

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 10th June, 2008.

Present: Cllr Robert Gibson (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Mrs Fletcher (vice Cllr Mrs Rigg), Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Roberts (vice Cllr Mrs Trainer); Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: J. Allport, J. Edmonds, M Vaines (DNS); N Hart, L. Lawty, F Shayler, M Waggott (LD).

Also in attendance: Mr P Connaughton (Parent Governor Representative).

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Harrington, Cllr Narroway, Cllr Perry, Cllr Rigg, Cllr Sherris, Cllr Smith, Cllr Mrs Trainer, Cllr Womphrey. J Robson (Parent Governor Representative).

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Roberts declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Housing Futures further to being a Member of the Tristar Board.

Councillor Gibson declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Housing Futures further to being a Member of the Tristar Board.

Councillor Woodhead declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Housing Futures further to being a Member of the Tristar Board.

Councillor Cains declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 - Review of Voluntary and Community Sector further to being a member of a voluntary/community group.

Councillor Gibson declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 - Review of Voluntary and Community Sector further to being a member of a voluntary/community group.

Councillor Mrs Fletcher declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 - Review of Voluntary and Community Sector further to being a member of a voluntary/community group.

Councillor Leckonby declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 - Review of Voluntary and Community Sector further to being a member of a voluntary/community group.

Councillor Coleman declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 - Review of Voluntary and Community Sector further to being the Chairman of the International Family Centre.

Councillor Cains declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 9 - The Formalisation of a Suitable Commemoration Procedure for Individuals Connect/Associated with the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees further to being a life member of the English Heritage Group.

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 9 - The Formalisation of a Suitable Commemoration Procedure for Individuals Connect/Associated with the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees further to being a life member of the English Heritage Group.

2 **Draft Minutes - 13th May 2008**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

3 **Housing Futures**

Members were provided with an update regarding the ongoing option appraisal of the Council's housing stock.

On 2nd August 2007, Cabinet gave approval to undertake a comprehensive option appraisal of the Council's housing stock.

Throughout the option appraisal Members had been kept up to date with progress via the distribution of a series of 'Housing Futures: Members Briefing Notes'. The last of these Briefing Notes (Issue 4) was distributed to all Members in April 2008.

Members were provided with the 'Executive Summary' of the Stock Condition Survey. The findings of the stock condition survey were critical to the option appraisal exercise. The survey undertaken during 2007 assessed the current and future repairs and maintenance liabilities of the stock over the next 30 years.

Since the April 2008 Member Briefing Note, critical financial modelling and evaluation had commenced. This work had taken longer than originally programmed due to the ongoing national review of the Housing Revenue Account and a delay in the release of key consultation papers issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) for example the 'Housing Revenue Account, Self Financing' pilot evaluation.

The financial modelling currently being undertaken reviewed all of the potential options available to the council i.e. the 'Stay as we are' option (ownership of the housing stock remains with the Council), Stock Transfer, Private Finance Initiative and the establishment of Regeneration/Special Purpose Vehicles. Each model was being considered on its merits and whether it would deliver a whole scale or partial stock solution or whether a combination of options would be more effective.

For each option available a series of financial scenarios and sensitivities were being modelled to determine their potential impact in terms of securing necessary investment and what impact it may have on the Authority.

This level of financial evaluation was essential as neither Government Office or CLG would 'sign off' the Council's option appraisal unless they were satisfied that a robust and detailed analysis of all potential options has been undertaken.

It was anticipated that the financial modelling would be complete within the coming six weeks. Once complete a series of member consultation and briefings meetings would be held over the summer months. Members' views and comments would feed into the option appraisal and it was anticipated that a report would be taken back to Cabinet in October 2008. Running parallel to member consultation would be further meetings of the Housing Futures Customer Group, wider tenant meetings and future editions of the 'Your Home, Your Say' newsletter.

Members held discussion on the report particularly in relation to the financial modelling and looked forward to receiving a report once the modelling was complete.

RESOLVED that progress achieved to date and the project timeline as detailed within the body of the report be noted and a further report be received in due course.

4 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

Members were provided with a copy of the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08. The report explained how overview and scrutiny operated at Stockton and outlined the work of the Council's Select Committees during 2007/08.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Annual Report 2007/08 be approved.

5 Review of Voluntary & Community Sector-Final Report of Corporate & Social Inclusion (Task & Finish Group)

Members were provided with a copy of the final report of the Corporate and Social Inclusion Task and Finish Group's Review of Voluntary and Community Sector.

Members discussed the list of Community Premises and stated that the list was not exhaustive and requested that some additional premises be included.

The report had been circulated for comments to all those that had been involved in providing evidence.

RESOLVED that the report be noted with comments and forwarded to Cabinet.

6 NE Region-Proposed Scrutiny Database & Information Sharing for Scrutiny Reviews

Members were updated on initial progress made regarding the proposed development of systems to share information within the North East Region regarding both completed scrutiny reviews, and proposed reviews to be undertaken during the current year.

Since the meeting, discussions had been held with the Secretariat of the North East Region Employers Organisation (NEREO) Joint Scrutiny Officer & Member Network, and they had expressed initial support for each proposal.

Subsequently, the issue was raised at a NEREO Joint Scrutiny Officer meeting on the 21st May; where it was agreed that the Secretariat of NEREO would contact all local authorities in the region to request details of their planned scrutiny reviews, in order that a scrutiny work programme for the whole of the region could be established and shared, and any duplicity/work sharing considered. Details of these reviews were now being exchanged, and once a composite schedule had been produced, details would be reported to this Committee.

Regarding the sharing of completed scrutiny reviews, the NEREO Network considered this timely as discussions were now commencing, and planned for the following months, regarding how the regional scrutiny officer and member network would operate from April next year when the number of local authorities in the region reduce from 25 to 12. In principle, they were supportive of the need to have such a regional database of scrutiny review information, which would compliment the national data held by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. It was envisaged that the information held would include both completed and proposed/current scrutiny reviews.

The matter would therefore be initially discussed at the next Joint Scrutiny Member Network Meeting on the 13th June 2008; at which members from Stockton BC would be invited to attend. The outcome of this will be reported back to this Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and progress on the development of appropriate systems for sharing the envisaged scrutiny information throughout the region, be reported back to this Committee.

7 Scrutiny Review of Taxis

Members were requested to consider the need to allocate responsibility for a scrutiny review of Taxis to be carried out within the current year.

Executive Scrutiny Committee allocated an initial work programme for each of the seven Select Committees at its meeting on 1st April 2008; with the suggested review of taxis prioritised (using the PICK system of scoring) as number 10 on the list of review topics, meaning it would therefore be considered at a later date by the Committee when determining future workload allocation for the Select Committees.

The proposal for a Review of Taxis has been raised again due to recent controversy around the new level of licensing fees proposed by the Council in February 2008. Following consultation, the Council subsequently agreed a lower level of fees than originally proposed and a package of other measures, including the fact that there would be a scrutiny review during 2008/09.

Members discussed the matter and requested a more detailed report to the next meeting, outlining the suggested remit and benefits of the review, in order for Members to prioritise workloads appropriately.

RESOLVED that a further report be considered at the next meeting.

8 The Formalisation of a Suitable Commemoration Procedure for Individuals Connected/Associated with the Borough of Stockton on Tees

Members were presented with a detailed report on the draft process and criteria with which Stockton Council might consider commemorating the lives of significant individuals, based on their importance and their connection with, and contribution to, the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

A report with a draft commemoration procedure was presented to the Members Advisory Panel in January 2008 and details of the draft procedure were provided. Following consideration of the report the Members' Advisory Panel agreed that the draft scheme be forwarded to the Executive Scrutiny Committee requesting that it considered the matter and, if appropriate, allocates it to a Select Committee for a time limited review.

RESOLVED that the suggested commemoration procedure as detailed within the report be endorsed.

9 Statutory Forward Plan

Members were provided with the Statutory Forward Plan for 1st June 2008 - 30th September, 2008.

Members raised the NRF Evaluation and requested that a copy of the DVD and report be sent out to Members.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted and that Members be sent a copy of the DVD and report.

10 Report on Chairs Updates:-

The Chairman/Vice Chairman of the following Select Committees provided an update on their current reviews/work programme:-

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee - Review of Tees Active

Children and Young People Select Committee - Review of Obesity

Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee - Review of Older People Strategy; Task and Finish Group - Review of Community and Voluntary Sector; Monitoring of Meeting Venues, Sickness Absence, Theatre Subsidy and Stockton/Darlington Partnership.

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee - Review of Registered Social Landlords

Environment Select Committee - Review of Customer First and Task and Finish Group - Review of Vermin Control

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee - Review of Highway Network Management

Health Select Committee - Review of the location and services of a new health centre, Momentum, and the development of a Local Involvement Network (LINK).

The Chair of Health Select Committee encouraged Members to complete the consultation questionnaire on Momentum that was currently being circulated. With regard to the consultation for Momentum full agreement on a joint select committee has been unable to be reached. However, an agreement for Stockton with contributions from North Yorkshire, and for Hartlepool with contributions from Durham, to both conduct their own evidence gathering which it was anticipated would be formulated into one report.

RESOLVED that the Chair's updates be noted.