

Housing and Community Select Committee

Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 22 November 2011

Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

EIT Review of Community Safety and Security Services

The Committee agreed on 3 November to the £153,000 (15%) savings target operated for this review.

Year 3 EIT Review of Community Safety & Security – Schedule of Proposed Savings			
	Measure	Value (£)	Comments
1.	Delete post of Finance & Administrative Assistant, Grade F, Security Services	21,967	Postholder becomes at risk and eligible for vacant post of Office Manager (Grade I)
2.	Delete post of Neighbourhood Enforcement Support Officer, Grade E	17,804	Vacant since 31 March 2011 – duties taken over by Enforcement Officer and Care For Your Area
3.	Delete post of Community Safety Assistant, Grade G	24,422	Vacant since April 2011 – duties absorbed by other posts
4.	Delete post of Domestic Violence Co-ordinator (0.5 fte, shared with Hartlepool Borough Council, Grade L	17,000	Vacant since May 2011, postholder on long-term sickness absence from March 2010, duties absorbed by other posts (main focus on performance management of Domestic Violence Services, not on direct service delivery)
5.	Delete two posts of Senior Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer, Grade I	61,300	Four current postholders. One volunteer to stand down. Selection process for 2 from 3, based on criteria agreed with trade unions, unsuccessful candidate to drop down to Grade H post of Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer.
6.	Reduce contribution to Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU)	7,000	Hartlepool BC, as lead authority for CEPU, has initiated a programme of efficiency measures, with targets for 10% savings for all four local authorities in year 1, i.e. 2011/12 (achieved), a further 5% for 2012/13, and a final 5% in 2013/14. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer has put in place a range of measures to achieve these budget reductions, including some reductions in staffing levels and increased income generation through organisation of training programmes. The intention is to make the savings without reducing the level of service to the four authorities. In particular, a full and active programme of updating,

			testing and exercising statutory emergency plans in respect of the chemical industry will be maintained. Progress of the CEPU savings is being monitored via the Joint Committee on emergency Planning.
7.	Reduce Supplies & Services budget	3,500	Some directly associated with deleted posts above e.g. transport costs
Total		152,993	

The remaining timescale for this review is as follows;

Tripartite – 19.12.11

Final Report agreed – 5.1.12

Executive Scrutiny – 31.1.12

Cabinet – 9.2.12

EIT Review of Housing Benefits

The Committee agreed the recommendations of this gateway review presented on 3 November.

1. That the benefit service be restructured, the new structure to be in place by 1 April 2012, with estimated savings of £180,000 per annum (excluding any potential redundancy costs). In order to ensure that appropriate staff consultation and other deadlines can be met, this process be delegated to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety.
2. New arrangements for recovery of old outstanding housing benefit overpayments are introduced with anticipated additional income collected of £100,000 per annum.
3. No new cases to be accepted onto the Combined Payments Scheme.
4. Review debt collection policy and undertake a trial to determine the effectiveness of using a debt collection agency to collect outstanding overpayment debt which is unsuitable for recovery by other methods.
5. Members acknowledge that the recommendations in this report fulfil the requirements of this first stage gateway review of housing benefits, delivering up required savings and that future changes to the service as directed by national policy changes be a subject for discussion and decision at the Council's Cabinet.

The Committee were reluctant to accept the changes to the service when the future of benefits are unknown.

Other Work

The Committee have made the discussion of future topics an agenda item at its next meeting on 8 December. Mention was made of inviting the Chair of Tristar to a future meeting to scrutinise their housing policy.