

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 11th December, 2007.

Present: Cllr Robert Gibson (Chairman); Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Lee Narrowway, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Allison Trainer, Cllr William Woodhead

Officers: Ms S.Daniels, T.Gibson, R Todd, M Rowell, R M Poundford (DNS);G Cummings (R); D.Bond, N Hart, J Trainer,P Mennear, G Birtle, D Ladd (LD).

Also in attendance: Richard Honeysett (CPA).

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Ann Cains, David Harrington, Mick Eddy, Colin Leckonby, Liz Nesbitt, Maurenn Rigg, Andrew Sherris, Michael Smith, Mick Womphrey; Mrs S Mustafa (Parent Governor Representative).

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Lee Narrowway declared a personal/non prejudicial interest further to being employed by Tees, Esk and Wear NHS.

2 **Minutes - 16th October 2007 - For Signature**

The minutes of the meeting of 16th October 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 **Minutes - 13th November - For Information**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 13th November were agreed and would be forwarded to Council for consideration.

4 **Verbal Update on HMS Kellington and River Debris**

The HMS Kellington was brought to the River Tees in 1993. The MOD had recently done a survey of the vessel and noted that the condition was poor and needed to be removed from the river. Following discussions with the Sea Cadets, as owners of the vessel, and other relevant partners, a private company had had agreed to undertake the ship dismantling work and to dispose of, or recycle, the subsequent waste material. Planning permission would be required for the waste disposal.

Talks were ongoing with the Ministry of Defence in relation to funding the cost of the transport involved in the removal operation. It was anticipated that works would be completed May - July 2008.

With regard to the river debris, 98% had been cleared. The River Master had indicated that the main problem was that land owners adjacent to the river were not being responsible and were allowing debris to go into the river. Available resources were limited to clearing navigation routes. There was a potential to look at sustainable use for the recovery of debris from the river but the cost of the necessary machinery would be in the region of £150k.

Members thanked the officer for the update and particularly highlighted the problem of debris gathering between HMS Kellington and the Quayside.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

5 **Scrutiny Review of Employability**

Members were provided with the final report on the scrutiny review of Employability undertaken by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee. The report examined the measures to improve the overall employment rate in the borough as well as the measures to assist specific groups such as those living in Stockton's wards with the worst labour market position, those

claiming key government benefits and those considered the 'hardest to help'. It also examined funding post March 2008, when a large proportion of employability related funding ended.

Members were provided with the full report and recommendations prior to being submitted to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and submitted to the next Cabinet for approval.

6 Performance, Finance and Risk Report Quarter 2 July - September 2007

Members were provided with a report that outlined the Council's performance and financial position for the period Quarter 2, July to September 2007, providing details of performance against targets and improvement trends.

The report included the linkages between finance, performance and corresponding risks, general fund balances, medium term financial and capital plan position. Also included in the report was the performance against Council Plan objectives, Service Improvement Plan progress, Corporate Basket of key performance indicators, Gershon Efficiency Savings, complaints and commendations, consultation and sharing of good practice, undertaken during Quarter 2.

Members made reference to how this authority compared with others in terms of the number of commendations and complaints received; and it was suggested that future reports include details of benchmarking with other relevant authorities. It was also noted that this authority's policy on complaints and commendations also made provision for the handling of 'repeat' or 'vaxatious' complaints; and it was agreed that a copy of this report be forwarded to all members for information.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The progress in the delivery of the Council plan objectives and in meeting the corporate Basket targets be noted.
3. The revised MTFP be noted.
4. The Capital slippage of (£3,032,000) and an expenditure saving of (£8,000) be approved.
5. The revised level of working balances be noted.
6. The Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader be given delegated approval to respond to the provisional Revenue Support Grant settlement.
7. The proposed further action suggested with regard to the Council's Complaints and Commendations Reporting Policy be approved.

7 Forward Plan

Members were provided with the Statutory Forward Plan for 1 December 2007 to 31st March 2008.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

8 Chairman's Update Reports

Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee

Theatre Subsidy

The Committee's recommendations were approved by Cabinet on 22 November 2007.

Review of Community and Voluntary Sector

This review would be conducted by a smaller task and finish group of the full committee.

Monitoring

The Committee was due to receive a further progress report on the implementation of the Meetings Venues Review in December together with a progress report on the implementation of the

Consultation review.

Joint Scrutiny of the Stockton/ Darlington Partnership

Four Members of the Select Committee were appointed to a sub group with Darlington Borough Council to undertake a joint scrutiny of the Partnership.

The Sub Group were advised that a Gate 1 Review had been undertaken to establish that the business case for the project was robust. A number of recommendations were included in the Gate 1 report and an Action Plan detailing those recommendations, together with the proposed actions were circulated to Members.

During discussion, particular references were made to the Governance Arrangements and the work being undertaken on the Heads of Terms; risk management arrangements in place; the benefits realisation programme; how the project would help deliver on the corporate goals of each Council; improved linkages with service delivery plans; the accuracy of the projected savings of the Project in the early years; and the membership of the Partnership Consultative Panel. The Committee also discussed the number of staff who would be affected by the proposals and how both Councils would manage the staffing issues which would arise. Members particularly referred to the effect the proposed partnership would have on the morale of staff and the need to ensure effective management of change including making re-training/skilling opportunities available to them.

The Sub Group supported the Business Case for the Project being taken forward to both Council's Cabinets.

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee

Review of River Based Leisure Facilities

At a meeting on 28 December, 2007 the Committee received evidence in relation to the proposals for a 'River Tees Park'. Graham Clingan (Parks and Countryside) and Mr Doug Nicholson (Friends of River Tees Heritage Park) attended the meeting.

In addition, Reuben Kench was able to update the Committee on proposals in relation to Preston Park.

On 5 December the Committee heard evidence from Tanya Gray (One North East) and Julia Frater (visit Teesvalley). This allowed the Committee to examine opportunities for Stockton Borough in relation to watersports and the lead up period for the 2012 Olympics, and also to examine the issue of the tourist promotion of the Borough's river-based assets.

Responses had been received from Parish/Town Councils and relevant ward councillors in relation to local issues surrounding river use. Both the latest Adult and Youth Viewpoint surveys included a series of questions in relation to leisure and the river.

The review remained on schedule and was due to report to Cabinet at the first meeting of the next municipal year.

Monitoring

The Committee received progress reports following the reviews of Preston Hall and Park and Festivals on 28 November, 2007.

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

Traveller Transit Site Selection

Following a referral from Cabinet, and confirmation and allocation by Executive Scrutiny Committee, the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee had included within the work programme a time-limited activity in order to decide on the best location for a Gipsy and Traveller Transit Site.

Following discussions surrounding the scope of the review, including a tri-partite meeting, the Committee agreed to undertake a two-stage approach to the work. This would involve the creation of a list of possible sites, with reference to the relevant planning and policy guidance and criteria. And then the consideration of the shortlist in conjunction with appropriate consultation exercises.

Due to the timescale involved, the Committee would need to agree on a recommendation on a site by late January. With a report to Cabinet on 14 February, 2008.

Monitoring

Following acceptance of the recommendations contained within the Committee's report on the Neighbourhood Enforcement Service, an Action Plan was submitted to a meeting on 22 November, 2007 and agreed subject to amendments. A progress report would be considered at the first meeting following Annual Council.

The progress report on the Choice Based Lettings review was received on 22 November and completed actions were signed off. Further updates would be received as the project progresses.

Environment Select Committee

Cemeteries and Memorials – Phase 2 - The Management of Memorials

The Committee's recommendations were approved by Cabinet on 22 November 2007.

Waste Review

The Committee met on 19 November 2007 to agree the scope for its second review – Waste Management and Recycling. The aim of the review was to seek improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of household waste collection and disposal services and improve recycling rates whilst maintaining/ improving customer satisfaction rates.

The review was due to report to Cabinet in May 2007.

Monitoring

The Committee were due to receive a progress report on the implementation of the Cemeteries phase 1 review in January 2007.

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee

Employability Review

Since the last update the Committee had completed receiving evidence. The Committee made their recommendations on the 5 November, 2007. The final agreement of the report was made on the 3 December, 2007. The report was to go to Cabinet on the 20 December, 2007.

Second Review – School Travel Plan

The next topic for review was intended as the School Travel Plan. This was referred to Executive Scrutiny in a report to Cabinet on Stockton's Sustainable School Travel Strategy (2008). Each local authority had to produce a Sustainable School Travel Strategy by August 2007 which would be available to parents considering submitting applications for their children to start at a primary or secondary school in 2008.

The Education and Inspections Act (2006) placed a duty on local authorities to assess the transport needs of all pupils and promote sustainable travel to schools. It also extended entitlement to free home to school travel for low income families. Funding to promote sustainable travel has been made available from the Department for Children, Schools and Families until 2011/12.

For clarity, a School Travel Strategy was the policy background within which School Travel Plans were developed. A School Travel Plan was a document setting out a package of measures for reducing the number of car trips made to a school or a group of schools by parents and staff and

for improving safety on the school journey. No two School Travel Plans were likely to be the same. The plan may be produced by a local authority in consultation with a school or may be produced by the school with the advice of the authority. Local authorities needed to include a School Travel Strategy in local transport plans.

Monitoring

The Committee carried out monitoring of the recommendations contained within the Street Lighting review on the 3 December 2007.

Children and Young People Select Committee

The Committee meeting on 19th December would examine CESC's Annual Performance Assessment and would undertake preparatory work regarding the School Organisation Plan ahead of beginning its next review.

Review of School Organisation

The scope and project plan for this review would take place in January, 2008 when results of the current Building Schools for the Future consultation results were known.

Adult, Health and Social Care Select Committee

The Committee was finalising its report and recommendations for this review and would agree its final report on 18th December, 2007.

As a result of two extra meetings this review would be reported to Cabinet on 17th January, 2008.

Audiology Services

The Committee would be developing the scope and project plan for its review of audiology services in the borough. The review was planned to be completed in this municipal year.

Other Work

The Committee had been consulted by the North East Ambulance Service regarding the possible new location of its contact centre moving from Middlesbrough to Hebburn.

The Committee continued to be involved in the development of a Local Involvement Network (LINK) in Stockton Borough to replace Patient and Public Involvement Forums that exist for all health trusts (North Tees PCT; North Tees and Hartlepool Hospitals Trust; Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys (Mental Health) Trust). Scrutiny committees were tasked with ensuring the procurement process achieved Best Value. The committee would be discussing LINKs at the next meeting on 18th December and would provide commentary for national consultation that concluded on 21st December, 2007.

The Committee was to receive presentation/information from Carole Langrick, Director of Strategic Service Development regarding the current position of Momentum – pathways to healthcare (new hospital location and service provision) on 7th January 2008. The consultation period for the location of the new hospital site was being brought forward to June 2008 instead of January 2009.

The Committee was now regularly consulted about planning issues concerning doctor's surgeries and other health establishments especially with regard to pathways to healthcare.

The Committee would also be consulted by the North Tees PCT and North Tees and Hartlepool Hospitals Trust in January / February regarding its submission to the Healthcare Commission's Annual Healthcheck.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.