

## Housing and Community Select Committee

### Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 2 August 2011

#### Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

##### EIT Review of Community Protection and Security Services

The Committee has agreed the scope and project plan and has received the baseline information.

The Neighbourhood Policing model for Stockton-on-Tees provides for a minimum of one Police Officer and one Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) per ward. After allowing for 26 Constables and 26 PCSOs, the remaining Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) staff complement is 12 Constables and 20.5 PCSOs, i.e. 32.5 officers in total. Of those 32.5 officers, 21 (65%) are deployed in the five 'high crime wards'.

It is proposed to delete two of the four posts of Senior Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer, and to use the vacancies at the main Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer grade as redeployment options for the two people displaced from the Senior level (one of the four Seniors has volunteered to 'step down'). This approach is intended to minimise the impact on direct service delivery.

The total full year savings of the posts proposed for deletion (Community Safety Assistant; Domestic Violence Co-ordinator (0.5 full time equivalent); Neighbourhood Enforcement Support Officer; two posts of Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer) is approximately £118,000, compared to the savings target for the review of £153,000 (15%). It is anticipated that the remaining £35,000 can be identified from a combination of increased income generation and reduction in supplies and services budgets.



A tripartite was organised for 26 July to determine two recommendations proposed by the Committee which were meant to deal with the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) which has outlined a 20% cut in the central government police funding grant for all 43 forces in England and Wales by 2014/15 (in real terms).

It was recommended that:

- R1 This review is postponed until the effects of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) which outlined a 20% cut in the central government police funding grant for all 43 forces in England and Wales by 2014/15 (in real terms) are known.
- R2 The vacant posts are not deleted and where possible are filled to counteract any reduction in police officer staffing and to maintain or improve the reduced crime figures in the borough.



This review may also conflict with the intentions of the EIT Review of Commissioned Carers and Independent Living Services (CASSI Select Committee) by suggesting that an additional £35,000 income can be identified from a combination of increased income generation (Care Call) and a reduction in supplies and services.

## **EIT Review of Housing Benefits**

Consideration was given to the Scope and Baseline Report of the EIT Gateway Review of Housing Benefits.

Key elements of the review will deal with:

- a) Universal credit to be introduced and replace the following
  - income support
  - income based job seekers allowance
  - income based employment and support allowance
  - housing benefit
  - tax credits for people of working age from 2013.
- b) Pensioners to receive Housing Credit by 2014.
- c) Universal credit and Housing credit to be centrally controlled by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Full migration of existing housing benefit cases to the new service will have taken place by 2017.
- d) Council Tax Benefit to be abolished and to be replaced by a local alternative which must save 10% on current benefit costs and be implemented by April 2013, however this date may slip.
- e) Local authorities would lose responsibility for the investigation of benefit fraud.
- f) DWP to provide a transition strategy and appropriate funding to aid in the migration of services from the Local Authority in the Autumn of 2011.

Concentration of this review will focus on current performance and a review of new proposals will be carried out when more detail is known.

## **Member Development**

At the Committee meeting on 21 July Members identified the need to better prepare them for the reviews so that they had more knowledge of the subject under review.