

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 16th October, 2007.

Present: Cllr Lee Narrowway (In the Chair), Cllr J Beall (vice Cllr Mrs Cains), Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr William Woodhead; Mrs Mustafa (Parent Governor Representative).

Officers: M Batty (DNS); G Birtle, P Mennear, Mrs J Trainer, Miss F Shayler, Mrs M Waggott (LD).

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Mrs Cains, Coleman, Gibson, Mrs Nesbitt, Smith, Mrs Trainer, Womphrey.

EXC 31/07 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Narrowway declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 5 further to being an employee of Tees Esk and Wear NHS.

Councillor Mrs Rigg declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 5 further to being a member of a Parish Council.

Councillor Cains declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 further to being a member of a trade union involved in the discussions regarding Remploy.

Councillor Narrowway declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 further to being a member of a trade union involved in the discussions regarding Remploy.

Councillor Mrs O'Donnell declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 further to being a member of a trade union involved in the discussions regarding Remploy.

Councillor Woodhead declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 further to being a member of a trade union involved in the discussions regarding Remploy.

Councillor Woodhead declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 9 further to being a Tristar Board Member.

EXC 32/07 Minutes - 17th September 2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

EXC 33/07 Housing and Community Safety Select Committee - Review of Neighbourhood Enforcement Service

Members were presented with the final report on the Review of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service.

RESOLVED that the final report - Review of Neighbourhood Enforcement Service be endorsed and submitted to Cabinet for final approval.

EXC 34/07 Children and Young People Select Committee - Review of Corporate Parenting Part 2

Members were presented with the final report on the Review of the Corporate Parenting Part 2. Some minor rewording was suggested which the Scrutiny Officer would incorporate prior to submitting to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the final report - Review of Corporate Parenting Part 2 be endorsed and submitted to Cabinet for final approval.

EXC 35/07 Feedback on Performance Queries

Further to the previous meeting (minute no EXC 26/07 refers), Members raised 2 queries from the Performance Report.

Members were provided with a briefing note on REMPLOY which gave an up to date position with regard to the service provided within Stockton on Tees. Members felt that it would have been appropriate to receive the view of the Unions regarding this matter. It was also stated that a letter be sent by the Chairman on behalf of this Committee to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions highlighting this Council's support of the work of Remploy and giving appropriate support where possible.

The other issue raised was with regard to Reducing Total Annual Crime. Mike Batty was in attendance to answer Members queries. It was stated that the long term target was to reduce total crime by 20% over a four year period. Stockton was working closely with Cleveland Police and other partners on a number of crime reduction initiatives. Problem areas were shoplifting and theft of metals.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted and that a letter be sent by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee regarding Remploy to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

EXC 36/07 Performance Report

Members were provided with the Council's performance for the period Quarter 1, April - June 2007, providing details of performance against targets and improvement trends. This report included the linkages between finance, performance and corresponding risks. Also included within the report was performance against the corporate basket of key performance indicators, Gershon Efficiency Savings, complaints and commendations, research and consultation and sharing of good practice undertaken during Quarter 1.

Members raised queries to which further information was required for the next meeting:-

1. Housing Benefits - The department of Work and Pensions had cut the Administration Grant by 5% year on year.

2. Councillor Mrs Rigg raised a query regarding fostering placements and asked whether there had been any progress in working with partners across the region on this issue.

Members discussed their Learning Plans and competing priorities as it had been identified that training was being offered from other sources such as Police and Fire Authority. The Head of Democratic Services would take this matter up with Police and Fire Authority to ensure that training was directed through the Development Officer for it to then be disseminated to the most appropriate Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that further information be provided at the next meeting on the points raised.

**EXC
37/07** **Forward Plan**

Members were provided with a copy of the Statutory Forward Plan for 1st October 2007 - 31st January 2008.

The Committee noted that the report on Sustainable Energy Options was to be submitted to Cabinet in November and asked for further details of the consultation that had been undertaken in respect of the report.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted and that information be presented to the next meeting on the query raised.

**EXC
38/07** **Report on Chairs Updates**

Corporate and Social Inclusion - Theatre Subsidy

The committee had undertaken the following activities:

- Background and comparative information relating to subsidy levels and programming information had been supplied to the Committee
- a members' survey had been completed
- the Committee had taken evidence from the contractor at two meetings of the committee and a site visit of the theatre had also taken place

The Committee met on 2 October and formulated recommendations arising from the review.

The final report on was due to be considered by Executive Scrutiny Committee on 13 November and presented to Cabinet on 22 November 2007.

The Committee were due to receive progress reports on the implementation of the Meetings Venues and Consultation Strategy reviews in November 2007.

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee - Review of River Based Leisure Facilities

The Committee had visited the River Tees Watersports Centre and spoke with representatives of the various sporting clubs based there. The Committee had

also arranged to speak with Steve Chaytor from Tees Active to discuss Castlegate Quay Centre, and Superintendent Dave Brunskill from Cleveland Police in order to discuss the issue of anti-social behaviour at various locations along the river.

A special meeting had been arranged for November during which issues surrounding Preston Hall and the proposed River Tees Heritage Park would be discussed.

The Committee had also undertaken a site visit on board the Teesside Princess in order to visit the various locations under discussion.

The review remained on schedule.

The Committee would be receiving updates on progress with the Preston Hall review and an action plan for the Festivals review in November.

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee - Review of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service

The Committee were presented with the evidence collected during the review of the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service at a meeting on 18 September. During this meeting the Committee also received evidence from Chief Inspector Gamesby of Cleveland Police in order to respond to concerns regarding partnership working.

Following consideration of all the information, the Committee drafted recommendations and the final report was approved at a meeting on 27 September. Members feel strongly that the Service should continue to be funded by the Council, but also that efforts should be made to further improve the funding of the service by engagement with Parish and Town Councils and the DVLA.

In addition, the committee made recommendations surrounding the publicity of the Service and the possibility of extending the service to cover out of hours nuisance noise control.

The review was completed on schedule and the final report will be presented to Cabinet on 25 October.

The Choice Based Lettings action plan was agreed by the Committee in June, and the progress report was due later this year.

Adult Services and Health Select Committee - Review of Alcohol Services

The Committee received information from representatives from North Tees Hospital and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust to determine secondary/tertiary service level provision. Evidence had also been taken from representatives of The Albert Centre and Community Alliance both of whom provide alcohol counselling services in the borough.

The Committee would meet Mike Batty and Dave Kitching to discuss community safety/police and licensing issues that had been raised as part of this review. A

meeting was being arranged for the Committee to have discussions with Neil Nicholson, Director of Finance, North Tees PCT to determine funding of commissioned services.

As a result of the two extra meetings to gather further evidence it was likely that this review would be reported to Cabinet on 17th January.

A monitoring report on the Dentistry review would be received on 28th November 2007

The Committee was also to receive a presentation/information regarding Pathways to Healthcare.

The Committee was to receive presentation/information from Paul Frank, Head of Patient Experience.

The Committee was considering providing a response to the Department of Health's consultation regarding Local involvement Networks (LINKs).

Environment Select Committee - Cemeteries and Memorials – Phase 2 - The Management of Memorials

The following activities had taken place:

- a site visit to Durham Road Cemetery where Members had a demonstration of memorial safety testing by MemSafe
- a press release was issued with photo opportunity and meetings with the press on the day of the site visit. Following this, there was significant press coverage in the D&S Times, the Northern Echo and the Evening Gazette
- a comprehensive background information pack supplied to all members of the committee
- the Committee had taken evidence from the service, Care for Your Area, Funeral Directors and Memorials Masons at two meetings of the Select Committee
- a members' survey was issued
- letters had been sent to churches and faith groups seeking their views.
- a visit to Carlisle (a best practice Authority) took place on 3 October
- a mid review "tri partite" meeting was held on 29 August 2007 to update the Cabinet Member with progress
- consultation with cemetery users at Durham Road, Oxbridge and Thornaby Cemeteries has also taken place and to date over 50 questionnaires had been completed/returned

This phase of the Cemeteries and Memorials review was due to report to Cabinet in November 2007.

The Committee had received an action plan setting out how the phase 1 recommendations would be implemented and were due to receive a report on progress in December 2007.

The Chair wished to take this opportunity to thank Judith Trainer all the staff of the Democratic Services Team for their hard work during the review particularly with the consultation exercises that were undertaken at the Cemeteries.

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee - Review of Employability

Since the last update the committee had received evidence from Pathways to Work at Job Centre Plus, North Tees PCT, and Stockton Drugs Action Team looking at how health problems (especially mental health problems), disability, and substance abuse impact on employability; and the North East Employers Coalition, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit and Tees Valley Engineering Partnership to examine employer perspectives on employability.

A further two meetings of the review were currently scheduled, which had been programmed thematically. These focused on areas identified as particularly pertinent to the scope of the review, including: the voluntary and community sectors involvement in increasing employability, and provision under the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Deprived Area Fund; and, essentially, the council itself as an employer, especially in relation to those considered the 'hardest to help' and those living in Stockton's wards with the worst labour market position.

As initial evidence had been taken, the review had developed from the original scope and project plan in terms of the witnesses and evidence the Committee would receive, in order to effectively tackle the main issues and meet the stated aims of the review.

The review was currently on schedule with a view to the final report being presented to Cabinet in December 2007.

The Committee was also due to undertake monitoring of the recommendations contained within the Street Lighting review by December 2007.

The Chairman stated that Daniel Ladd, Trainee Scrutiny Officer was doing a sterling job assisting the Members during this review.

Members discussed the difficulties when scrutinising and being able to be critical when hearing conflicting advice from witnesses. The importance of listening to witnesses but asking for evidence to support their views in a positive manner was stressed.

Children and Young People Select Committee - Review of Corporate Parenting

The Committee had concluded its evidence gathering for this review and had presented their final report at today's meeting. Cabinet would receive the report on 25th October 2007.

The Committee was due to discuss the scope and project plan of the next review topic – School Organisation Plan.

Monitoring Reports would be received on Teenage Pregnancy and Bullying during November 2007.

RESOLVED that the Chairs updates be noted.

