

Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee

Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 8 May 2012

Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

EIT Review of Commissioned Carers and Independent Living Services

The final report will be considered by Cabinet on 17 May.

Next Review

Review of Membership to Outside Bodies

The main issues

The Council has completed a three-year programme of efficiency saving reviews. This review contributes by examining the overall spend on Council membership to outside bodies as well as determining value for money.

The aim / objectives of the review:

Determining the level of use of outside bodies

Determining value for money

Determining level of representation for SBC (especially at national level)

The following bodies (with membership fees 2011/12) are scoped within this review:

- Association of Public Service Excellence (£3,159)
- British Association of Adoption and Fostering (£3,316)
- North East Purchasing Organisation (£37,843)
- North East Regional Employers Organisation (£15,680)
- Association of North East Councils (£64,700)
- Local Government Association (£42,871 (£1,099 early payment discount))

The Committee has asked that it be provided information of all organisations and costs to determine total cost to SBC.

Interviews with Members and officers are taking place to determine the level and usefulness of membership to outside bodies.

Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet - 12 July

Overview Meetings

The Committee received an overview of Resources, and Democratic Services on 24 April which included the following emerging issues:

Resources

- The spending review 2010 announced that Government would localise council tax benefit from 2013-14, and reduce its costs by 10%. These proposed changes to the Council Tax Benefit system will impact on both Customer Services and Taxation, and may require major changes to ICT systems. The situation will become clearer as more details emerge from

Government over the coming months. This will also have an impact of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

- The Welfare Reform Act will have an impact on many of the benefit and advice services
- Local Government Resource Review looking at the way local authorities are funded, with a view to giving authorities greater financial autonomy and strengthening incentives to support local economic growth.
- Pension reform. - It has been proposed that major reforms to the Local Government Pension Scheme are implemented ahead of the government's 2015 deadline for overall reform for public sector pensions.
- The Future of Local Public Audit - Proposals have been made for the audit system managed by the Audit Commission to be decentralised under a new regime.
- Localism Act will impact on many of the areas across resources. The Localism Act received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. It seeks to give effect to the Government's ambitions to decentralise power away from Whitehall and back into the hands of local councils, communities and individuals to act on local priorities.
- The transfer of Public Health functions into Local Authorities from April 2013 will impact on many areas across the Council including many areas within Resources.

Democratic Services

- To meet the criteria for assessment against the Members' Charter Plus thereby maximizing the capacity of elected Members and delivering the highest standards of support required to be provided to Councillors in order for them to fulfil their duties.
- To identify Members learning needs within a revised Member Learning & Development Programme.
- As part of the transition towards responsibility for Public Health, future support will include utilisation of the Council's E-Genda system, member induction and support, and promotion of the role of the Council's new responsibilities for Public Health via our Community Engagement Strategy. Democratic Services are also currently involved in providing advice with regard to the Governance Structure for both the Board and the Partnership; and are seeking to develop an appropriate Forward Plan module for the structure with the Council's current E-Genda suppliers.
- To develop a new Mayoral Strategy for the year ahead reflective of the Mayor's aims and objectives.
- To review the current Community & Engagement Strategy with the aim of maximising public awareness and building upon the success of the current strategy to ensure that the challenge of transition to individual electoral registration is achieved through successful community engagement.
- To develop the governance and decision making structure of the new Police & Crime Commissioner Panel and manage the meeting support for the Panel.

Electoral

- The Localism Act This Act devolves greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and gives local communities more control over housing and planning decisions. The key area in relation to Electoral Services is giving residents the power to veto excessive council tax increases.
- Electoral Commission Performance standards. The EC are introducing new standards for elections and electoral registration that will need to be incorporated into future elections and canvass project plans.

- Draft legislation on Individual Electoral Registration (IER) will result in a significant increase in workload and see approximately 143,019 personal forms in circulation rather than 82,867 household forms; all of which will have to be processed and verified before electors are added to the register. Data matching and verification will be time intensive particularly where further investigation and follow up required. As well as requiring increased staffing resource, there will also be additional non-staffing costs such as postage, stationery, storage, etc. which are not yet quantified.
- The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act. Elections for Police and Crime Commissioners will now take place in November 2012. Stockton has been appointed as the lead authority for Cleveland. Draft secondary legislation has been issued and guidance is yet to be issued. Initial meetings have been held, a project plan has been developed and arrangements are well underway.
- Annual Canvas 2012 In view of the forthcoming PCC elections, the Secretary of State has issued a direction to move the timing of the annual canvass 2012 and has brought forward the publication of the revised register to 16 October 2012. Arrangements have been made to commence the 2012 canvass early with an initial postal delivery and an advert has been placed to recruit canvassers for door to door contact, with training taking place in July.
- Elections to the Youth Parliament in February 2013, Electoral Services, in conjunction with colleagues in CESC, will be organising the first elections for Stockton's MYP. It is planned conduct a poll through all secondary schools across the Borough and this will be the first time that formal elections have been carried out.

Scrutiny

- Police and Health Reform Police and Health reforms are likely to impact on the scrutiny function and on-going Member training needs against the context of legislative developments will need to be considered.
- The impact of national health and police reform continues to be discussed and considered in the context of our own scrutiny arrangements and work programme. Consideration is being given to the accountability implications of the Police and Crime Panels.

An overview meeting will be held on 22 May to provide details of Legal Services

Other Work

- Review of Energy Supply - tripartite on 18 June. Scope and project plan at Committee meeting on 26 June.
- Review of Impact of Welfare Reform - presentation at meeting on 26 June.