

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 4th January, 2011.

Present: Cllr Robert Gibson (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Mick Eddy (vice Cllr Harrington), Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg.

Officers: Simon Willson (CESC); Paul Diggins, Carol Straughan (DNS); Anthony Duffy, Fiona McKie, Margaret Waggott (LD); Garry Cummings (R).

Also in attendance: Mr Malcolm Frank (Diocesan Representative).

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Bill Woodhead.

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Robert Gibson declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Building Asset Review further to being a Member of Know How North East.

Cllr Colin Leckonby declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 - Building Asset Review further to being a Member of Low Grange Community Centre.

2 **Minutes of Meetings held on 16th and 30th November 2010**

It was agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 16th and 30th of November 2010 be forwarded to the next meeting for approval.

3 **Building Asset Review**

Members were provided with a report that outlined the baseline information and the principles and methodology to be used in the review.

The review would focus on the Council's building estate to ensure that properties were being utilised efficiently and effectively. The aim of the review was to develop a strategic overview of facilities in the Borough and to consider opportunities for rationalisation, re-location and combining of facilities. The potential opportunities linked to any known or planned service developments would also be considered.

The review would consider current and future service delivery models and link with other service reviews. It was important that service reviews concentrated on service requirements across the Council and within communities, and that this review considered the most appropriate and efficient accommodation to enable those services to be delivered.

It was anticipated that the review would identify four categories of building as highlighted within the report. Members discussed the categories and felt that some buildings could fall into more than one category and that it needed to be clear which would take preference.

Members requested that they be consulted in the early stages of the Asset Transfer Strategy.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and principles and methodology agreed.

4 **Q2 MTFP Update**

Members were updated on the Council's current financial position as at the end of September 2010. It also updated Members on the funding position of the Council following the Comprehensive Spending Review and outlined the Council's approach to developing the Medium Term Financial Plan covering 2011 to 2015.

Members were provided with the report that had been agreed by Cabinet on 16th December 2010. The report detailed the current medium term financial plan of each service group and detailed the range of pressures on services.

Information was also provided on the provisional financial settlement which provided further information and the impact on the reduction of Council funding of the Comprehensive Spending Review. It also reflected changes in the Formula Grant calculations and provided some clarification on the Specific and Area Based Grants position.

Discussion was held by members on Human Resource implications. It was anticipated that there would be a reduction in the number of posts following the reviews that were reporting in this Cabinet cycle. Members also discussed the need to review employees' terms and conditions and the involvement of trade unions.

RESOLVED that Members note the report.

5 Quarter 2 - Performance Report

Members were provided with a report that outlined the progress against service performance for the second quarter of 2010/11. The report highlighted the achievements, areas for improvement, consultation activity undertaken, summary of Freedom of Information requests, complaints, commendations and comments, RIPA update and provided details of suggestions from the staff suggestion scheme.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6 Alteration to the Planning Scheme of Delegation

Members were provided with two proposed alterations to the scheme of delegation to make it more streamlined and efficient. The proposed revised scheme of delegation would ensure transparency, probity, fairness and consistency in decision making and lead to continued improvements in performance.

The alterations to the scheme of delegation were detailed in full within the report.

AGREED that the proposed changes to the scheme of delegation be agreed and incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

7 Select Committee Work Programme

The current year's work programme had continued to focus on the Council's Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) programme with Member involvement in all reviews.

Scrutiny Liaison Forum met on 10 February 2010 to review the suggestions for in depth scrutiny and prioritised topics for review. A list of all the topics proposed for scrutiny was provided to Members all of which had or would be subject to scrutiny in the current municipal year with the exception of:

- Children and Young Peoples Assessment/ Field Work
- Mental Health and Learning Disability

In addition, Executive Scrutiny Committee on 19 October took a decision to expedite some Year 3 EIT reviews into the current year.

Health Select Committee had recently concluded their review of Fair Access to Care and it was therefore proposed that the review of Mental Health and Learning Disability was allocated to this Committee to agree a scope and receive a presentation on initial base line information ahead of the elections next May.

It was the intention that the review of Children and Young Peoples Assessment/ Fieldwork was to be the next topic for the Children and Young People Select Committee. However, taking account of extended timescales on the review of youth services and also the Committee's input into the expedited review of Connexions from Year 3, it was proposed that Executive Scrutiny Committee

incorporate this topic into the work programme for Year 3 following the May elections.

It was noted that the topic of Cycling on Pavements was also outstanding. Councillor Mrs Rigg stated that the Environment Select Committee had concluded their review of Built and Natural Environment, however the Committee had a number of monitoring reports and an overview meeting to carry out prior to the end of the Municipal Year. The Head of Democratic Services would consider whether this topic could be timetabled into the Year 2 programme and report back to Members.

RESOLVED that the review of Mental Health and Learning Disability be referred to the Health Select Committee for in depth scrutiny and the Head of Democratic Services report back on the Cycling on Pavements review.

8 Forward Plan

Members were provided with the Statutory Forward Plan for 1 January 2011 - 30 April 2011.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

9 Report on Chairs 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 and officer-led reviews of Finance, Audit, and Risk Management.

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 and EIT Task and Finish Review of Connexions

Health - EIT Review of Fair Access to Care Services and Task and Finish EIT review of Adult Service Structure.

RESOLVED that Chairs updates be noted.