

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 22nd October, 2014.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Barbara Inman); Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Michael Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Phillip Dennis, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Ben Houchen, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Elliot Kennedy, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Mrs Kathryn Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr Bill Woodhead and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: N Schneider (CE); J Danks, L King (R), J Humphreys (CESC); P Dobson, J Nixon (DNS); P Kelly (DPH); J Nertney, P K Bell, J McDonald (LD).

Also in attendance: Angela Darnell (Head Teacher of Eggescliffe School), members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Mark Chatburn, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Maureen Rigg, Cllr David Rose, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Andrew Stephenson, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey and Cllr Michael Walmsley

C Declarations of Interest

61/14

There were no declarations of interests.

C Minutes

62/14

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2014 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

C Presentation to Angela Darnell

63/14

A presentation was made to Angela Darnell who was retiring as Head Teacher of Eggescliffe School.

Angela led Eggescliffe School for almost 24 years and during this time she steered the school through a number of inspections with impressive results.

Throughout her time as Headteacher she had overseen some of the best results in the Borough ensuring that the thousands of young people who had attended the school had a platform to succeed.

Angela had always been relentless in her championing children and education across Stockton and in upholding the role of the local authority with schools.

As Headteacher of Eggescliffe School, Angela played an active role in the Secondary Headteacher Partnerships, always willing to take a lead on behalf of Stockton where the need arose. Most recently, she had been instrumental in the local authority securing funding to develop a post 16 facility in Billingham and in shaping and delivering the school to school challenge framework that had been put in place to improve the performance of secondary schools across the Borough.

Members placed on record their thanks to Angela for the magnificent

contribution she had made to education in the Borough over the past 24 years.

C
64/14

APSE Awards

The Leader of the Council reported that Stockton Council had been shortlisted again for a variety of public service awards.

The Council had been shortlisted for the fifth year in a row for the prestigious Council of the Year Award in the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) awards.

The APSE awards recognised the very best in local government frontline services, with councils throughout the UK recognised for their achievements in delivering excellence in frontline service.

As well as being shortlisted for the overall Council of the Year Award the Council had also been nominated for eight separate service award categories.

Stockton Council won Best Housing and Regeneration Initiative – Mandale Park.

The project had seen hundreds of properties in Thornaby replaced with quality new homes.

Over the past ten years, residents, partners and Council Members and Officers had worked closely to replace 578 properties with mixed-tenure, energy efficient homes in a safe and secure environment. Once complete more than 860 new homes would have been built, including 200 affordable homes for rent or shared ownership.

The regeneration of Mandale Park had been led by Stockton Council in partnership with Tristar Homes, Barratt Homes, Keepmoat and Isos Housing and had received financial support from the Homes and Communities Agency.

Julie Nixon the Head of Housing and Community Protection was in attendance at the meeting to collect the award.

C
65/14

Public Question Time

The Director of Law and Democracy informed Members that no Public Questions had been received.

C
66/14

Members Policy Seminar Programme

Consideration was given to a report that provided Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminar in October 2014 that included presentations on the Care Act 2014 and Better Care Fund and the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

C

Children and Young People's Partnership, Adults Health and Wellbeing

67/14 Partnership – Amendments to Partnership Rules of Procedure (Membership) and Terms of Reference

Consideration was given to a report on Children and Young People's Partnership, Adults Health and Wellbeing Partnership – Amendments to Partnership Rules of Procedure (Membership) and Terms of Reference.

At its meeting, held on 23 July 2014, the Council considered and approved governance arrangements relating to the Children and Young People's Partnership and Adults' Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Since that approval, the arrangements had been further considered, including discussion at both Partnerships. As a result, a number of proposed changes had been identified which, it was considered, would further support the work of the Partnerships. Those proposals were:-

Children and Young People's Partnership

Within the Partnership's Rules of Procedure the following to be added to the membership:-

- A representative from each of the Commissioned Children's Centres within the Borough. Currently this is Big Life Families and 4Children
- A representative from North East Chamber of Commerce

Adults' Health and Wellbeing Partnership

Within the Partnership's Rules of Procedure the following to be added to the membership:-

- A representative from the Prisons Service
- A representative from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office

The following to be deleted from membership:-

- A representative of BALANCE (it is proposed that in future representatives from BALANCE and FRESH will be requested to attend meetings as and when required)

Within the Terms of Reference of the Partnership under principles of working, add:-

- Ensure that any statutory powers that partners have available to them are fully considered, as a means of fulfilling the objectives of the Partnership.
- Highlight to the Health and Wellbeing Board any issues where the Partnership considers that the lobbying of government and/or other decision makers would be of benefit

It was suggested that, for the Children and Young People's Partnership, any future minor amendments to its Terms of Reference and / or Rules of Procedure be delegated to the Director of Children, Education and Social Care in

consultation with the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. In addition, for the Adults Health and Wellbeing Partnership, it was suggested that any minor amendments to its Terms of Reference and / or Rules of Procedure be delegated to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health.

RESOLVED that the above amendments and suggested delegations be approved.

**C
68/14** **Urgent Decision – Newport Bridge**

Consideration was given to a report that provided Council with an update on the emerging picture of the Newport Bridge repainting scheme, informing Council of the changing scope, context of the scheme and rationale.

Newport Bridge repainting works commenced on 28 July for an expected duration of seventeen weeks. This included a full closure of Newport Bridge Approach Road for a six week period throughout the school summer holidays to enable works that required a road closure to be completed.

The actual condition of the structure had been found to be in a far more advanced state of deterioration than any preliminary investigations had identified. The true condition of the structure of the bridge was not able to be ascertained until the road closure had been put in place, the structure had been high pressure cleaned and the old paint removed. A number of weeks into the contract had revealed that the speed and level of corrosion was so significant that major structural repairs and surface treatments far beyond those originally scoped were required.

Due to initial problems identified it was planned to keep the carriageway closed until 26 October. Clearly the impact of the latest information would require significantly more work which would have a prolonged impact on the travelling public. The report considered the options that were available to minimise the disruption and ensure the bridge was repaired and repainted to an acceptable standard.

Newport Bridge was built in 1934 and spanned the boundary between Stockton-On-Tees and Middlesbrough Borough Councils carrying the A1032 over the River Tees. Newport Bridge was designated Grade II listed building status in 1988 and as owners of the bridge the Council was required to repair and maintain it to a 'reasonable state of repair'. The A1032 Newport Bridge Approach Road which transversed the bridge was a major strategic link on the secondary carriageway network carrying approximately 23,000 vehicles per day.

Since the construction of the bridge it had received regular maintenance including painting, although the last time it was undertaken was in 1998. Historically the bridge had been painted on a cycle of 8 to 10 years but this had been considerably exceeded. In the past funding was via a grant for large scale special maintenance projects but changes to the mechanism meant that this was no longer an option.

Due to the length of time that it had been since Newport Bridge was last repainted and recognising that delaying it further still would increase the chance of further deterioration the decision had been made to repaint the structure during the summer 2014 utilising the Councils Commuted Lump Sum resources.

Prior to the works a preparatory inspection was undertaken to assess the overall condition of the existing coating systems and recommend a compatible paint system for the future maintenance works. Overall the condition was found to be variable, consistent with a structure of its age, location and being subject to several maintenance painting programmes throughout its history.

The approach to the scheme was to replicate what had been undertaken previously when the bridge had been subject to repainting. This was typically a fourteen to sixteen week contract which utilised a six week closure of Newport Bridge during the school summer holidays when traffic flows were generally lighter in order to paint those sections required within a sterile area. Once those were complete it was expected that the remainder of the works could be completed with minimal disruption to road users. Given the duration of the closure was only expected to be six weeks in total it was felt the most appropriate method to undertake the works was to do so under a formal road closure, as this would give the operatives a safe, sterile area in which to work, particularly when working at height. In addition the amount of machinery required to undertake cleansing, washing and preparation of the bridge, coupled with a significant amount of dust and debris generated during the cleansing period would have been impossible to contain, thus necessitating a full road closure.

The decision not to utilise an encased scaffold tunnel from the start of the project was due to the expected closure length being only six weeks. This tunnel method of working would have required a full closure of the carriageway for approximately four weeks to install and a similar duration to dismantle. A closure would also still have been likely to facilitate the preparation works detailed above.

Upon the contractor commencing the high pressure water washing excessive coatings were being easily removed exposing previous paint undercoats. Extensive flaking with no particular direction or shape was occurring, with some sections showing eight different coatings, as well as more rusted areas being exposed than was expected. The edges of many of these areas were poorly adhered and further detachment would have occurred if they had simply been over coated. This had resulted in significantly more preparation involving 'feather edging' of the existing coating, which had been the primary reason for the elongated closure period. Due to the issues with the preparation and repairs of a structural nature that were required, plus the days lost due to inclement weather, the contractor was no longer in a position to complete the elements of work that need to be done under a full road closure. In fact the level of corrosion and paint removal required meant the scope of the project was very different and no longer a simple repainting job.

In lieu of the above there were two potential options being evaluated by the contractor in order to take the project through to completion, these were:-

i) Continue with the road closure in place until the end of October, at which time the closure will be removed with a temporary scaffold deck (or tunnel top) having been erected along the full length of the bridge, which will then facilitate Newport Bridge Approach Road opening with two-way traffic flow in each direction. Works will then be able to continue where practicable throughout the winter months with an expected completion date of around late spring 2015. The resources required to repair and repaint the bridge will then be smoothed to ensure the most cost effective approach is taken.

ii) Work until the end of the agreed closure period (27 October) and then not carry out any further works, decant the site and restart again in early summer 2015. However, this option carries some potential risks to reputation in that the public have experienced significant travel disruption from August through to November and it could be perceived that works have ceased with the painting still not complete. This risk will likely be compounded again during summer 2015 once the works restart again with further potential disruption to the travelling public.

In view of this, Option i) was agreed as the best option and urgency powers were used to approve the release of up to £2.5m from the Council's General fund balances to enable the revised scope of the work to be undertaken for the completion of the Newport Bridge structural repair and repainting scheme. This was required urgently in order to continue the work and enable the opening of the road as soon as possible.

Members felt it would be appropriate if a Task and Finish scrutiny exercise was to take place by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee to examine arrangements for the maintenance of the Boroughs' main bridges and to provide reassurances and recommendations on those arrangements.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Council note that Urgency powers have been used under the Council's scheme of delegation to release additional funding of £2.5M so that the revised scope of works can be commissioned in order to open the road at the earliest opportunity.

2. A Task and Finish scrutiny exercise take place by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee to examine arrangements for the maintenance of the Boroughs' main bridges and to provide reassurances and recommendations on those arrangements.

**C
69/14**

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2014

Consideration was given to a report that set out the existing arrangements for polling districts and places and proposed changes taking into account the submission of the Returning Officer and feedback from public consultation.

Each Local Authority was required to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 changed the timing of these reviews and the next review must be held between 1 October 2013 and

31 January 2015 with subsequent reviews held within a 16 month period starting on 1 October every fifth year after 1 October 2013. Ward boundaries were unaffected by the review.

The Council's last review was held in 2011 when a number of minor changes were made.

A Council's area was divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.

The review considered:-

- The boundaries of polling districts – for example, are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
- Polling Places – the location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
- Polling Stations – the suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station

In addition to the above considerations, during the European Elections 2014, the opportunity was taken to complete the Electoral Commission's evaluation templates in order to assess the suitability / accessibility of the polling place / station. Presiding Officers were also asked to record any complaints/ comments received.

Tees Valley Unlimited also provided electorate projections for the polling district boundaries in each year and up to December 2018. This took into account new housing and demolitions.

The Returning Officer's submission was published on 7 July 2014 and summarised the existing arrangements, key issues identified from the recent European Elections, any notable projected changes in electorate and made proposals for changes to polling districts / places.

The proposals sought to combine polling districts where electorate was low, identify more appropriate polling places where adverse comments had been received on the location / suitability of current venues and identify alternatives to using mobile stations which were expensive and unpopular with voters. The proposals took into account Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500 not including postal voters.

The Returning Officers proposals resulted in an overall reduction of twelve polling districts / stations (including two mobile stations) and changes to two further polling places.

More detailed comments from the European Elections in relation to the suitability of existing polling stations would be taken into account in the planning for future electoral events.

The Statutory Notice publicising the review was displayed on/ sent to:-

- Website
- Libraries
- Community Pharmacies
- GP Practice Managers
- Healthwatch
- Tees Active Leisure Centres
- Community Centres/ Village Halls

In addition, the Statutory Notice and the Returning Officer's submission was displayed / sent to:-

- Municipal Buildings
- Website (with accompanying plans)
- All Councillors
- MPs
- Parish Councils
- Disability Groups/ BME/faith community
- Other interested persons/ bodies

All correspondence sent to the Returning Officer as part of the review had been published on the Council's website. A table within the report contained a summary of the comments received and comments / revised proposals in response to the consultation feedback.

Existing arrangements for all wards and the final proposals of the Returning Officer following consultation were attached to the report. The final proposals result in a reduction of seven polling districts / stations, a reduction of one mobile station and three further changes to polling places.

RESOLVED that the recommended changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places be approved.

C 70/14 Highway Infrastructure Investment

Consideration was given to a report on the best use of additional resources that had been secured through government grant towards road maintenance activities and how resources could continually be targeted to support the most localised solutions which were able to be funded through the community participation budget which was due to end in March 2015. The report set out the intention of a £9M investment in highway and footpath maintenance activities which included small community participation projects over the next three years.

As part of the Council's 2014-15 budget setting process, Council agreed the allocation of £5.89M to support future investments. There were significant new developments coming forward across the Borough. A detailed Infrastructure Strategy in response to such developments, which was particularly relevant to South of the Borough was in production. An allocation of the above figure towards increased funding of roads and footpaths had been discussed however the Council had received external funding primarily towards investment in roads and footpaths and a scrutiny review of road and footpath maintenance was

ongoing which would help identify areas to be targeted for further interventions over and above normal spending patterns.

The community participation budget had over a number of years provided a successful mechanism to carry out very localised solutions to problems with highway infrastructure and these could include car parking and fencing that aided pedestrian and traffic movements. The report considered the additional resources for highway and footpath maintenance that were being considered by the Regeneration & Transport Select Committee, what opportunities would exist to use this mechanism to continue to provide local selections on a ward by ward basis.

At its meeting 9th October 2014, Cabinet RESOLVED that:-

1. The additional funding received from Government for additional highway and footpath maintenance be noted. The Council's Regeneration & Transport Scrutiny Committee are currently reviewing the priorities for this additional spend which would be reported to Cabinet separately.

2. It be noted that over the next three years £9M will be available from government grant and additional revenue support for the investment in highway and footpath maintenance and community participation budget project.

Cabinet also recommended to Council that:-

3. The success of the community participation budget be noted and the use of £800K over the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17 (£400K per year) be approved from the approved Medium Term Financial Plan allocation for investment to use on local highway and environmental improvements using the community participation budget protocols and funding distribution mechanism.

RESOLVED that:-

3. The success of the community participation budget be noted and the use of £800K over the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17 (£400K per year) be approved from the approved Medium Term Financial Plan allocation for investment to use on local highway and environmental improvements using the community participation budget protocols and funding distribution mechanism.

C
71/14

Infrastructure Investment

Consideration was given to a report on Infrastructure Investment. The pattern of economic growth, impact of the National Planning Policy Framework and the infrastructure needs in general in the Borough were changing rapidly. Principal growth in population had always been around Ingleby Barwick and this continued apace with additional housing approvals and the provision of a free school by the government. Both Eaglescliffe and Yarm had seen a mix of allocated and unallocated housing sites come forward with approvals being granted in the context of NPPG. All of this activity placed strain on the Borough's infrastructure in the broader sense and meeting the needs of the community, which was diverse in the ancient setting of Yarm compared to the new build of Ingleby and traditional layout of Thornaby, required careful planning of infrastructure needs going forward.

By infrastructure the report considered not only roads and transport links but also schools, leisure facilities, green spaces, parks and town centres. It was not only the growth that was driving the need to invest in infrastructure but also analysis of survey information and the observations of Elected Members had been brought together to support the investment proposal in the report.

As part of the Council's 2014-15 budget setting process, Council agreed the allocation of £5.590M to support future investments and regeneration related acquisitions and also £300K to support feasibility work. There were significant new developments coming forward across the Borough. A detailed Infrastructure Strategy in response to such developments, which was particularly relevant to South of the Borough was in production.

The report also highlighted other significant investment and activities planned in the South of the Borough.

At its meeting 9th October 2014, Cabinet RESOLVED that:-

1. The recent investment in primary school capacity in the south of the borough and emerging trend of required primary school places in Ingleby Barwick be noted. Any future investment decisions will be subject to a further report to Cabinet following the review of Children and Young People Select Committee and their work into school organisation and admission arrangements.
2. The principle of developing a pedestrian link between Ingleby Barwick and Preston Park be approved and that £35k be allocated to develop a scheme to allow funding sources to be actively pursued. The funding for the feasibility work to be allocated from the investment fund.
3. The investment of £18.9m into Highway Infrastructure in the schemes outlined in paragraph 31 be noted.

Cabinet had also recommended to Council that:-

4. The investment of £1.2M into Yarm town centre public realm and facilities be noted and the allocation from the investment fund of a further £150k alongside the £60k available to develop the library facilities in Yarm be supported.
5. The principle of the development of additional Leisure facilities in Ingleby Barwick be approved and that further feasibility work be undertaken to determine the most appropriate mix of facilities and location. The funding for this development work of £175K be approved from the feasibility element of the investment fund. In addition £3M from the investment fund be approved in principle towards the scheme, which will be used as the basis to pursue external funding with Sports England and Tees Active. The full costs of the scheme will be considered in the 2015/16 Medium Term Financial Plan.
6. The investment of £800k in additional car parking provision within Preston Park from the allocated investment fund be approved.

Councillor Lupton moved and Councillor Houchen seconded the following amendment:-

"That the principle of the development of additional leisure facilities within the Borough be considered by the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee and their recommendations be submitted to Cabinet in time to inform the budget proposals for 2015/16."

A vote took place and the amendment was declared lost.

RESOLVED that:-

4. The investment of £1.2M into Yarm town centre public realm and facilities be noted and the allocation from the investment fund of a further £150k alongside the £60k available to develop the library facilities in Yarm be supported.

5. The principle of the development of additional Leisure facilities in Ingleby Barwick be approved and that further feasibility work be undertaken to determine the most appropriate mix of facilities and location. The funding for this development work of £175K be approved from the feasibility element of the investment fund. In addition £3M from the investment fund be approved in principle towards the scheme, which will be used as the basis to pursue external funding with Sports England and Tees Active. The full costs of the scheme will be considered in the 2015/16 Medium Term Financial Plan.

6. The investment of £800k in additional car parking provision within Preston Park from the allocated investment fund be approved.

C 72/14

Future Role of Scrutiny

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and discussed the future of scrutiny at Stockton. The proposals in the report fulfilled the Leader of the Council's commitment to review Cabinet and Scrutiny structures to contribute to the 15% efficiency savings target of £130,000. Agreement of this proposal would result in savings of £20,100 in addition to the Cabinet savings proposal which if agreed would save £24,120. Savings proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel (15/16) and agreed by Council were part of a wider set of savings including e.g. Members LGPS membership ending, budget savings amounts to £103,560 not including £10,416 from freezing Basic Allowances for two years.

At Stockton, scrutiny had provided an excellent platform for non-executive Members to have direct involvement with policy review and development, performance review and championing of community issues. The development of collaborative scrutiny arrangements had ensured that the scrutiny work programme had supported delivery of the Council's priorities including the efficiency agenda. Scrutiny had proved to be particularly valuable when addressing sensitive issues or reviewing public facing services.

Scrutiny was a statutory requirement introduced under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. The Act required Councils operating Executive arrangements to have a scrutiny function. The main legislative provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to scrutiny enabled Committees and their Members to:-

Review and/or scrutinise

- Decisions made by Cabinet and Council Officers in relation to key decisions
- Actions carried out within the remit of the Council
- The performance of the Council in relation to targets and policy objectives; and
- Have the right to call in and examine (in accordance with the agreed timescale), decisions made by Cabinet, before the decision was implemented

Local Authorities also had the power to scrutinise health issues and services, as introduced in the Health and Social Care Act 2001. The Health Select Committee could review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services. In relation to major health service re-design, the Health Select Committee must be consulted on proposals and Council had the power to refer a proposal to the Secretary of State.

Legislation also required the designation of a Committee to scrutinise crime and disorder matters. Housing and Community Safety Committee had been so designated at Stockton.

Legislation identified key partner agencies that had a duty to co-operate with the scrutiny process. In respect of health scrutiny, legislation had extended this power to cover all providers of NHS-funded healthcare.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 established the Police and Crime Panel to scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner. Police and Crime Panels also undertake review work to complement their other roles.

The Localism Act gave Councils greater flexibility over governance models including a power to return to a Committee model (whilst allowing overview and scrutiny to operate within a Committee model). Other minor changes were introduced including the requirement for Executive members to respond to Scrutiny recommendations within two months and provision for Members of the Council who were not members of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to refer an item to one of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees as long as the matter was relevant to the functions of the Committee. The Act also removed the link between the scrutiny committee powers to scrutinise partner authorities and improvement targets in LAA. Partners were required to have regard to the reports and recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees that related to any of their functions exercised in relation to the committee's area or residents of that area. This widened the partners' activities that overview & scrutiny committees could scrutinise.

Councils must also appoint a Designated Scrutiny Officer to support the work of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees which in Stockton's case was the Head of Democratic Services

Increasingly, there was an expectation by external inspection regimes that Member scrutiny should play an integral part in self-regulation providing independent review and challenge of Council services.

In December 2005, Council approved new arrangements which sought to

strengthen co-ordination of the scrutiny work programme. Key features of the new arrangements, which were still in place, included:

- Greater emphasis on policy review and development work
- Establishment of Executive Scrutiny Committee to co-ordinate the work programme
- Strengthened project management of in depth scrutiny reviews
- Establishment of a Scrutiny Liaison Forum to facilitate dialogue between scrutiny and Cabinet Members. This enabled CMT and Cabinet Members to comment on priorities for the scrutiny work programme.
- Improved communication mechanisms, including regular “tri partite” discussions between Scrutiny Members, Cabinet Members and Officers during the course of reviews and the appointment of a Link Officer.

The Council's scrutiny function had consistently received positive feedback from external inspection. The last corporate assessment in 2008 stated that Scrutiny provided rigorous policy review and had made a significant contribution to service improvement. However, the assessment commented that the scrutiny process would benefit from additional opportunities for challenge. In response to this and in reviewing best practice across the Region, annual overview meetings were established to provide Members with an overview of all the services reporting to the various Select Committees and to question Cabinet Members and Senior Officers on their performance.

In addition, arrangements to monitor the implementation of agreed scrutiny recommendations were introduced. Progress reports submitted to Select Committee monitored the implementation of recommendations but also helped the Committees to understand the impact of review work.

The function had also been praised in more recent inspections. In 2010, the Care Quality Commission Inspection stated that Overview and Scrutiny Committees were effective with Members giving detailed attention to key policy issues. The safeguarding inspection by OFSTED stated that good scrutiny arrangements were in place with good examples of the engagement of children and young people in reviewing processes leading to change and that scrutiny arrangements had had an impact on developing services and achieving cost effectiveness.

The Council's scrutiny function had proved itself to be flexible and adaptable to changing priorities. The Select Committee work programme from 2009 onwards played a key role in supporting the Council's EIT programme enabling non-executive Councillors to challenge services and had meaningful input into reviews. Close involvement of scrutiny with the EIT process at Stockton helped it to remain transparent, accountable and open to Stockton residents and enabled Councillors to have a meaningful input to reviews and inform difficult decisions on service priorities.

In response to high profile cases in the media relating to the quality and safety of health and social care services and the increased expectation on Councils to put in place internal mechanisms to undertake rigorous review and challenge, Children and Young People Select Committee received quarterly performance reports in respect of children's services – this included a selection of performance indicators linked to priorities in the Council Plan, along with

commentary on other performance issues arising during each quarter. In addition, reports were considered in respect of the challenges identified at the last overview meeting such as adoption timescales, School and Academy Performance and NEETs.

Adult Services and Health Select Committee also received six-monthly performance reports on adult social care issues and a range of other reports and updates were provided as part of the enhanced performance management arrangements. This ensured an increased focus on safeguarding and the quality of health and care services. These included Annual Reports from the Adult Services and CQC, SBC Quality Standards Frameworks for Care Homes, NHS Quality Accounts; and reports from Healthwatch including Enter and View Reports etc. In addition all relevant CQC inspection reports were circulated to all Members.

With the abolition of external inspection regimes, an increasingly important role had emerged for scrutiny to play in self-regulation. In addition, the quality and safety of health and care services (e.g. Mid Staffordshire Inquiry, Winterbourne View, Rotherham Sexual Exploitation) had been a matter of intense public interest reinforcing the importance of robust scrutiny of health and social care and also children's services. Any future framework for scrutiny should seek to ensure greater focus on these areas utilising enhanced scrutiny powers to scrutinise all commissioners and providers.

It was essential that resources were deployed in the most effective way continuing to demonstrate the value added through scrutiny. It was therefore proposed that a scrutiny model be developed that continued to strengthen the role of scrutiny focusing on statutory functions, the quality and safety of services for vulnerable groups and holding services to account. It was proposed that in line with the reduction of Cabinet Member posts that the number of Standing Select Committees was reduced from seven to five whilst retaining Executive Scrutiny Committee as the co-ordinating scrutiny body. Attached to the report were details of the existing and proposed scrutiny structure.

In the new model, Executive Scrutiny Committee would retain its co-ordinating role but would also be responsible for any task and finish reviews that arose in relation to corporate issues.

The Children and Young People Select Committee, Crime and Disorder Select Committee and Adult Services and Health Select Committee would be responsible for the priority issues for scrutiny and Members serving on these Committees would need to have / develop a robust knowledge of the services and legislative framework in relation to matters falling within their remit. These Committees would also need to have a detailed understanding of the performance framework within the context of their Committees. The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care was continuing to work with the Head of Democratic Services and the Committees to strengthen this role particularly in relation to the role of Children and Young People Select Committee under the new OFSETD Inspection Framework.

Under the proposed structure, the People and Place Committees would undertake scrutiny reviews within these themes, for example, an issue relating to the arts or leisure could be considered by the People Select Committee whilst

an issue relating to housing or the built environment could be considered by the Place Select Committee. This would continue to allow Councillors to opt to sit on Committees where they had a particular interest in the subject matter. However, it was proposed that the flexibility be retained for Select Committees to undertake review work outside of their remits where priorities dictated.

Although there had been an on-going programme of training and development offered to scrutiny Members to respond to national and local developments, this would again need to be reviewed to ensure that the Committees had the necessary skills and competencies to meet their new roles. Stockton had scoped and successfully lobbied to secure regional funding to develop a package of scrutiny training. The Regional Scrutiny Joint Member / Officer Network approved the use of funding to develop a programme which Councils would be able to use in-house within their own Committees.

In reducing the number of Select Committees, consideration could be given to increasing the size of the Committees (currently nine members per Committee).

However, retaining the size of Select Committees at nine, although this would mean that non-executive Councillors would sit on just one Select Committee, would have the benefit of each Member being able to devote more time and attention to the work of their Select Committee. It might also alleviate the problems that had been experienced with Members' time and attention being spread too thinly, leading to attendance issues at some Committees. Increasing the size of the Select Committees might lead to problems with Committees being too large and unwieldy and giving Members less time to devote to the work of their Committee(s).

In addition Members would still be required to fulfil roles on quasi-judicial committees - Planning and Licensing, plus a range of other roles including outside bodies, Audit Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board, Appeals and Complaints etc.

Cabinet was requested to recommend to Council that the number of Scrutiny Committees be reduced by two as detailed in the attachment to the report.

RESOLVED that the number of Scrutiny Committees be reduced by two as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

C
73/14 **Members' Question Time**

The Director of Law and Democracy informed Members that no Member Questions had been received.

C
74/14 **Forward Plan and Leader's Statement**

The Leader of the Council gave his Forward Plan and Leaders Statement.

Since the last meeting of Council on the 17th September 2014, Cabinet met on the 9th October 2014 and, (in addition to the regular items) considered:-

- Two reports on Highway and Infrastructure investments

- A report on Cabinet Member portfolios
- A report on the future role of Scrutiny
- An update on Tees Credit Union
- An update on the Social Fund
- A Local Growth Fund Update
- A report on rail devolution and Rail North
- The regular review of Children's Social Care Activity
- A report on School Performance in 2013/14
- A report from the Scrutiny Review of Durham Tees Valley Airport
- A report on Polling Districts & Places
- A report on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Looking ahead to the next Cabinet meeting to be held on 6th November 2014 significant items on the agenda to be considered were as follows:-

- An update report on the impact of Welfare Reforms
- A report on Transforming Rehabilitation
- A report on Recording and Web Broadcasting of Council Meetings
- A report on driving up standards in private rented housing
- An update report on the Victoria Housing Estate regeneration project
- An update report on implementation of Individual Electoral Registration
- A report on the Service Review of Development and Neighbourhood Services
- A report on the 2013/14 Local Account of Adult Social Care Services

The Leader of the Council had received an invitation from the RSPCA to go an award event in Leeds where Stockton Animal Welfare Team were to be awarded the Gold Footprint Award. However the Leader was unfortunately not able to attend due to other commitments on the day. What the RSPCA had said was testament to the fantastic staff employed by the Council so the Leader shared the following comments with Members, Officers and members of the public:-

“You are very fortunate in Stockton on Tees to have two fantastic officers Mark Berry and Steven Gale who are certainly among the best in the Country. I hope you get an opportunity to congratulate them on winning a Gold Footprint Award from the RSPCA they as the Council is in a minority of those who are delivering animal welfare services at such a high level”.

As always, there were many exciting events taking place across the Borough over the next few weeks:-

- The Festival of Light and Colour would take place Wednesday 29th October 2014 at the Durham University Queen's Campus by the Infinity Bridge
- The ever popular Halloween Spooky Walk would take place at Preston Park next Friday 31st October 2014
- And of course the spectacular Fireworks Display would take place at Stockton riverside on Wednesday 5th November 2014
- On Sunday 9th November 2014 annual Remembrance Services would be taking place across the Borough. The Mayor would lead the service in Stockton town centre and details of all the services were available on the Council website
- And finally, the evening of Friday 14th November 2014 would see huge celebrations on Stockton High Street in aid of Children in Need. Pudsey Bear

would be on Stockton High Street to help raise money for the annual appeal.

The Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing Members and Officers at the next meeting of Council on the 19th November.

C
75/14 **Falls Awareness Event**

The Worshipful the Mayor passed on her thanks to Councillor Cherrett and Councillor Cunningham for their assistance with and support for the Falls Awareness Event.