

# **CABINET**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

9 February 2009

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Gerard Hall, Adult and Public Health Portfolio Holder  
Cath Hill, Children's Services Portfolio Holder  
Robbie Payne, Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder  
Peter Jackson, Neighbourhoods & Communities Portfolio Holder

### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor Marjorie James, Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee  
Councillor Jonathan Brash, Chair of Health Scrutiny Forum  
Councillor Chris Simmons, Chair of Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum

Officers: Paul Walker, Chief Executive  
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive  
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor  
Peter Scott, Director of Regeneration and Planning Services  
Nicola Bailey, Director of Adult and Community Services  
Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services  
Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services  
Caroline O'Neill, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Mike Ward, Chief Financial Officer  
Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer  
Chris Little, Assistant Chief Financial Officer  
Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement and Property Services  
Joanne Smithson, Head of Community Strategy  
Helen Beaman, Environment Co-ordinator  
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager  
Alastair Rae, Public Relations Officer  
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **204. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pamela Hargreaves and Victor Tumilty.

## **205. Declarations of interest by Members**

None.

## **206. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2009**

Confirmed.

## **207. Matters arising**

In relation to minute 199 – Business Transformation Programme, a Member had requested further information from the Business Transformation Programme Manager on the current and projected management salary costs of the Authority. This request would be forwarded to the Business Transformation Programme Manager.

## **208. Final Report – Scrutiny Investigation into the Use of Agency Workers within the Council** (*Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings and conclusions of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's investigation into the use of agency workers within the Council.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee presented the Final Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee into the Use of Agency Workers within the Council. The report outlined the overall aim of the scrutiny investigation, terms of reference, methods of investigation, findings, conclusions, and subsequent recommendations.

It was noted that the Council currently incurred significant expenditure in relation to employing agency workers/specialists and the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's report provided a balanced range of recommendations to reduce the dependency of the authority on agency workers/specialists.

## Decision

The recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to Cabinet as set out below, be approved:-

- i) That a review be undertaken to substantially reduce the current level of expenditure on the use of agency workers / specialists across the Authority;
- ii) That the current arrangements for the recruitment of agency workers / specialists across the Authority be centralised and appropriate control measures introduced;
- iii) That the duration of engagement for all agency workers / specialists be restricted to short-term use and not exceed twelve months;
- iv) That the Authority be encouraged to share innovative approaches to minimise the future demand of agency workers / specialists where appropriate;
- v) That a feasibility study be undertaken to determine the appropriateness of establishing either a Council-run agency or a joint procurement arrangement with neighbouring local authorities across the Tees Valley;
- vi) That there appears to be some conflict between the Council's recruitment and retention policies, namely the securing of temporary and permanent positions by modern apprentices versus permanent posts occupied in the short-term by agency workers and this should be addressed appropriately; and
- vii) That twelve months after the implementation of the new HR/payroll system and the introduction of centralised control measures for the recruitment of agency workers / specialists across the Authority, a detailed monitoring report on the level of expenditure and usage be submitted to this Committee and the appropriate Portfolio Holder thereafter.

## **209. Final Report – Scrutiny Investigation into the Use of Agency Workers within the Council – Action Plan** (Chief Personnel Officer)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's investigation into the use of agency workers within the Council.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The report provided brief background information into the scrutiny investigation into the use of agency workers within the Council. To assist the Cabinet in its determination of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's recommendations, attached as Appendix A was a proposed Action Plan for the implementation of those recommendations which had been prepared in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

### **Decision**

That the Action Plan prepared in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's investigation into 'The use of Agency Workers within the Council' be approved.

## **210. Formal Response to the Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals 2009/10** *(Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the formal response of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in relation to the Executive's Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2009/10.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee presented the formal response of the Committee in relation to the Executive's finalised proposals 2009/10, prior to the consideration of the finalised proposals at the meeting of full Council on 12 February 2009. The Chair indicated that Scrutiny were generally supportive of the proposed 3% efficiency savings. However, the additional 1% efficiency savings proposed were not supported by Scrutiny

Members with the exception of the Chief Executive's Department as it was noted that this reduction would not place people in need at risk.

Clarification was sought on paragraph 3.15 (a) of the report which referred to financial assistance for residents in conservation areas to replace windows with high quality upvc windows and whether this was a request for funding. The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Forum indicated that this paragraph referred to Members' disappointment that this option was not being considered and requested that this be noted. Members were informed that the Planning Committee and Conservation Area Advisory Committee were currently examining the issue of replacement windows in conservation areas with a view to providing a contribution through grant funding towards the use of traditional materials for replacement windows.

### **Decision**

That the comments of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and the four Scrutiny Forums be received.

## **211. Corporate Plan Update for 2009/10 – Proposed Outcomes and Actions** *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To enable Cabinet to discuss the proposed outcomes and actions for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2009/10. The Corporate Plan was for the 3-years 2008/9 to 2010/11. This coincided with the Local Area Agreement and the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and allocation of funding to local government which was reflected in the Council's own Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Assistant Chief Executive presented the report which proposed the outcomes and actions for each of the eight community strategy aims and the Council's organisational development priorities. The purpose of the plan was to describe the Council's priorities for 2009/10, including how weaknesses would be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people.

It was noted that subject to Cabinet's comments, the Corporate Plan would be considered at Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with elements of the

Plan being considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Forum during February and March 2009.

Members were asked to note that the performance information could not be collected until after 31 March 2009 and was therefore unavailable at present. As with previous years, this information would be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in May/June for consideration. At this stage, Cabinet was requested to consider the Corporate Plan Outcomes and Actions which were attached at Appendix A. Further opportunities to consider the Corporate Plan would be provided to Members as further progress was made.

### **Decision**

That the proposed outcomes and actions for inclusion in the Corporate Plan 2009/10 be approved for consideration by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 13 February 2009.

## **212. Medium Term Financial Strategy – Budget and Policy Framework 2009/2010 to 2011/2012** *(Corporate Management Team)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to enable Cabinet to finalise the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and determine the detailed 2009/2010 Budget and Council Tax proposals to be referred to Council on 12 February 2009.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency presented the report which provided a detailed overview of the financial issues affecting the Council in relation to:

the 2008/2009 Outturn Strategy;  
Capital programme 2009/2010 to 2011/2012;  
General Fund and Council Tax 2009/2010 to 2011/2012.

The aim of the 2008/2009 outturn strategy is to maximise ongoing financial flexibility. This is achieved through the proposed strategy for managing 2008/2009 departmental overspends and proposals for setting aside

resources for a range of one-off issues and support for future years budgets.

The financial position for 2009/2010 and beyond is significantly more challenging than previously anticipated. At a local level this is owing to increased pressures in relation to Children's and Adult Social Services and Job Evaluation. The local position will also be affected by the impact of the recession. The most visible initial sign of this locally will be a significant reduction in investment income owing to interest rates falling to levels not seen for over 50 years. Other income streams will come under increasing pressure in 2009/2010.

This is not an entirely new problem as the Council has been funding a structural deficit for a number of years from the use of reserves. The previous strategy reflected the planning assumption that the budget could be brought back into balance over a number of years through a combination of increasing grant allocations, Council Tax increases, the achievement of efficiencies and the control of costs. The latter factor is the most difficult to achieve owing to the demand lead nature of many services, particularly Children's and Adult Social Services.

In 2009/2010 the position can be managed by increasing the level of temporary support to £5.1m, compared to £2.7m planned in February, 2008. This position is not sustainable beyond 2009/2010. Therefore, a strategy will need to be developed during 2009/2010 to address the structural deficit, which arises because expenditure is increasing at a faster rate than income.

The Business Transformation programme will make a significant contribution to reducing the structural budget deficit and achieving future year's efficiency targets. However, the Business Transformation programme will not fund the whole of the budget deficit and other measures will need to be identified during 2009/2010 to put the budget onto a sustainable basis as detailed in the following table.

	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000
Revised Budget Deficit (as detailed in paragraph 7.13)	1,525	1,312
Add - 2010/11 3% efficiencies	2,522	0
Add - 2010/11 and 2011/12 cumulative 3% efficiencies	0	5,107
Less - 2010/11 Business Transformation efficiencies	0	(2,140)
Deficit before Business Transformation Efficiencies	4,047	4,279
Less - 2010/11 Business Transformation efficiencies	(2,088)	
Less - 2010/11 and 2011/12 cumulative Business Transformation efficiencies		(1,105)
Net Forecast Deficit *	1,959	3,174

The above forecasts assume costs pressures do not exceed the headroom included in budget forecasts. The deficit for 2011/12 may reduce by £1.9m if the 2010/11 net deficit is bridged on a sustainable basis. BUT it could also increase by £1.3m if the 2011/12 grant is frozen at the 2010/11 level, rather than increasing by 2.5% as assumed in the above forecast.

A grant freeze in 2011/12, which is the first year of the next Comprehensive Spending Review, is now an increasing risk owing to the impact of the recession on the Government's financial position. It is becoming clearer that the recession will be deeper and more prolonged than anticipated just a few months ago. As a result the Government's own financial position will deteriorate and therefore its ability to fund public services.

Against this back ground the Council is effectively facing gross annual budget deficits of £4m in 2010/11 and 2011/12.

The Portfolio Holder brought to Members' attention that the Local Government Minister had recently set out details of the final allocations under the LABGI (Local Authority Business Growth Incentive) scheme which indicated that an additional one-off grant of just under £800,000 would be received. This would be utilised to balance future budgets and to manage the increasing risk that RTB income which was committed to supporting the budget was not received until the recession was over.

Cabinet also considered and approved revisions to the Neighbourhood Services 3% efficiency proposals, including a 50p per journey increase in the charge for Dial a Ride which will generate £15,000 and a further £15,000 of expenditure efficiencies on this service. The Chief Financial Officer added that it was hoped that the number of compulsory redundancies within Neighbourhood Services could be reduced by utilising voluntary redundancies in some areas. However, Members were asked to note that the 3% efficiency savings proposed within Children's Services Department would place 7.5 members of staff at risk as opposed to 5 as indicated in the report.

A discussion ensued in which all Members noted their reluctance to agree to the additional 1% efficiency savings proposed and this was also reflected within the recommendations from Scrutiny, although there was a note of concern that these difficult decisions would be brought back in future years. However, it was acknowledged that the unexpected LABGI funding awarded provided greater flexibility to deal with future year budgets. Members determined not to include the additional 1% efficiencies in the final proposals to be referred to Cabinet, with the exception of the additional 1% efficiency saving proposed by the Chief Executive's department, which would remain within the proposals due to the fact that this was predominantly income based and did not affect staff directly. It was determined to use £520,000 of uncommitted resources that had been identified to avoid a large part of the remaining additional 1% reductions.

Members were reminded that the budget forecasts included a significant



additional provision for expected pay awards and the cost of job evaluation appeals. It was proposed that these issues be looked at together and pay issues be managed as a single risk area, which could result in this provision being reduced by £250,000 next year. It was also suggested that in view of the current economic situation, provision for future pay awards be reduced to 1.5%. These measures would enable the protection of services whilst still providing a reasonable level of pay increases and minimising the level of redundancies. It was determined to use this amount to fund the remaining shortfall from the deletion of the 1% efficiencies. A Member sought clarification on whether the level of pay award was agreed on the level of inflation. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the local government pay award was not linked to any specific period of inflation and was set nationally in conjunction with the Employers' Organisation and Trades Unions. A Member questioned how the risk would be managed should a pay award be agreed in excess of 1.5%. The Chief Financial Officer informed Members that any shortfall would need to be managed through salary abatement provision within the budget.

Clarification was sought on whether any savings could be anticipated should inflation remain below 2.5%. The Chief Financial Officer indicated that in September 2008 inflation was at 2.5% for goods and services. Any benefits to be gained from a reduction in the level of inflation on goods and services could be used to offset the risk of a higher than anticipated pay award, although in practice most Council expenditure was on care packages which was linked to minimum wage increases and was unlikely to generate any significant saving.

In response to a Member's question the Chief Financial Officer commented that in relation to investments and associated interest, supported borrowing with a revenue contribution of 10% had been utilised borrowing funded the resources of the Neighbourhood Forums and was in practice a capital resource. Some of the neighbourhood expenditure was revenue and these needed to be balanced.

A Member questioned whether there were any carry forward provisions within the Council's reserves and if they were reviewed to enable the funding of one-off projects. The Assistant Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the Council's reserves were reviewed annually and were driven by statutory requirements in relation to risks. These were kept under review and any need to either increase the provisions, which was usually the case, or reduce the provision was addressed in the Closure Strategy. The ghost ships, equal pay and job evaluation protection were sited as examples in recent years. Members were asked to note that some of the risks were time limited and would carry forward until that risk was resolved. This would then be reported to Council as part of the outturn strategy.

The recommendation to make further representations to the Government about the floor damping adjustment was welcomed by Members as was the need to ensure that local businesses received payment for services provided in a timely manner.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and four standing Scrutiny Forums were thanked for their invaluable input whilst assisting Cabinet examine the budget proposals. In conclusion, it was noted that the whole budget consultation process had been six months of very difficult discussions and decisions and all departments and officers involved were thanked for their hard work and contribution. The process had also involved the Business Sector and members of the public and it was hoped that due to the input from the consultation undertaken, the final proposals to be submitted to Council would be as acceptable as can be in the current economic climate.

## Decision

That Council at its meeting on 12 February 2009 be requested to: -

- (i) Approve the proposal to earmark the increase in the stock of funds (paragraph 4.7), as follows:
  - £400,000 to manage RTB timing risk;
  - £639,000 to fund initial budget deficits for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011;
  - £31,000 for Bus Services (note Council 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2008, approved £93,000 for Bus Services, including £44,000 for the Hospital Transport Service);
  - £23,000 for one-off costs associated with the revised Legal Services restructure;
  - £2,186,000 to support the 2009/2010 to 2010/2011 budgets.
- (ii) Approve the proposals that capital expenditure up to the value of £2.6m which it was planned to fund from revenue budgets (RCCOs) and the Capital Funding Reserves should be funded from Prudential Borrowing. The resulting repayment costs in 2009/2010 will be funded by earmarking part of the 2008/2009 RCCOs and from 2010/2011 these costs will be a first call of the £1.5m budget headroom (paragraph 4.14).
- (iii) Approve the proposal to earmark the revenue resources released from recommendation 3.4 to fund the 2008/2009 departmental overspends (paragraph 4.15).
- (iv) Approve the proposal to earmark the 2008/2009 additional investment income firstly to offset income shortfalls during the recession, then £1.5m for Building Schools for the Future costs and £0.5m as a risk contingency for potential income shortfalls on the Tall Ships budget which may arise from adverse weather when the ships visit (paragraph 7.9). Approve the proposal to provide an additional £0.5m for the upfront costs of the procurement/contract letting stage of Building Schools for the Future, from anticipated

lower borrowing costs and investment income in 2009/2010. In the event that the Tall Ships amount is not needed these resources should be returned to the General Fund in 2010/2011 (paragraph 4.22).

- (v) Approve the proposal to reallocate the saving of £37,000 on the 2008/2009 one-off items to partly meet the one-off capital costs of the Government Connects Project (paragraph 4.26).

### **Capital**

- (vi) Approve the proposal that Government capital allocations should be passported.
- (vii) Approve the proposal to continue Capital Investment of £1.2m in local priorities for the three years 2009/2010 to 2011/2012, which will be funded from unsupported borrowing. Detailed proposals for 2009/2010 are set out in Appendix A, Table 1.
- (viii) Approve the proposal to provide Capital investment of £1.2m in 2009/2010 to fund a range of health and safety property improvements and to delegate authority to Cabinet to approve the detailed proposals for using this amount.
- (ix) Approve the proposal to use unsupported borrowings to support the following capital investment in 2009/2010 (paragraph 5.7).

#### **£'000**

Community Safety Initiatives	150
Disabled Adaptations	50
Neighbourhood Forum Minor Works	156

- (x) Approve the principles for strategic land and property acquisitions subject to the appropriate Cabinet and Council approval of detailed cases (paragraph 5.11).

### **2009/2010 Revenue Budget**

- (xi) Approve the proposed 3% efficiencies detailed in Appendix C, including the revised proposals for Neighbourhood Services (Appendix 1 to this report) and to note the increase in redundancies arising from the achievement of the Children's Services efficiencies. Approve the proposal to repay associated severance costs over five years, subject to compulsory redundancies only being implemented after exploring redeployment of staff to vacant posts, or posts temporarily filled using agency staff, where the person to be redeployed has the necessary qualifications, skills and experience.

- (xii) Approve the revised net pressures etc., as detailed in the following appendices and the additional requirements identified in paragraph 6.24:
  - Appendix D – Pressures
  - Appendix E – Contingency
  - Appendix F – Terminating Grants
- (xiii) Approve the proposed 2009/2010 allocations and 2010/2011 indicative allocations of the Area Based Grant detailed in Appendix G, including the use of £0.287m to support services/projects currently funded from the Council's core budget. Note that in the event that Council in February, 2009, do not approve individual ABG allocations the Council will need to underwrite such schemes for a three month period to enable Partners to comply with statutory redundancy timescales.
- (xiv) Approve the revised corporate planning assumptions for reducing the provision for pay awards by 0.5%, saving £0.2m (paragraph 6.42) and increase in the salary turnover target of £0.3m (paragraph 6.43).
- (xv) Approve the reduction in 2008/2009 pressures, etc, of £50,000 (paragraph 6.44).
- (xvi) Approve the reduction in 2007/2008 pressures, etc., of £100,000 (paragraph 6.46).
- (xvii) Approve the temporary measures for reducing the budget gap from reduced Job Evaluation protection costs £0.2m (paragraph 6.49) and additional benefit subsidy income £0.2m (paragraph 6.50).
- (xviii) Approve the proposed 2009/2010 Council Tax increase of 3.9%.
- (xix) Approve the proposal to bridge the net budget gap for 2009/2010 of £2.677m as follows and to note that this does not address the underlying structural budget deficit which will need addressing during 2009/2010:

	<b><u>£'000</u></b>
Allocate the Mill House Loan Repayment budget	300
Additional 1% efficiencies Chief Executive's Department	53
Final Council Tax Base and Collection Fund Benefit	190*
Reduction in energy costs pressure	30*
Temporary Investment Income	300*
Use part of the uncommitted one-off resources	1,554
Reduction in Provision for Pay Awards and Job Evaluation Costs	250

\* These amounts make up the £0.52m detailed in paragraph 2.3 of this report.

- (xx) Approve the proposed indicative annual Council Tax increase for 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 of 3.9% per annum.
- (xxi) Note the net Business Transformation saving anticipated for the period 2010/2011 to 2016/2017 (paragraph 8.3) and approve the principle of funding one-off Business Transformation severance costs (£3.14m) and one-off implementation costs (£0.68m) on a loan basis repayable over a five year period from the gross savings achieved from implementing the Business Transformation Programme.
- (xxii) Approve the principle of centralising transport and property maintenance budgets to facilitate the achievement of the relevant Business Transformation efficiencies.
- (xxiii) Approve the proposal to make further representation to the Government about the floor damping adjustment and the adverse impact this has on the Council's financial position, in particular, the impact on the Council's ability to provide services for children, adults with physical or mental health disabilities and older people.
- (xxiv) Approve the proposal to undertake a corporate review of pricing policies as part of the 2010/2011 budget process.
- (xxv) Approve the proposal to earmark the final LABGI Grant of £0.8m to manage the risk that future anticipated RTB income of £1m is not received before this money is needed to support future year's budgets.

## **213. Former Eldon Grove Sports Centre** *(Director of Adult and Community Services and Director of Neighbourhood Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek Cabinet approval to the proposed granting of a lease to Eldon Grove Tennis Club and to seek a decision around some proposed changes to the agreed terms for occupation.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health presented a report which outlined progress that had been made since Cabinet decided to approve terms for the granting of a lease to the tennis club, including a change to the proposed development, details of which were included in the confidential appendix. In light of the change to the development, proposed amendments to the original terms along with the options available were included in a confidential appendix for Cabinet to consider. (This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (para 3).

Members welcomed the development in view of the fact that it would provide a top-class, valued facility for the region as well as the residents and in particular the young people of Hartlepool. However, a Member questioned the fact that this proposal was for an outdoor facility which would render the facility unusable for a number of months each year. It was confirmed that the long term vision of the Tennis Club was to provide an indoor centre also but initially the proposal aimed to increase the current capacity at the Club. It was noted that there were very limited concerns or objections submitted to the ward councillors for the area.

A Member suggested that interaction with the local schools be examined by the Tennis Club and it was noted that the Club were happy to meet with Cabinet to discuss suggestions and ideas and achieve a continuous dialogue in relation to the future proposals and success of the Tennis Club.

### **Decision**

That the provision as detailed in option a) of the confidential appendix be approved as a contribution to the tennis club.

## **214. Transfer of Commissioning Responsibilities for 16-18 Year Old Education and Training to Local Authorities – Stage 2** (*Director of Children's Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

## **Purpose of report**

To seek approval for proposals in preparation for the transfer of commissioning responsibilities for 16-18 education and training to the Council within a Tees Valley sub-regional arrangement.

## **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services presented a report which informed Members that by 2010 it was the Government's intention to transfer funding for 16-19 participation in education and training from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities, giving local authorities clear responsibility for commissioning across the whole 14-19 sector and for delivering the Government's intention that by 2015 all young people will stay in education or training to at least 18 years of age. The report highlighted issues for Cabinet to consider as part of this funding change.

Clarification was sought by Members on what cost this proposal would have for the Council. The Chief Executive confirmed that the options for local authorities imposed by the Department of Children, Schools and Families necessitated either regional or sub-regional provision of the commissioning for education and training for 16-18 year olds. The sub-regional proposal submitted would concentrate on the Tees Valley Area with Stockton Borough Council being the proposed lead authority. It was hoped that the sub-regional arrangement would enable Hartlepool to have more power and influence on training provision in the town for 16-18 year olds. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that the funding for the commissioning arrangement and the provision of training would be a reconfiguration of the funding currently utilised by the Learning Skills Council with no additional cost to the Authority.

A Member sought clarification on the Elected Member involvement in the proposed sub-regional arrangements. The Assistant Director, Children's Services referred Members to Appendix 1 which detailed the Governance arrangements for this proposal and included the Leader/Elected Mayor of each authority involved. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that further reports would be submitted to Cabinet on future commissioning plans for Hartlepool.

## **Decision**

- i) That the Stage 2 proposal for submission to GONE (Government Office North East) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families attached as appendix 1 be approved.
- ii) That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to continue discussions with other Tees Valley and North East local authorities to

develop effective arrangements for the future commissioning and funding of post 16 education and training in readiness for implementation in September 2010.

## **215. Biodiversity Report 2008** (*Director of Neighbourhood Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide an update on the work that has been undertaken within the Neighbourhood Services Department to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the Borough. The report also provides details of how biodiversity will be taken forward in the future.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities presented a report which provided a summary of the more detailed Biodiversity Report 2008 (attached as Appendix 1) which explained the main reasons for undertaking a proactive approach to enhancing and preserving biodiversity, highlights examples of 'good practice' that the department had introduced and finally made recommendations for opportunities for furthering this work.

### **Decision**

- (i) The Biodiversity Report 2008 was noted and the adoption of the recommendations therein was agreed.
- (ii) It was agreed that the Neighbourhood Services Department would produce a Biodiversity Action Plan.
- (iii) A review of the Action Plan after the first year was agreed with consideration being given to extending the action plan to cover all services within the Council.

## **216. Local Area Agreement – Annual Refresh 2009-10** (*Head of Community Strategy*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.



### **Purpose of report**

To update on the LAA 2009/10 refresh process.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Liveability presented a report which confirmed that Local Authorities had a statutory duty to prepare a LAA in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnership. The report presents the progress made and the next stages in the process of the annual refresh.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the results of the Place Survey recently undertaken had been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and a response was expected within the week or so, although it was not expected that comparative information would be available at that point.

Reference was made to the proposal to remove two indicators referring to mortality rates in the Neighbourhood Renewal Area from the Local Area Agreement. It was confirmed by the Head of Community Strategy that this indicator was being removed on the recommendation of the Tees Public Health Team due to concerns over the statistical validity of the data. Members were asked to note that additional indicators were proposed including smoking during pregnancy and breast feeding. The Director of Adult and Community Services confirmed that more targeted indicators had been introduced which would make a more valid contribution, for example in relation to smoking cessation.

### **Decision**

The progress made and the next stage in the refresh process was noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.25 pm

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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