

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 19th October, 2010.

Present: Cllr Robert Gibson (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Andrew Sherris.

Officers: Paul Diggins (DNS); Fiona McKie, Judith Trainer, Margaret Waggott (LD); Kate Fulton (PP); Garry Cummings, Paul Saunders (R); Ian Miles, Sue Reay (Xentrall).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Dixon, Cllr Harrington, Cllr Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Nesbitt, Cllr Perry, Cllr Smith, Cllr Stoker, Cllr Womphrey, Cllr Woodhead, Paul Connaughton.

1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Gibson declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item no. 6 Year 2 Reporting In EIT Reviews further to being a Tristar Homes Board Member.

Cllr Cherrett declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item no. 6 Year 2 Reporting In EIT Reviews further to being a Tristar Homes Board Member.

2 Q1 Improvement Report - Finance/ Performance

Members were provided with the Quarter 1 2010/11 - Finance and Performance report. The report highlighted the achievements, areas for improvement, consultation activity undertaken, summary of freedom of information (FOI) requests, complaints, commendations and comments received and provided an update on progress with Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT) reviews and the new staff suggestion scheme.

Members discussed the amount of FOI requests and the cost implications with regard to Officer time. Members requested a breakdown for a future meeting.

Members were informed that the Localism Bill was due to be published. An update on the implications of this Bill would be provided to Members at Quarter 2.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report that the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme be noted.
2. The performance and subsequent actions be noted.
3. A further report be presented on FOI requests.
4. An update on the implications of the Localism Bill be provided at Quarter 2.

3 Year 1 EIT Review Monitoring Updates

Members were provided with the Year 1 EIT Review monitoring updates for Advice and Information, Commercial Trading and Domestic Violence.

Discussion was held on the Commercial Trading EIT Review with regard to the use of re-useable green waste sacks. Members were informed that satisfaction would be measured through the IPSOS MORI Survey in 2011 rather than the Place Survey in 2010 as this was not going ahead. Councillor Mrs Rigg stated that the sacks were due to be reviewed after one season of use and therefore requested an update as to whether any alternative consultation with customers had been carried out. The Team Leader (Scrutiny) would report back.

RESOLVED that the monitoring updates be noted.

4 Enhancing Stockton's Value for Money Programme.

Members were provided with a report that proposed steps to enhance the current programme of

EIT reviews in light of the current financial circumstances, the comprehensive spending review and the provisional Local Government finance settlement.

Following on from the success in year 1 where select committees identified in excess of £2million savings through the EIT approach Executive Scrutiny committee at its meeting of 2nd March 2010 agreed a programme of year two EIT reviews. Progress in year 2 has been in line with proposed project plans, and there were a number of reviews to be considered in year three.

The comprehensive spending review due in October and the provisional settlement was expected to confirm and reinforce the need for delivery against the Value for Money Programme in Stockton.

Given the success of the programme, the increased ability to undertake EIT reviews and in light of the financial environment it was proposed that officer led task and finish groups were formed to expedite the delivery of some of the year 3 EIT reviews identified as potentially resulting in the realisation of substantial efficiencies for Stockton. The reviews were concentrated around back office / service reconfiguration issues.

With this in mind the EIT framework had been tested by Xentrall who have undertaken a pilot review which had proven the adaptability of the framework to an expedited approach.

The review identified that Xentrall Shared Services had delivered its savings targets and delivered continuous performance improvements over the last two years. Benchmarking of the services showed that it was performing better than average on cost against those Councils taking part in the benchmarking exercise. The service now needed to focus on its ability to retain existing external income and develop additional sources of income where appropriate. The review also identified additional savings of approximately £400k per year to be shared between the two Councils on the basis previously agreed, which would be delivered from a restructure of the ICT service.

It was recommended that the partnership continued in its current form and continued to deliver the savings set out in the original business case, that it implemented the additional savings identified from a restructure of the ICT service, and that additional opportunities to grow Xentrall were considered over the next two years.

The task and finish reviews and proposed select committee for year 2 were as follows:-

Health - Adult Services Structures

Regeneration and Transport - Highway Management

Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion - Human Resources, Taxation and Customer Service

Arts, Leisure and Culture - Audit, Risk Management, Finance Land and Property

Children and Young People - Connexions

Executive Scrutiny - Xentrall, Democratic Services

There were also two remaining EIT review topics for Year 2 which were Learning Disability and Mental Health and the Children and Young People Assessment and Field Work. A list of topics for Year 3 were also provided. Full details and timescales for each of the reviews were provided within the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The task and finish reviews be approved and allocated to those select committees as detailed.
2. The Xentrall report be noted and the recommendation as detailed above be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

5 Year 2 Reporting In EIT Reviews

Members were provided with Year 2 Reporting In EIT reviews.

Procurement and Commissioning

Members were provided with a report that detailed the work undertaken by the Project Team for

the review of Procurement and Commissioning on the baselining and challenge phases. As a consequence of that assessment it recommended that Members approve the principle of a centralised approach to Procurement and Commissioning as the most effective way to obtain value for money for the authority.

Building Asset Review

Members were provided with the Scope and Project Plan for the Building Asset Review. Members suggested that this review link into other reviews such as the Youth Service Review.

Devolved ICT EIT Review

This review concerned those elements of ICT support which currently sit outside of the Council's main ICT service i.e. Xentrall ICT Services. With agreement from both Councils, the scope of the review also included Darlington Council. Work had been undertaken with the services concerned to pull together baseline information for the existing service based provision.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Members approve the principle of a centralised approach to Procurement and Commissioning as the most effective way to obtain value for money for the authority.
2. The Scope and Project Plan for the Building Asset Review be approved.
3. The baseline information for the Devolved ICT Review be noted.

6 Scrutiny Annual Report 09/10

Members were provided with a report that sought approval for the scrutiny annual report 2009/10.

The report followed the same format as previous years, and had been circulated for comment to Select Committee Chairs and Link Officers.

Similarly to last year, it was the intention to circulate an electronic copy of the annual report to key partner agencies and publish it on the Scrutiny Web Site.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report for 2009/10 be approved for publication.

7 Forward Plan

Members were provided with the Statutory Forward Plan for 1st October 2010 to 31st January 2011.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

8 Report on Chair's Updates

Members were provided with an update from each of the Chair's on their current reviews:-

Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion - EIT Review of School Catering
Arts, Leisure and Culture - EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation
Housing and Community Safety - Review of Taxi Trade Licenses
and EIT Gateway Review of Administration, Business Support/Customer Services and
Performance Management
Environment - Review of Built and Natural Environment
Regeneration and Transport - EIT Review of Events, Arts and Tourism
Children and Young People - EIT Review of Youth Services
Health - EIT Review of Fair Access to Care Services
Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group - Review of Outside Bodies

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.