

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 30th November, 2010.

Present: Cllr Robert Gibson (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Aiden Cockerill (vice Cllr Sherris), Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Bill Woodhead.

Officers: Graham Birtle, Anthony Duffy, Nigel Hart, Michelle Jones, Fiona McKie, Judith Trainer, Margaret Waggott (LD); Ian Miles (Xentrall); Paul Saunders (R); Richard McGuckin (DNS).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Andrew Sherris.

1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mrs Rigg declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 8 - Final Report Review of Built and Natural Environment further to a relative holding a Blue Badge.

2 Task and Finish EIT Review - Democratic Services

Members were provided with a report that presented the findings and recommendations of the officer Task and Finish Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT) review of Democratic Services. The review covered all areas within Democratic Services.

The review had been programmed to be reviewed in April 2011 as part of the Council's (EIT) programme. Because of increasing financial pressure and desire to effect the proposed changes before the 2011 Elections, it was agreed that this review would be brought forward.

This review had followed the approach that Stockton Borough Council had adopted for undertaking EIT reviews which ensured that all reviews were conducted with equal rigour and as part of an overall corporate strategy. A review team was established at the outset to progress work and ensure the wider corporate policy implications and customer requirements were considered. The Director of Law & Democracy, the Corporate Management Team and the EIT Sub-Board had provided a Strategic overview and challenged the status quo. Elected Members had supported the review through their roles as customers, policy makers and community representatives.

A desk top exercise had been completed to draw together appropriate consultation, benchmarking / performance data, financial appraisals and feedback from staff which had been evaluated and was presented to Members for consideration and comment.

Members discussed the report which would be submitted to Cabinet on 16th December 2010.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Area Based Allocation grants amounting to £15,393 be retained as part of the Council's overall required savings.
2. Subject to CMT and MAP approving the introduction of a summer recess period for Council/Committee meetings, the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to consider the introduction of a system of annualised hours for Democratic Services staff and realise any financial savings that accrue from this.
3. Subject to consultation with Members, the Council's approach to the hosting of its AGM be revised, as outlined, with effect from 2011 and MAP be invited to consider options to be presented regarding the future role of ordinary Council meetings.
4. Subject to full consultation with elected Members:

- the Head of Democratic Services and the Head of ICT seek to introduce a standardised level of future IT support for Members;
- following the successful rationalisation of our printer estate within the authority and the introduction of secure 'follow me' printing from multi-function devices, local printers in Members homes be no longer supported;
- in line with Workwise principles, the amount of office accommodation provided within the Council offices be rationalised to reduce the amount of office space required in favour of more shared 'touchdown' facilities with concentrated workspace areas;
- advancements in IT technology be reviewed in the near future to see whether devices such as I-Pads, tablets etc can be introduced by the Authority offering longer term efficiencies leading to a reduction in the Council's Printing budget with less paper work sent to Members and the facility for Members to access all documents via a tablet, upon which notes can be made on the documents electronically.

5. Attendance at the list of approved conferences be reviewed by the Members Advisory Panel.

6. Democratic Services, in consultation with each elected Member, be authorised to identify ward surgery venues that could be provided at no cost to the Authority, utilising more widely library and school buildings where appropriate.

7. The business case for transferring servicing of LSP meetings to Democratic Services be explored by the Head of Democratic Services.

8. Democratic Services deliver the further service improvements identified through independent assessment and inspection at no extra cost to the Authority within existing budgets.

9. Support arrangements for the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee be reviewed (in discussion with other Tees Valley Authorities) with a view to removing the £5000 scrutiny support to Middlesbrough Council and providing scrutiny support on a rotational basis from within existing scrutiny budgets at Stockton.

10. Responsibility for the EIT function transferred to the Head of Democratic Services be confirmed as a permanent arrangement and that the fixed term scrutiny officer appointed to support the wider Value for Money Strategy be reviewed at the end of the fixed 2 year contract period.

11. The staffing arrangements at paragraph 209 be made permanent and any resulting savings be made permanent within the structure and budgets for Democratic Services.

12. Future work be carried out to examine the civic function and how the current staffing arrangements and roles can become multi functional to increase efficiencies whilst maintaining and improving the current service.

13. A new lease car for the Mayor be procured at an annual saving of £2,200.

14. The Head of Democratic Services continue to work with procurement to maximise the opportunities for savings in respect of electoral printing.

3 EIT Review of Procurement and Commissioning

Members were provided with a report that concluded the EIT Review of Procurement and Commissioning. The report recommended how the principles of category management were to be practically implemented for Stockton.

The baseline and challenge elements of this review were presented to this Committee on 19 October and recommended a centralised approach to category management procurement for Stockton. This recommendation was accepted with the requirement for a further report to detail how this principle would be practically implemented.

In undertaking this consideration due regard needed to be paid to the current circumstances facing local authorities and their public sector partners. In particular the impact of future budget reductions and organisational change. It had therefore been decided that a phased approach to implementation was the most sensible solution, thus ensuring we do not overstretch officer

resource capacity. An approach that tried to cover all categories in one go may well be impractical, and counter-productive in the current situation.

Members were provided with a copy of the phasing scheme and further detail.

It was felt that the suggested centralised approach was a pragmatic approach to category management. For those categories that were deemed Corporate they would be managed by the Corporate Procurement Team with the authority-wide co-ordination done in the centre. In those categories where there was a service element, they would be lead by a Service Officer with support from the central team, and a requirement to report corporately to ensure that balance between service delivery and corporate accountability were maintained.

RESOLVED that the Members of Executive Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet the centralised approach detailed within the report.

4 EIT Review of Devolved ICT – Findings

This review concerned those elements of ICT support which currently sat outside of the Council's main ICT service i.e. Xentrall ICT Services. The baseline position was reported to Executive Scrutiny Committee on 19 October 2010. Since reporting the baseline, the overall EIT review timetable has been reviewed and a number of short timescale task and finish reviews have been commissioned.

At Stockton the review considered the three ICT support teams within CESC (Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Children & Young People) and the E-Learning Co-ordination function. The three support teams and their line management were now included within the scope of the EIT Administration Review. Similarly, the E-Learning Co-ordination function was to be reviewed by the new Head of School Effectiveness when in post. Both these areas had therefore been taken out of the scope of this review.

This refinement leaves the Schools Information & Communications Technology Unit (SICTU) within the scope of the devolved ICT review.

SICTU provide ICT support to the following learning establishments across the Borough:

- 60 Primary Schools
- 3 Special Schools
- 10 Secondary Schools
- 2 Academies
- 2 Pupil Referral Units
- Children with Medical Needs (Redhill House)

SICTU was clearly a Council in-house technical ICT function which sits outside the main ICT service. It's functions were a sub-set of those provided by Xentrall ICT Services i.e. application and technical support. Xentrall and SICTU already had a working relationship through the provision of some Council ICT services to schools e.g. Agresso. The separation of the two services and differences in technologies could cause problems in the implementation of these services.

The funding pressures facing the service both in terms of school's SLA and the ICT architecture which underpins all school's services, means that the current model for provision was destined to change. Incorporating SICTU within Xentrall ICT would increase the capacity to manage change of ICT provision within schools and provide a platform which could more readily cope with an expansion or contraction of the service. A review of architecture provision would also give rise to opportunities from an increase in overall scale, as has seen to be the case with the Stockton and Darlington partnership.

The outline proposal therefore was to integrate SICTU as it currently exists into Xentrall ICT Services. However, due to the current funding uncertainties outlined within the report, it was felt that the best time to consider integration was during 2011/12. The process could then be undertaken in light of clear funding arrangements for both SICTU and the underlying school's ICT architecture. To inform this process, consultation would start with School Heads to gain clarity

over current and future ICT service & infrastructure funding and to seek views on the way forward.

As SICTU were self funding through SLA arrangements, there were no anticipated savings resulting from this particular EIT review at this time. Any pressure from schools to reduce SLA costs or significant efficiency savings gained at the centre would result in either reduced income from schools or lower operating costs. Based upon the current working arrangements with schools it was unlikely that significant savings can be made through a reduction in cost base. However, there were opportunities to proactively market the service wider outside of Stockton and it would be appropriate for the Xentrall brand to be used for this purpose. Any increase in income or reduction in cost would ultimately contribute to the Authority's medium term financial plan.

A potential integration with Xentrall also gave an opportunity to consider an integrated architecture for ICT provision to both Council and schools. As well as efficiencies of scale, an integrated architecture could provide increased resilience and also assist in the provision of services to schools. An integration of the two services will also allow a review of architecture to be considered in time for the renewal of the NGfL contract later in 2011/12.

Xentrall ICT Services had also been the subject of an EIT review and were planning to implement a new service structure in April 2011. Subject to consultation, the proposal at this stage would be to initially transfer the SICTU structure into Xentrall ICT unchanged during 2011/12. The service could then be monitored and an informed view developed on how to best integrate aspects of the service more fully.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The findings of the review were noted.
2. The Head of Support Services (CESC) consult with School Heads regarding the findings of the EIT review and the proposal to transfer the SICTU function into Xentrall Shared Services.

5 EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation - Final Report of Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee

Members were provided with the final report of the Arts, Leisure and Culture Committee following their EIT review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation. An amendment had been made to one of the recommendations and this was tabled at the meeting.

The Chairman highlighted the main areas of the report for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the final report on the EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet for final approval.

6 Final Report - Review of Youth Services - Children and Young People Select Committee

Members were provided with the final report of the Children and Young People Select Committee following their EIT review of Youth Services. An additional appendix was made available at the meeting for Members attention.

RESOLVED that the final report on the EIT Review of Youth Services be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet for final approval.

7 Final Report - Review of Built and Natural Environment - Environment Select Committee

Members were provided with the final report of the Environment Select Committee following their EIT review of Built and Natural Environment. The Chairman highlighted the main areas of the report for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the final report on the EIT Review of Built and Natural Environment be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet for final approval.