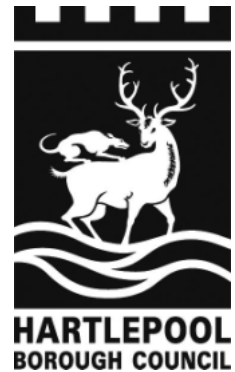


SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Friday, 5 November 2010

At 2.00 pm

in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, S Akers-Belcher, Cook, Cranney, Flintoff, Griffin, James, London, A Marshall, McKenna, Preece, Richardson, Shaw, Simmons, Thomas and Wells.

Resident Representatives:

Evelyn Leck, Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

3. **MINUTES**

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2010 (*to follow*)

3.2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2010 (*to follow*)

4. **RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

No Items

5. **CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

No Items

6. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Item only Quarterly*)

No Items

7. **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No Items

8. **CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS**

No Items

9. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

9.1 Call-In of Decision: Migration of Telephony Provision To Hartlepool Borough Council:-

(a) Briefing note – *Scrutiny Manager*;

(b) Additional Information – *Assistant Director (Resources)*; and

(c) Verbal evidence from the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.

10. **CALL-IN REQUESTS**

No Items

11. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting:- **Friday, 12 November at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

24 SEPTEMBER 2010

The meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Bob Flintoff, Sheila Griffin, Ann Marshall, Chris Simmons, Stephen Thomas and Ray Wells.

Resident Representative: Linda Shields

Also Present: Councillor Mary Fleet as substitute for Councillor Carl Richardson in accordance with Constitution Procedure Rule 4.2

Officers: Joanne Machers, Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Laura Starrs, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

42. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Cranney, London, and Richardson. Resident Representatives E Leck and A Wilcox.

43. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

44. Confirmation of the minutes of the joint meeting of the Health Scrutiny Forum and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee held on 27 August 2010

Confirmed.

The Chair updated the Committee on the following issues from the minutes of the joint meeting.

Minute no.8 'Health White Paper Response'. Cabinet had welcomed the response from the joint meeting and had authorised the Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder to prepare a joint response with the Director

of Child and Adult Services and the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Forum. The response from the joint meeting was also reported to the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny body and would form an integral part of the Tees Valley response.

Minute no.10 'Call-in of Decision – Migration of Telephony Provision". This would be considered at a meeting of the Committee on 5 November 2010 commencing at 11.00 a.m.

45. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2010

Confirmed.

The Chair updated the Committee on the following issues from the minutes of the joint meeting.

Minute no.33 'Forward Plan (Sept to Dec 2010)'

Review of Car Allowances - Report to be submitted at the Committee meeting on 15 October.

Victoria Park – The item is being removed from the Forward Plan and no report will be submitted to this Committee. The Chair indicated that even if Members had been consulted it would have been post-decision and not pre-decision. Members would have had to wait until the decision had been published and the call-in period had expired. The Chair considered that this was not within the spirit of the original request and that the matter must be raised formally with the executive so the situation was not repeated.

Disposal of Surplus Land –the wording had been changed as requested by Members.

Regional Procurement - Constitution Committee had been inserted in case there were any constitutional issues. Subsequently, it was confirmed that there were no constitution issues for this council and consultations with NEPO members will be considered by the Contract Scrutiny Committee on 4th October; Cabinet on 11th October; and Full Council on 28th October.

Local Area Agreement – the date set out in the forward plan for the approval of the document was correct.

Refurbishment of Exmoor Grove Children's Home – the referral was to be considered by Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 28 September at 4.30 p.m.

Service Delivery Option for Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years – this referral was to be considered by Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 30 September at 4.30 p.m.

Housing Adaptations Policy for 2010-2013 – this referral was to be considered by a joint meeting of the Adult Services, Children's Services and Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forums on the 27 September at 5.00pm.

Minute no's 35 and 36 'Year End - Revenue Outturn Report 2009/10 and Capital' and 'Accountable Body Programme Outturn 2009/10' - Letters were

the process of being finalised and sent out to Members setting out the information requested at the meeting.

Minute No. 42 'Call-in - Senior Management Review'. The Chair indicated that a date for reconvening the investigation would be set in the near future.

46. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Reports of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

No items.

47. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews from Council, Executive Members and Non Executive Members

No items.

48. Forward Plan

No items.

49. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents

No items.

50. Consideration of financial monitoring/corporate reports

No items.

51. Call-in of Decision: Counselling Services (*Scrutiny Manager*)

The Scrutiny Manager provided Members with the relevant information relating to the Call-In of the Counselling Services decision taken by the Performance Portfolio Holder on 13 August 2010, in accordance with the Authority's Call-In procedures. The decision taken was that "The Portfolio Holder noted the content of the report and approved the procurement exercise on the basis of 60% quality and 40% price". An extract of the relevant minute together with the report considered by the Portfolio Holder was submitted with the report. Following the submission of an appropriate call-in notice (submitted as an appendix to the report) the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee and the Health Scrutiny Forum at its meeting on 27 August 2010 considered and accepted the notice. Members

made some initial comments on the call-in and these were set out at minute no.11 of the minutes of the meeting contained within the agenda papers. A report from the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer was submitted which set out some additional information on the Counselling Services as requested by Members when the call-in notice was accepted.

The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer outlined the additional information contained within her report. The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer highlighted that in 2008 the Council was visited by an inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) visited the Council to discuss issues associated with work related stress. Whilst the Inspector wanted the Council to undertake further assessment into the causes of stress and to undertake a stress risk assessment in accordance with the Stress Management Standards, they were very complimentary about the support provided. Following this visit a project to undertake a stress risk assessment was commenced. A key part of this project was to adapt and use the employee survey which is undertaken on a regular basis. The latest survey was undertaken in February 2009. The analysis of this survey identified some key issues relating to pressure and stress which were summarised in the report.

In order to further investigate the findings of the survey and to comply with the HSE's requirements an independent qualitative assessment was commissioned which discussed with staff and managers from "hot spot" areas (as identified by the employee survey) their views as regards the Council's approach to managing stress. This investigation also covered the opinions regarding the Council's mental health support services.

The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer highlighted to the Committee the extract below which was taken from the recommendations contained in the independent report;

"The research suggests that the organisation can be pretty pleased with the way the support services for which Human Resources and Occupational Health are responsible work now. They are generally well thought of by managers and the individuals who have used them. But there is scope for improvement. The following learning points for possible action can be drawn from the research:

Support services should continue to be promoted. Employees need to know practical details, like what they are, who they are for, where and how they can be accessed, and for how long. But, just as importantly, they also need to be reassured that it's perfectly normal to need help sometimes. This will help to address any stigma that exists around the services.

Managers must be able to recognise when individual team members are under pressure and what the signs of stress are. Partly this goes back to closing the gap between management and the frontline, but some focused training on the telltale signs and what to do in response, perhaps as part

of the proposed Management Academy, would be welcomed by some of the managers interviewed in this research.

Also, managers need to understand how important it is to act and to seek help when necessary when there are problems that are not quickly resolved. This is a key concern of the Human Resources and Occupational Health specialists who know from experience that delays only make the problems worse. The specialists themselves need to continue to work to get this message to managers and it should be part of any training provided on this topic.

Correspondingly, when managers seek help from the specialists the response needs to be quick and effective. Performance in this respect therefore needs to be measured and tracked principally with a view to making improvements.”

The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer indicated that as the Councils budget situation had become challenging and people had become aware of the services and support available, the counselling service has become more utilised and as such it was appropriate in accordance with the Council's Constitution in relation to managing contracts that an appropriate market testing arrangement is put in place. The services currently provided by Hartlepool Mind were not subject to contract.

At the earlier meeting, Members had requested some additional information and the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer reported that 17 GP practices in Hartlepool had been contacted with 10 responding. Whilst some practices felt unable or unwilling to comment most confirmed that they would refer to Hartlepool Mind or to the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme. However the IAPT programme, which is provided by a consortium, is subject to certain qualification, such as condition specific criteria.

The Committee then moved on to questions for the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer. Members raised questions on the current service, the reasons for moving to a formal contract and the contract process. During the questions and answer section the following issues / comments were raised and responded to by the Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer: -

- If the Council was satisfied with the service it was currently receiving, could it not simply enter into a contract with MIND? No, not without having tested the market for these services first.
- How would the quality of the contractors be evaluated? Through assessing issues such as speed of access to appointments, the availability of the appropriate response to an individuals needs.
- What service delivery comparators had been used? The Council had in the past employed its own counsellor and individual members of staff could be referred by their manager or could self-refer. There was the

issue of being able to keep the counsellor fully utilised and ‘we’ were also relying on only one member of staff to provide the service. After that a telephone service had been provided but this had not proved popular with staff as they seemed to prefer to talk to someone directly.

- Concern was expressed by Members that there was insufficient information to make any recommendations at this stage. There was no analysis of the current service or any feedback from users. Access to that information would allow Members to balance the current service against the cost of the tendering exercise. There was also the question of why the bias was towards quality rather than price.
- As the tendering exercise was being undertaken jointly with Middlesbrough Borough Council (MBC), did they use Middlesbrough MIND? It was not known whom MBC used for their counselling service. The joint tendering procedure would reduce costs for both parties. At the moment, MBC were awaiting the outcome of this call-in procedure. It may be the case that they would decide on their own.
- What was the cost of the joint tendering process? Advertisements for the contract had costs £2000. This would be shared with MBC. There would be benefits in shared officer time when assessing the tenders submitted as well.
- Could Hartlepool choose a different contractor to Middlesbrough or where we bound to each other? No, Hartlepool could choose its own contractor.
- Were those officers that utilised the service from the higher graded posts and who in general referred people to the service? Officers right across the spectrum utilised the service and most accessed it through the Occupational Health Team and Some may be referred to the Occupational Health Nurse. Managers may not know if a member of staff has referred themselves to the service.
- Members requested details of the overall figures for referrals to the service. It was identified during the meeting that on average, seven new cases were referred to the service each month with around 25 individuals being seen by the service a month. Using these figures and the estimated cost of the service in the previous year, members established an estimate of the cost of each session.
- Members were concerned that due consideration had not been given to all the options available. It was suggested that a grant could have been offered to MIND based on the current expenditure level.
- Members considered that an analysis of the current service was needed together with anonymous feedback from the staff who had used the service.
- There was concern that formalising the contract may incur additional unnecessary costs. It was indicated that formalising the arrangement would give defined price per session and allow proper promotion of the service.
- Members commented that if the current informal arrangement had exceeded the limit for an informal arrangement of £20,000, the quotations approach (three written quotations) was limited to expenditure between £5,000 and £25,000; essentially only an additional £5000 over

the current situation. However, pursuing the full tender procedure would in itself cost that much, so it was difficult to see the actual benefit to the council.

- Members understood that the forthcoming year may be a difficult one for staff so there may be greater calls on the counselling service. However, members did feel that more work was needed before a full procurement exercise was required.
- Members questioned the grade level of the staff using the service. The acknowledged that middle managers would be under extreme pressure at the moment and that demands on the service could increase significantly over the coming months.
- If a new contract was not awarded to MIND, there was concern expressed by Members at the affect of removing the current levels of income from the Hartlepool service.
- It was suggested that the Portfolio Holder be requested to maintain the status quo for the next 12 months during which time a full detailed assessment of the service could be undertaken.
- Members questioned if there had been any costs comparison done with other providers in the town. The Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer indicated that another provider had been used in the town but the individual costs were not known. Members questioned the use of the second provider and it was indicated that it was 'by exception' for staff who could not attend MIND. The Chair indicated that she found it disgraceful that the Committee was only hearing now that a second provider had been used.

Following the detailed debate, The Committee agreed that further information was needed before Members could finalise any recommendations to the Portfolio Holder. The Chair agreed that the meeting should adjourn and the date of Wednesday 6 October at 3.30 p.m. was set for reconvening the meeting.

Recommended

That the consideration of the Call-In of the Counselling Services decision taken by the Performance Portfolio Holder on 13 August 2010, continue when the meeting was reconvened and that in the interim, the additional information that members had suggested would be helpful in their deliberations be circulated in advance of the reconvening.

52. Call-In Requests

No items.

53. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

No items.

54. Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting stood adjourned at 12.25 p.m. to be reconvened at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday 6 October 2010.

Wednesday 6 October 2010

The meeting reconvened at 3.30 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Kevin Cranney, Sheila Griffin, Ann Marshall, Carl Richardson, Jane Shaw, Chris Simmons, Stephen Thomas and Ray Wells.

Resident Representatives: Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox.

Officers: Stuart Langston, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Laura Starrs, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

55. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Stephen Akers-Belcher, Bob Flintoff, and Arthur Preece and Resident Representative Evelyn Leck.

56. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

57. Call-in of Decision: Counselling Services *(Scrutiny Manager)*

The Committee recommenced its consideration of the call-in of the Counselling Services decision taken by the Performance Portfolio Holder on 13 August 2010. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager had produced some additional information for the Committee which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Officer indicated that in addition to taking its statutory responsibilities very seriously, has a key corporate aim to “Promote Healthy Working” by taking “a proactive approach to the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health, safety and general wellbeing of all employees”. The Council has endeavoured to meet the aims of this strategy by regularly

reviewing the conditions of employment but also providing appropriate Wellbeing support where appropriate.

For a number of years one of the wellbeing support initiatives provided by the Council had been in relation to mental health. This mental health support has in the past consisted of an individual paid on an hourly rate depending upon usage and organisations providing counselling services on an hourly rate or per session basis. A confidential appendix contained information relating to cost, which includes commercially sensitive pricing information. The appendix contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006) namely (para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

As employee wellbeing services had been developed to help improve sickness absence performance and support staff, the counselling service had been used more significantly.

The Committee went on to continue to question the reasons behind the move to place the services out to competitive tender. During the question and answer session, the following matters were raised and responded to appropriately by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

- The need to go to tender now on the services was again questioned, particularly when there was a proposal being considered by the Contracts Scrutiny Panel on raising the threshold for tendering to £50,000. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager commented that the arrangement with MIND was called a 'call-off' contract which meant that at any time we could end the arrangement but so could MIND. A long-term contract would give certainty and commitment and promote a partnership arrangement. It would allow whoever provided the service to arrange their resources appropriately to meet the Council's needs. Some may see it as the Council losing the benefit of the current arrangement but it could also gain through a more formal arrangement.
- If the Council had spent over the £20,000 limit on this service (which triggered the tender process) when had that occurred and did that expenditure include the money spent with the second provider of services. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager reported that there was one budget, which was under his control, for this expenditure. There was no indication of how many people may come forward to use the service and the allocated budget was often over-spent, the over-spend being financed from savings elsewhere in the department's budget. There was a limit of six counselling sessions for each Member of staff referred though this was flexible where there was need.
- Members referred to one of the wider benefits of the counselling service in the work it did with those that were on long-term sickness absence, particularly those with stress problems, in bringing them back to work. The benefits to the Council of this work were significant and the cost

would be more than saved by the individual coming back to work only one week earlier than had been expected. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager stated that was one of the primary aim in providing the service.

- Members commented that the quality of the service needed to be assured when fulfilling the duty to protect the wellbeing of staff.
- Members indicated that the earlier session of the meeting had made several references to the analysis and evaluation of the service; what such work had been undertaken. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager commented that there was an analysis of cost and usage set out in the confidential appendix. The Chair commented that a discussion on the appendix would be held in closed session later in the meeting.
- How would the non-budgeted costs of the service be met if there were no savings elsewhere in the departmental budget to cover them? The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager commented that this was one of the difficult balancing measures of the service. Counselling did assist in getting those on long-term sickness absence back to work sooner than expected; so there were costs benefits to the council in those situations. If there was no budget available, people could be referred to NHS services but this would take considerably longer and did require GP support.
- What happens to those individuals that the counselling service indicates that it cannot help? They would be referred to NHS services.
- How did individuals get referred into the service; did it always require a Manager's input? Referrals could come through Managers through sickness monitoring procedures. They could also be made by the Occupational Health Advisor. This could be done confidentially without a manager being advised. Individual stress risk assessments could be undertaken to address any issues in the workplace.
- The Chair considered that the costs should be viewed in the wider context of assisting people in returning to work and the benefit that had on the department employing them. This was a cost effective way of bringing people back to work and should be viewed in that way rather than an over or under-spend of an isolated budget.
- Members revisited the issue raised at the earlier session of the meeting in relation to the waiting time for appointments. It had been stated that the 12-week wait related to GP referrals for NHS appointments. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager indicated that he had recently spoken to MIND to clarify the waiting times. A GP referral to them would take around 1 or 2 weeks. MIND would then contact the individual by telephone a week later to carry out an initial screening. The wait would then be around 8 weeks for appointments which were usually over a 6-week period. If the individual doesn't respond to the initial telephone contact, the new procedure was now that they would be contacted by letter. If there was no response to this letter, then they would drop off the referral list.

At this point in the discussion, Members indicated that they wished to discuss the exempt information set out in the appendix to the supplementary

information provided by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager for this meeting.

Recommended

That the meeting move into closed session.

58. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely, (para 3) information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information

Minute 59 'Call-in of Decision: Counselling Services'.

59. Call-in of Decision: Counselling Services (*Scrutiny Manager*)

The Committee discussed the information set out in the exempt appendix to the report of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager submitted to the meeting.

Following the discussion, the Committee determined its recommendations in relation to the call-in and these are set out in full below.

Recommended

That following the Committee's full and detailed consideration of the information provided, the Performance Portfolio Holder is advised that the Committee's views are as follows: -

- (i) That the current arrangements for the provision of counselling services should continue in the short term to allow time for an 'informal' quotations procedure to be undertaken;
- (ii) That as part of the 'informal' procedure, 3 quotations be sought from local companies to facilitate the award of a 12 month contract for the provision of counselling services on a 60:40 (quality: price) basis;
- (i) That during the 12 month duration of the contract, a full evaluation of the counselling service provided be undertaken, including consideration of demand, effectiveness / quality and the impact of external factors (i.e. GP commissioning); and
- (ii) That at the end of the 12-month contract, the results of the evaluation are used to inform a decision as to whether a 'formal' quotations

procedure should be undertaken to award a full / longer term contract.

The meeting closed at 5.00 p.m.

CHAIR

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

15 OCTOBER 2010

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Kevin Cranney, Sheila Griffin, Ann Marshall, Arthur Preece, Carl Richardson, Jane Shaw, Chris Simmons, Stephen Thomas, and Ray Wells.

Resident Representatives: Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox.

Officers: Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance - Corporate
Joanne Smithson, Head of Performance and Partnerships
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager
Carol Ann Jones, Financial Inclusion Partnership
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Elaine Hind, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

60. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Stephen Akers-Belcher and Francis London; and Resident Representative Evelyn Leck.

61. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

62. Confirmation of the minutes of the meetings held on 24 September 2010

Deferred to the next meeting.

63. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Reports of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

No items.

64. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews from Council, Executive Members and Non Executive Members

No items.

65. Forward Plan

No items.

66. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 – Initial Consultation Proposals *(Chief Finance Officer)*

The Chief Finance Officer provided a detailed overview of the financial issues affecting the Council in relation to:

- The national financial position and the Spending Review;
- The 2010/2011 financial position;
- Capital Programme 2011/2011 to 2014/2015;
- General Fund and Council Tax 2011/2012 to 2014/2015;
- Redundancy issues and funding;
- Budget Risks;
- Timetable;
- Specific Grants;
- Consultation.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that Cabinet had considered the same report earlier in the week. The report indicated that it was expected that the public sector would be facing a prolonged period of austerity as the Government was committed to reducing the public sector deficit. Details of the impact on individual Government departments would be announced on the 20th October 2010.

The Government had already indicated that unprotected areas faced cuts of 25% over a 4-year period. The report therefore outlined two planning scenarios to address the scale of anticipated grant reductions and uncertainty over the phasing of grants cuts. For the Council's main Formula Grant these forecasts are based on reductions of 25% and 30% over the next four years, with the cuts being front loaded in 2011/12. On this basis the Council faced a gross deficit on the General Fund budget of between £20.8m and £23.1m over the next four years.

The forecast General Fund deficit for 2011/12 was between £8.1m and £10.7m. The report outlined a number of measures to reduce the 2011/12 forecast gap to between £4.1m and £6.7m. These forecasts were after planned Business Transformation efficiencies. Detailed proposals for bridging this gap would need to be developed and would require some very difficult decisions.

In relation to specific grants, which included the Area Based Grant, the Council would also face cuts in funding. This was an extremely difficult area to predict as the Government had not yet determined which local authority grants they would prioritise.

The development of detailed budget proposals for next year was critically dependant upon Government funding announcements. Some details would be provided in the Spending Review. The detailed allocations for individual councils were not expected until late December or early January 2011. This would mean that budget decisions would need to be made over a shorter time period and it would not be possible to follow the normal budget timetable.

In relation to consultation, there had been a number of consultation exercises utilised to inform the budget process. This included Viewpoint, a public survey, staff survey and discussion meetings with young people, community representatives and business representatives. A summary of the Viewpoint survey was set out in section 13 of the report outlining those areas where people had responded to a question on whether the service area was acceptable or unacceptable to cut. Detailed results of the surveys and reports of the consultation meetings were set out in appendices to the report.

Supplemental to the report was a proposed timetable for the budget process and three options for an all day Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on 1 December to consider in detail the budget issues. The Chair addressed the issue of the 1 December meeting first and indicated that following a meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs, the timetable set out at option 2 for the meeting on 1 December should be followed. There were some amendments to the proposal set out in the report. The consideration of the Chief Executive department's budget which had been scheduled for the final session of the meeting on 1 December should be moved to the meeting date on 3 December that was already diaried. That would allow the whole of the afternoon session to be dedicated to the Child and Adult Services department budget. The Chair also made some amendments to the timing of breaks in the sessions and advised Members that there would be both a breakfast and lunch provided.

The Committee supported the proposals put forward. The Chair stated that due to the government's timetable it would not be possible to have the usual process of referring budget consultations to each of the forums so the proposals for all scrutiny members to be involved in the all day meeting

proposed was the only real alternative available.

The Committee moved on to the report submitted by the Chief Finance Officer. Members focussed on the feedback reported in the report from the Viewpoint and public consultation meetings. There was criticism from many members on the questions asked and the feedback obtained through the consultation exercise. Members specifically criticised the broad nature of questions asked and the lack of information on specific services that was given with the consultation exercise. Members expressed a view that many responses seemed to be based on ignorance of the actual services provided, particularly those to the most vulnerable service users.

Members were also concerned at the lack of responses from any ethnic minority groups and the spread of responses received from across the town as, in the community representatives' consultation, there appeared to be none received from the TS27 postcode area. Members were of the view that the exercise had been a waste of officer time and money. There was particular concern at the amount of money that had been spent on the consultation exercise which was estimated by the Chief Finance Officer in the meeting as around £6,000. The Chief Finance officer indicated that Members would be informed of the actual costs incurred. Members considered that there were better ways to consult with the public and that these should be examined in the future.

Members specifically asked for details of the category of responses from the public that were described as 'other'. The Head of Performance and Partnerships indicated that the groupings used for the responses under the question "Do you have any suggestions or examples how the council could save money over the next 12 months" were utilised to bring together the many comments that were of the same broad principles as listed in the consultation responses. Those identified as other didn't fit into any of the general areas listed but a report could be provided for Members setting out those specific comments.

The Chair indicated that the report and the consultation responses would form part of the information that would be utilised in the 1 December meeting.

Recommended

1. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 – Initial Consultation Proposals report be noted.
2. That the arrangements for the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee meetings to which all scrutiny members would be invited on 1 December and 3 December as discussed by the committee, and set out above, be approved.

67. Quarter 1 - Corporate Plan and Revenue Financial Management Report 2010/11 *(Chief Finance Officer and Head of Performance and Partnerships)*

The Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Performance and Partnerships outlined the principle issues from the Quarter 1 Corporate Plan and Revenue Financial Management Report 2010/11, which was submitted to Cabinet on 6 September 2010.

Recommended

That the report be noted.

68. Quarter 1 - Capital and Accountable Body Programme Monitoring 2010/11 *(Chief Finance Officer)*

The Chief Finance Officer outlined the principle issues from the Quarter 1 Capital and Accountable Body Programme Monitoring 2010/11 report submitted to Cabinet on 6 September 2010.

Recommended

That the report be noted.

69. The Provision of Face to Face Financial Advice and Information Services in Hartlepool - Setting the Scene Report *(Extended Services and Early Years Manager / Hartlepool Financial Inclusion Partnership Development Officer)*

Members had agreed that “face to face” financial advice would be part of the scrutiny co-ordinating committee’s work programme 2010/11. The Committee had previously investigated child poverty in 2009/2010. Members requested through this investigation that a mapping exercise of financial advice be undertaken and this scoping report set out the information collected from this exercise and further information to support the current scrutiny investigation.

The initial child poverty investigation showed that one of the key issues impacting on poverty in families is that of poor financial management and debt. Families with limited financial resources may have their situation made worse by an inability to access “mainstream” credit facilities with the result that they make use of loan sharks or purchase arrangements that charge huge interest rates. Families who may appear more affluent may also struggle with large debts.

The Extended Services and Early Years Manager / Hartlepool Financial Inclusion Partnership Development Officer presented an overview of the key information highlighted during the mapping exercise.

On the Breadline estimated as 26.8% of all Hartlepool households

- Young lone parents and single people living on benefits or earning low incomes and have poor financial capability. They struggle to cope with unexpected household expense due to a lack of savings or realisable assets.
- Live in the lowest value council, housing association, rented properties. High proportion of households have no full-time earner, majority pay no tax due to their low earnings/income.
- Shop in discount stores and are high spenders on childcare products and services such as utilities – prepayment arrangements.
- Find it difficult to obtain banking facilities and credit and are most likely to default.

Credit Hungry Families estimated as 13.1% of all Hartlepool households

- Typically couples in their 20's – 30's with young or school aged children. Little or no ability to save. Income is below average with a high proportion being used to fund existing debts – no reserves for emergencies– low financial awareness.
- Use credit extensively from a variety of sources to maintain their lifestyle often 'maxing out' credit cards and taking on loans for luxuries, holidays and have goods on hire purchase agreements.
- Live in low value housing terraced/semi's, but large number have mortgages, other typically rent from council, private landlords etc.
- Will often run out of cash before next payday so may use wage advance companies. This group are the largest risk for debt defaults.

Elderly Deprivation estimated as 15.2% of all Hartlepool households

- Pensioners living in poor circumstances and almost completely dependent upon state income. During their working lives were unable to make provision for old age.
- Manage their finances well to but still struggle to meet basic necessities such as rent, food, utilities – if they have any savings at all this would be set aside for their funeral.
- Majority live alone in small rented flats or sheltered accommodation.
- Have poor access to transport – so shop locally. Socially isolated due to lack of money for leisure/interests, some may have access to family support

Further information that sets out a need for financial advice includes:

- Personal insolvencies have increased from 10.9 per 10,000 of the population in 2005 to 30.1 per 10,000 of the population in 2009.
- 10,000 households in Hartlepool are involved in financial arrangements with home credit companies. It is therefore estimated that if the poorest families were removed the Doorstep leading arrangements, this would release at least £4 million into the local economy.
- According to HMRC 3,715 families in Hartlepool are not claiming essential Working Family Tax Credits that they are entitled to.
- The number of children living in families claiming income support/ job seekers allowance is 4,925 of these 3,555 live with a lone parent
- The Basic Bank Account Report published recently by the Financial Inclusion Taskforce confirmed that the number of un-paid or 'returned

items' (e.g. standing orders and direct debits) due to a lack of available funds on deposit in an individuals account at the time payment is requested, is rising. This is a significant problem for people with incomes of under £15,000 per annum.

There are also a number of statistics that give an indication of a risk of financial exclusion

- 28.6% of children are living in families on key benefits;
- 10.5% of adults with children are lone parents;
- There are 56,100 working age adults in Hartlepool - worklessness currently stands at 33.8%.

The work of the Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP) was also set out in the report. The partnership had delivered a number of Money Matters Road Shows and produced Money Matters publications to encourage residents to seek advice and information to address their money or debt concerns and to maximise the up-take of welfare benefits. It had taken a lead role in promoting the pitfalls associated with high interest lenders and unlicensed lenders (Loan Sharks). Links had been established with the DWP Financial Inclusion Champions Initiative and a mentoring role was provided to local agencies and partners in respect of increasing their understanding of issues related to financial exclusion.

There are four main providers of face to face advice in Hartlepool:

- Citizens Advice Bureau;
- West View Advice and Resource Centre;
- Manor Residents through Connected Care; and
- Jobcentre plus.

In addition to the face-to-face providers HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) offer a telephone helpline and email support.

One of the principle obstacles facing all the agencies dealing with these issues is that people were very reluctant to own up to and seek advice on their financial problems. Members supported this view and highlighted such reticence was particularly high amongst the elderly. There was concern expressed by Members that there were still many families not getting family tax credits and if the HMRC knew who these families were, then that information should be gained so that one agency or another could actually tell these families and assist them with applying for these benefits.

Members also commented that many people were reluctant to apply for family tax credits as they were aware of the anecdotal evidence from those who were overpaid and ended up having to pay significant amounts back. There were a wide range of rules and regulations attached to the tax credits and the slightest change in families circumstances needed to be reported relatively quickly. Many families were concerned at reporting have any changes as they believed this would always reduce their benefit.

Members were also concerned at the report of the lack of support for people attending tribunals; the earliest appointment available being in January

2011. A lot of people currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) were currently being reassessed and many were having their benefit cut. Many people were finding themselves having to go to the appeal tribunal unsupported.

The Chair commented on the situation affecting many elderly women who's husbands died before them. Their husbands may have worked all their lives contributing to a pension scheme as they did. Their wives were now finding that despite those years when their husband had made those contributions on behalf of their families, their pensions were cut in half. This should be taken up with the town's MP as many of these women were subsequently left in poverty when that is not what their husbands had intended when they contributed to their pension.

The Chair also expressed concern at the number of children in families in poverty. Based on the statistics; 1 in 3 children were in a household in poverty. In some deprived areas of the town that was as high as 1 in 2. Such statistics were unacceptable. If this was linked to the benefits that were not being claimed that was appalling indictment. There needed to be supplementary advice workers as the vast majority of claimants from these families needed that face-to-face advice, sometimes more than once to be able to claim everything to which they were entitled.

Members agreed that the support of the MP was essential to many of these issues being moved forward and therefore his attendance at the next meeting on this issue would be crucial.

Recommended

That the report and the discussions be noted.

70. Progress Report – Council Assisted Scheme for the Provision of Household White Goods/Furniture *(Scrutiny Manager)*

The Scrutiny Manager updated the Committee on the submission of a report on the options for, and feasibility of, the introduction of a council assisted scheme for the provision of household white goods/furniture. The report set out an outline timetable, with clear milestones, of how this issue could be progressed including engagement with potential providers; and information from authorities already undertaking this provision. There would be further report submitted to Members at the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 3 December 2010.

Recommended

That the report be noted.

71. Children's Services Scrutiny Forum – Response to the Referral from Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the Refurbishment of Exmoor Grove Children's Home *(Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum)*

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum reported that Children's Services Scrutiny Forum met on the 28 September 2010 to consider the referral from this committee of the forward plan entry in relation to the refurbishment of Exmoor Grove. At the meeting officers from the department provided a breakdown of the costs and the reasons for the refurbishment. The forum supported the proposed refurbishment and acknowledged that the costs were reasonable in light of the work being undertaken.

Recommended

That the report be noted and that the comments of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum relating to the refurbishment of Exmoor Grove Children's Home be presented to the Children's Services Portfolio Holder on 26 October 2010.

72. Children's Services Scrutiny Forum - Response to the Referral from Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the Service Delivery Option – Sure Start, Extended Services and Play *(Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum)*

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum reported that Children's Services Scrutiny Forum met on the 30 September to consider the referral from this committee of the forward plan entry in relation to the Service Delivery Option (SDO) for Sure Start, Extended Services and Play. At the meeting officers from the department provided information on the options available for a proposed £40,400 savings target which included how the target and budget base figures had been calculated. After consideration of the information and the options available, the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum supported the SDO and the proposed £40,400 savings target. In addition to this, the Forum thought that it would be beneficial if all schools could provide after school and holiday provision. Members suggested the option of OSCARS running the provision from schools and requested that this be explored further

Recommended

That the report be noted and the comments of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum relating to the SDO for Sure Start, Extended Services and Play be presentation to Cabinet when the matter was considered in November 2010.

73. Referral Feedback Report - Housing Adaptations Policy Review 2010 - 2013 *(Chair of the Joint Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum, Children's Services Scrutiny Forum and Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum)*

The Chair of the Joint Meeting, Councillor Simmons, reported on the joint meetings consideration of the referral of the Housing Adaptations Policy (2010 – 2013). This Committee had referred the matter to the joint meeting when considering the Forward Plan at its meeting on 3 September 2010.

The Joint Forum considered the presentation by the Officers from the Housing Regeneration and Policy Department and sought clarification on a number of issues regarding the policy and the consultation process. Members present at the meeting raised grave concerns about the absence of Member consultation on the Housing Adaptations Policy 2010 – 2013. These concerns mirrored those initially expressed by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at the time of the referral of the policy to the Joint Forum.

The Joint Meeting concluded that:-

- (i) Members were comfortable with the content of the draft Housing Adaptations Policy (2010 – 2013) as a whole and should proceed as planned;
- (ii) Members should be consulted / involved at appropriate stages in the continuing development of the Housing Adaptation Policy (2010 – 2013);
- (iii) The Adaptations Operations Panel should be convened on a flexible basis;
- (iv) Additional comments from individual Member regarding the Housing Adaptations Policy 2010 – 2013 (as detailed in Section 3.3 (iii)) should be made to the Housing Regeneration and Policy Officer for submission as part of the consultation process; and
- (v) Members should be included in the consultation process for all policies so that their views can be taken into account before they are enforced.

Recommended

That the report be noted and that the views of the Joint Regeneration and Planning Services, Children's Services and Adult and Community Services Scrutiny Forum relating to the Housing Adaptations Policy 2010 – 2013 be presentation to Cabinet when the matter was considered in November.

74. Request for Funding to Support the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum's Current Scrutiny Investigation *(Scrutiny Manager)*

The Scrutiny Manager sought approval from the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee for a request for funding for the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum, from within the Overview and Scrutiny Function's dedicated scrutiny budget. The request related to the costs of a consultation exercise

linked to the Forums' investigation into "20's Plenty – Traffic calming Measures" and concerned expenditure of £57.56

Recommended

That approval be given to the request for funding from the Overview and Scrutiny dedicated budget of £57.56 from the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum as reported.

75. Call-In Requests

No items.

76. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

77. Senior Management Review – Call-in

The Chair advised Members that it had been hoped that the meeting of the Committee considering the Senior Management Review call-in, which had commenced earlier in the year, could be reconvened on Monday 25 October. This was now not possible and members would be informed when a new date had been confirmed.

In advance of the new reconvened meeting date, the Chair indicated that there would be a briefing organised for those Members new to the committee that had not been involved in the call-in discussions to date.

The meeting concluded at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIR

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

5 November 2010



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: Call-In of Decision: Migration of Telephony Provision
To Hartlepool Borough Council – Briefing Note

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with the relevant information relating to the Call-In of the Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council Decision taken by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 12 August 2010, as per the Authority's Call-In procedure:-

Minute No. 13 – Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council

“The Portfolio Holder noted the content of the report and agreed to proceed with the migration of telephony services to Daisy Group plc subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the removal of costs from the ICT contract between Hartlepool Borough Council and Northgate and confirmation of service performance checks. The Portfolio Holder requested a further report be given to him.”

- 1.2 A full extract from the Decision Record is attached at **Appendix A**.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the decision making meeting of the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 12 August 2010, a report was considered on the Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council. A copy of the report is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 2.2 Following the decision taken by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 13 August 2010, as outlined in Section 1.1 above, a Call-In Notice was submitted to the Proper Officer by Members of the Council. A copy of this Call-in Notice is provided at **Appendix C**.
- 2.3 As the Call-In Notice met all the constitutional requirements, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, at its meeting on the 27 August 2010, gave consideration to the signatories view / opinion that the decision had been

taken in contravention of the principles of decision making (as outlined in Article 13 of the Constitution). The reason identified in the Call-In Notice being 'Best value and due consideration of options available to the decision taker and efficiency'.

- 2.4 Having considered the content of the Call-In Notice, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee supported the need look closer at how the decision had been made and accepted the Call-In Notice.
- 2.5 It was also agreed that the Call-In would be retained by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee for consideration in a practical and timely manner. In order to facilitate this, it was agreed that an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee would be convened today (5 November 2010) to deal with the Call-In.

3. CALL-IN PROCESS – NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 In the consideration of the Call-In, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is required in relation to the decisions to, in the first instance, focus its discussions solely at the reasons outlined within the Call-In Notice. In doing this, Members are asked to consider the additional information provided by the Assistant Director (Resources) at **Item 9.1(b)** of this agenda. The Assistant Director (Resources) will be in attendance at today's meeting to present and answer any further questions felt to be appropriate.
- 3.2 Following attendance at the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee meeting on the 27 August 2010, an invitation has been extended to the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder to be in attendance at this meeting to answer any questions felt to be appropriate. The Portfolio Holder has indicated that he will be in attendance at today's meeting.
- 3.3 Having fully discussed the reasons outlined within the Call-In Notice there are two ways forward:-
- (i) Should the Committee be satisfied that the principles of decision making have not been contravened, the decision(s) will be effective immediately; or
 - (ii) Should the Committee remain concerned about the decision(s), comments should be agreed for consideration by the Portfolio Holder at the earliest opportunity. The next possible Portfolio Holder meeting being held on the 2 December 2010.
- 3.4 Following the receipt of comments from Scrutiny, the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder would be required to reconsider the decision in light of them and either reaffirm or amend the decision. A response from the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder must be referred to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, setting out the reasons for reaffirming or modifying the decision, in relation to the issues raised by the Committee.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That consideration be given to the whether the decision detailed in Section 1.1 was taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making (as outlined in Section 13 of the Constitution).
- 4.2 That should the Committee be of the view that the decision detailed in Section 1.1 of this report was not taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making, comments be formulated for consideration by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.

Contact Officer:- Joan Stevens – Scrutiny Manager
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 28 4142
Email: joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Hartlepool Borough Council's Constitution;
- (ii) Call-In of Decision: Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council – Briefing Note – Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee (27 August 2010); and
- (iii) Agenda and Minutes – Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder (12 August 2010).

FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

12 August 2010

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Robbie Payne (Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Graham Frankland, Assistant Director (Resources)
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

13. Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council – Assistant Director (Resources)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the portfolio of the recent evaluation of the cost of telephony services provided to Hartlepool Borough Council by British Telecom (BT) and to advise of the recommendation to migrate service provision from BT to Daisy Group plc.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the potential to achieve savings on telephony costs across the council by relocating the service to a more cost effective provider for Hartlepool Borough Council.

Daisy Group plc currently provide services for Stockton and Middlesbrough Borough Councils. Other Authorities in the Tees Valley are in discussion with Daisy regarding migration of services. Analysis had identified a potential saving of £25,000 if Daisy were to provide the telephony provision for the Authority. Negotiations were currently ongoing with Northgate in relation to current service costs but it was expected that this would be finalised imminently. Daisy Group plc is an OCG approved supplier, and has therefore been through the relevant procurement checks and competition to prove value for money.

The Portfolio Holder asked what the current cost of service provision was with BT and the Assistant Director (Resources) agreed to provide him with this information. He also asked whether there would be scope

for procurement as a Tees Valley Authority Group and was informed that if other authorities decided to proceed with using Daisy it could be an option in future. Although the report had identified a risk that there may be a potential lost of service to HBC during the migration process, this was unlikely to occur. The contract could be initially for one year, but is flexible and could be extended if required.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the content of the report and agreed to proceed with the migration of telephony services to Daisy Group plc subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the removal of costs from the ICT contract between Hartlepool Borough Council and Northgate and confirmation of service performance checks. The Portfolio Holder requested a further report be given to him.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 17 August 2010

FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT PORTFOLIO
Report To Portfolio Holder
12th August 2010



Report of: Assistant Director (Resources)

Subject: MIGRATION OF TELEPHONY PROVISION TO
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Portfolio Holder of the recent evaluation of the cost of telephony services provided to Hartlepool Borough Council by British Telecom (BT), and to advise of the recommendation to migrate service provision from BT to Daisy Group plc.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

This report outlines the potential to achieve savings on telephony costs across the council by relocating the service to a more cost effective provider for Hartlepool Borough Council

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

Falls within the remit of the Portfolio Holder

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non Key

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Finance and Procurement Portfolio then Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

That the Portfolio Holder notes the contents of this report and agrees to proceed with the migration of telephony services to Daisy Group PLC subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the removal of costs from the ICT contract between HBC and Northgate.

Report of: Assistant Director (Resources)

Subject: MIGRATION OF TELEPHONY PROVISION TO
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Portfolio Holder of the recent evaluation of the cost of telephony services provided to Hartlepool Borough Council by British Telecom (BT), and to advise of the recommendation to migrate service provision from BT to Daisy Group plc.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In light of the current budget pressures upon the authority it was felt prudent to undertake some analysis of the cost of providing telephony services to HBC to determine whether any cost savings could be achieved.

2.2 HBC currently procure telephony services directly from BT's Office of Government Commerce (OGC) contract securing the most cost effective tariffs available from BT. In the past other providers have been able to undercut the cost of BT services, however further investigation of these service providers have left concerns or unanswered questions over the quality of service and customer service. Given the potential risk and impact to services the decision was made to leave services with BT.

2.3 Daisy Group plc have recently won a significant number of public sector contracts and now provide services, or are in the process of competing for them, for the majority of Local Authorities in the Tees Valley:

- Stockton and Middlesbrough are now customers of Daisy;
- Redcar and Cleveland, Darlington, Sunderland and South Tyneside are in direct discussion with Daisy to migrate services.

2.4 This, along with a number of reference sites Daisy have offered, gives HBC confidence in the quality of services provided to Local Authority and wider Public Sector customers

9.1 (a) Appendix B

3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 In order to understand the potential savings offered by migrating the telephony service to Daisy, a direct cost comparison between the Daisy Tariff and our incumbent supplier, BT, was undertaken. The analysis identified that potential savings of circa £25K per annum are available by migrating to Daisy from BT based on our telephone usage in the previous year.

4. CONTRACTUAL AND PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Current costs for the Council telephony are split between those directly billed to the Council and those that transferred to Northgate in 2001 as part of the Information Technology Alliance. HBC finance continue to work through the current mechanism and budgets for internally recharging telephony costs and to revise these to ensure future costs for telephony are easily understood and can be recharged with clarity allowing the relevant savings to be defunded from budget(s).
- 4.2 In order to simplify the billing and invoicing process for telephony services the Council intends to remove the element of service and associated costs from the Northgate contract and consolidate all costs and contracts directly to the Council. The Council have approached Northgate to negotiate the necessary costs from the base service fee and although detailed discussions are still to take place to determine the costs to be removed, Northgate have indicated their agreement to this, allowing the Council to access potential savings from the Daisy contract.
- 4.3 Daisy is an OGC approved supplier, and therefore has been through the relevant procurement checks and competition to prove value for money and fulfil regulations.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are 2 significant areas of risk that HBC need to mitigate before any migration of services can take place, these are:
- Potential loss of service to HBC during the migration process
 - Poor level of service from the new supplier
- 5.2 HBC have asked the proposed supplier to provide assurances to mitigate the identified areas of risk and have received a number of references from customers of Daisy to satisfy HBC's concerns in respect of the above.

9.1 (a) Appendix B

- 5.3 Feedback from other Local Authorities has been positive and provides confidence in the company.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Portfolio Holder notes the contents of this report and agrees to proceed with the migration of telephony services to Daisy Group PLC subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the removal of costs from the ICT contract between HBC and Northgate.

7. CONTACT OFFICER

John Bulman, ICT Contract Manager. Tel 284159



Hartlepool Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny – Call-in Notice – All Members (with the exception of Executive Members)

1. Which decision would you like to call-in?

(Please include details of the decision, when it was taken and by whom)

FINANCE & PROCUREMENT PORTFOLIO
 DECISION RECORD PUBLISHED 17/8/10.
 MIGRATION OF TELEPHONY PROVISION TO HARTLEPOOL
 BOROUGH COUNCIL.

2. What are the reasons for calling-in this decision?

Call-in must only be used in exceptional circumstances and the justification for the call must be either:

- that the decision or proposed decision is outside the Budget and Policy Framework
- that the decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in Article 13 of the Constitution.

BEST VALUE & DUE CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS
 AVAILABLE TO THE DECISION TAKER,
 & EFFICIENCY

Councillor	Position and Party Group	Signature
1. KEVIN CRANNY	LABOUR	
2. ANN MARSHALL	LABOUR	
3. C AKERS-BELCHER	LABOUR	
4. MA JAMES	LABOUR	
5. R FLINTOFF	LIA DEM	

NB. Any Member (with the exception of Executive Members) may initiate call-ins providing they have the support of at least four other members of the Council. The signatories must represent at least two of the Council's political groups.

Councillor: C AKERS-BELCHER.

Signed:

Date: 20/8/10.

For office use only

Date received:

Initials:

SCC Agenda:

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

5th November 2010



Report of: Assistant Director (Resources)

Subject: CALL-IN OF DECISION – MIGRATION OF TELEPHONY PROVISION TO HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide additional information to the Committee regarding the procurement process in relation to telephony services.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Assistant Director (Resources) presented a report to the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 12th August 2010 recommending to proceed with the migration of telephony services to an alternative provider. The evaluation presented was noted and the Portfolio Holder agreed to proceed with the migration of telephony services to an alternative provider subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the removal of costs from the ICT contract between Hartlepool Borough Council and Northgate and confirmation of service performance checks. The Portfolio Holder requested a further report be given to him.

2.2 Following the decision taken by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 13 August 2010 a Call-In Notice was submitted to the Proper Officer by Members of the Council on the 20 August 2010. The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at its meeting on 27th August 2010 accepted the 'Call-in' and requested further investigation. Full details of the process undertaken, culminating in today's meeting, are outlined in the report previously considered at item 9.1(a) of today's agenda.

2.3 In accordance with the request for additional information by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, this report provides supplementary information and analysis designed to support and advise Members.

- 2.4 Previous to the current investigation the current provider had been approached on several occasions in relation to the service they provided and the associated costs. This was due to the ongoing requirement to make savings and also due to concerns regarding their performance. We requested a meeting with our current providers account manager to discuss our financial position and to raise some minor concerns over the current provider's responsiveness. During this meeting the current provider was asked what as our primary supplier of telephony services they could do to assist. The current provider advised that HBC were already on their lowest tariff but offered to assist us by looking for unutilised lines and consolidating all billing information together onto a single bill to reduce HBC's management overhead for dealing with the current provider's invoices. Unfortunately the current provider acted on neither and despite several attempts by HBC to pursue this no response from the current provider was forthcoming.
- 2.5 This lead HBC to the conclusion that significant deliverable savings should be sought from an alternate provider.
- 2.6 Therefore, in light of the current budget pressures upon the authority it was felt prudent to undertake some further analysis of the cost of providing telephony services to HBC to determine whether any cost savings could be achieved.
- 2.7 HBC currently procure telephony services directly from the current provider through the OGC contract securing the most cost effective tariffs available from the current provider. However, a competing provider, Supplier A, has recently won a significant number of public sector contracts and now provide services, or are in the process of competing for them, for the majority of Local Authorities in the Tees Valley.
- 2.8 This information relating to current market activity raised the possibility that there were potential savings to be realised in relation to our current telephony arrangements.
- 2.9 As a result of their recent success and positive feedback received from other local authorities in relation to Supplier A, the decision was made to investigate what benefits adopting Supplier A as a telecoms provider would provide.
- 2.10 Following these investigations it was clear that Supplier A was able to provide the Council with an opportunity to accrue considerable savings, valued in the region of around £25k per annum (based on current usage patterns).
- 2.11 As part of the discussions with Supplier A it was necessary to understand the value of this contract to the marketplace so that the appropriate procurement route could be identified.

- 2.12 Specifically, the opportunity being made available to the market was for someone to manage the use of our existing infrastructure and networks for service delivery essentially acting as a 'middle man'. Many telephony vendors choose not to install their own cabling and telephone exchanges, instead they secure partnership arrangements with organisations like the current provider or Cable and Wireless who already have networks and infrastructure in place. Due to the potential level of business these vendors can bring, these organisations are able to procure access to the current provider networks at greatly discounted cost, far in excess of those normally available to direct customers of the current provider.
- 2.13 The services remain on the existing networks and the only visible change to the end-user is that the billing comes from Supplier A at lower charges than the current provider and they provide one point of contact for customer service issues.
- 2.14 The structure of this arrangement is that HBC pay a reduced price for calls, payable to an alternative provider. The alternative provider in turn pays the current supplier for our calls and they make their commission by paying a slightly lower rate to the current supplier than they charge us. They are able to do this because they buy large volumes of the current provider's call-time and attract significantly discounted rates as described in 2.12.
- 2.15 Due to the nature of this service and the fact that there is no specific charge payable by HBC (i.e. we just pay less for our calls), the value of the contract is difficult to estimate but we have researched the marketplace and can report that supplier returns based purely on the Council's call volumes (as opposed to other ancillary costs for equipment, maintenance etc.) would be in the region of 10% which, for the purposes of this contract, equates to approximately £5,000. (i.e. 10% of the cost of calls which is around £50,000; rental charges being £100,000)

3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 In order to understand the potential savings offered by migrating the telephony service to an alternative supplier, a direct cost comparison between the alternative supplier tariff and our incumbent supplier was undertaken. The analysis identified that potential savings of circa £25K per annum are available by migrating to the alternative supplier from the current supplier based on our telephone usage in the previous year. The alternative supplier has also said they will carry out checks on unused or rarely used lines which may result in further savings. This made their offer more attractive.
- 3.2 Current costs for the Council telephony are split between those directly billed to the Council and those that transferred to Northgate in 2001 as part of the Information Technology Alliance. The total annual payment to the current supplier is in the region of £150k which, with the £25k savings suggested would give an annual saving of 17%.

- 3.3 In order to simplify the billing and invoicing process for telephony services the Council intends to remove the element of service and associated costs from the Northgate contract and consolidate all costs and contracts directly to the Council. The Council have approached Northgate to negotiate the necessary costs from the base service fee and although detailed discussions are still to take place to determine the costs to be removed, Northgate have indicated their agreement to this, allowing the Council to access potential savings from the alternative arrangement.
- 3.4 The proposed alternative supplier is an OGC approved supplier, and therefore has been through the relevant procurement checks and competition to prove value for money and fulfil regulations.
- 3.5 Given the low value of this contract to the marketplace i.e. £5,000 per annum and the positive feedback being provided by several other Tees Valley Local Authorities it was considered appropriate to follow the Council's prescribed procurement process and follow an informal process, making reasonable enquiries.
- 3.6 As a result of these enquiries the recommendation was made to engage the services of the alternative supplier, subject to performance checks.
- 3.7 The following sections outline areas that the Committee requested to be examined at its meeting on 27th August 2010.

4. PERFORMANCE CHECKS ON SUPPLIER A

- 4.1 Additional performance checks in line with the original Portfolio Holder decision and the request of the Committee have been undertaken.
- 4.2. Following SCC on 27th August HBC have requested additional reference information to be provided from the proposed alternative supplier, as well as discussing with other Tees Valley Authorities to clarify their perception of services offered by this organisation. Responses were received from Stockton and Middlesbrough, both of which confirmed the view that the alternative supplier were providing savings and service improvements: The response from Stockton is given below:

"Our selection of Supplier A (the proposed alternative supplier) was based on some evaluation we did comparing them to our old supplier – (HBC current supplier), which showed that a quick saving could be made from a relatively simple switch to Supplier A. As our spend is not great we also spoke to a couple of reference sites to back this up, one of which had carried out a further competition which Supplier A (the proposed alternative supplier) won, & the other had conducted interviews/presentations where Supplier A (the proposed alternative provider) were ranked highest.

Our experience of the alternative provider so far has been excellent and we would have no problem recommending them to you. We have had one query to date which was resolved over the phone. Our previous supplier (HBC current provider) was frankly a complete

nightmare to deal with as they seem incapable of resolving even the simplest of problems. If you need any further info please let me know”

4.3 The proposed alternative supplier also provided numerous written references covering Local Authority and Health customers, all of these were very positive about the service and benefits provided by them. Furthermore the following list of contacts was provided to HBC but it was felt that with the written responses and comments from Tees Valley authorities it would not be necessary at this time to make any contact with the individuals provided:

- London Borough of Newham
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Waveney District Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Corby Borough Council
- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Fylde Borough Council/Wyre Borough Council
- Richmondshire District Council
- London Borough of Havering
- London Borough of Barnet
- Norfolk Fire and Rescue
- Dorset Fire and Rescue
- South Downs Healthcare NHS Trust
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue

4.4 In addition the following reassurances are extracts from those received from the proposed alternative supplier:-

- The transfer of services to ourselves from the present supplier, is completely seamless and invisible to the end-user. There is no drop or loss of service and no change to network or equipment involved.
- We will provide one single consolidated monthly invoice for telephony charges and this will be tailored to our exact requirements.
- We will provide one point of contact for all customer service issues on the lines 24/7/365 and a dedicated account management team will be appointed to our account.
- Our contract period through Buying Solutions is as follows: the first three months is a Service Acceptance Test period. The minimum contract period is 12 months and then rolls forward on an annual basis. In order to terminate services, 90 days notice is required prior to the renewal date.
- There is no change to network, equipment or infrastructure involved. The transfer of management of lines to ourselves is carried out remotely and is completely invisible to the end-user.

4.5 The performance of the current supplier is outlined in 2.4.

5. CHOICE OF PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE AS POTENTIAL SUPPLIER

5.1 The use of the OGC arrangement was considered the most appropriate for the following reasons:

- The value of the contract was low and under the Council's CPR's only reasonable enquiries were required
- Feedback from other local authorities indicated that the proposed alternative provider could be accessed through the OGC arrangement and was capable of providing a high quality service as well as delivering significant savings.
- The OGC option is pre-tendered and as such offers a quick, easy and cheap procurement route, as well as providing reassurance that suppliers were of a suitable standard.

5.2 There are several companies on the OGC list but due to the fact that reasonable enquiries would be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the CPR's, and that we had received glowing testimony from other local authorities, we elected to secure a proposal from the alternative provider and to contrast this against the offering from our current supplier.

5.3 In discussions with Tees Valley colleagues they procured the alternative supplier because of the need to deliver savings and the overwhelming positive responses received when contacting reference sites provided to them by the alternative supplier. The local authorities we consulted with followed similar principles to Hartlepool Borough Council in relation to their procurement routes, essentially comparing the alternative supplier's offering with their current supplier.

5.4 The utilisation of the alternative supplier in line with other Tees Valley Authorities may also provide an opportunity to collaborate under a single contract to achieve further savings through economies of scale. This could be done whilst at the same time the Council would be able to manage, monitor and control our element of the contract.

5.5 In addition arrangements in Durham County have been explored and they confirmed that they also have a contract for a third party telephone calls/lines with the proposed alternative provider.

Durham are happy with the service they are receiving and have had arrangements with the proposed alternative provider for about 6 years (this is the 3rd contract they have held).

6. NORTHGATE / INFRASTRUCTURE RISKS

6.1 Since the Committee's meeting on 27th August 2010 and in line with the Portfolio Holders original decision, discussions have taken place with Northgate to ensure all risks have been mitigated and systems will operate fully in any change. This includes discussions of any Northgate contractual issues.

- 6.2 No contractual issues or barriers exist to switching telephony provider. Northgate have advised the council to ensure if a switch is to take place we remain with an organisation that uses a Tier 1 Network to mitigate against any degradation of service.

7. ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS

- 7.1 Further limited market testing has taken place with providers from the OGC Framework as well as the current supplier themselves as requested by the Committee.
- 7.2 The limited market testing operation was carried out with the aim of providing a guide to the competitiveness of the providers.
- 7.3 The analysis undertaken has lead us to conclude that enough inconsistencies exist between the submissions of the 6 OGC providers to suggest the market testing results will not be able to clearly identify a 'preferred supplier'.
- 7.4 The majority of submissions have differing 'current cost' values calculated from the sample billing information provided. Due to the limitations of the market testing, the analysis of potential savings has not been undertaken by the suppliers from a consistent base and as such it is extremely difficult to identify the best value supplier with confidence. An alternative provider still appears to be the best guarantee of savings but their offer is based on greater detail and consistent baselines. Also lack of clarity over the network provider to be used in some submissions makes it difficult to guarantee quality of service, as noted previously any move away from Tier 1 network providers significantly increases the risk of disruption to our service. This was the case in some suppliers within the market testing exercise.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 In conclusion, despite the alternative provider remaining in a strong position, it would be prudent not to select a preferred supplier at this stage. Taking the above factors into account it is felt that the only way to achieve absolute clarity may be to undertake a full competitive procurement which would add significant delay and cost to the authority. Given this, it is felt the most appropriate way to proceed is to renegotiate with the current supplier with a view to securing savings in line with those anticipated with moving supplier. This is now a viable option following the Council's proposals to switch supplier in addition to our concerns over the lack of response from our previous account manager. This has now resulted in the authority being allocated a new account manager.
- 8.2 It is hoped this will improve customer service levels and also meet the objectives of the authority in reducing current telephony costs by a similar

amount to that proposed by an alternative supplier without incurring any risk at all to the service HBC currently receive. This is unlikely to have been achieved without having undertaken the recent exercise which enabled the Council to put increased pressure on the current supplier using the information gathered.

- 8.3 In the light of the developments outlined it is suggested that the Committee may wish to refer the matter back to the Portfolio Holder so that negotiation can continue with the current provider. If these negotiations did not prove fruitful then agreement would be sought with the portfolio holder on the most appropriate route to take.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

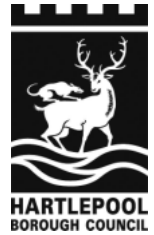
- 9.1 That Members note the content of the report and where appropriate seek clarification.
- 9.2 That consideration be given to whether the decision was taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making (as outlined in Section 12 of the Constitution).
- 9.3 That should the Committee be of the view that the decision was not taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making, comments be formulated for consideration by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.
- 9.4 That the Committee consider whether they refer the outcomes of Section 8 Conclusions to the Portfolio Holder (as outlined in 8.3)

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

Graham Frankland, Assistant Director (Resources)
Joan Chapman, Corporate ICT Manager
David Hart, Strategic Procurement Manager

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

28th January 2011



Report of: Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods

Subject: CALL-IN OF DECISION – MIGRATION OF TELEPHONY PROVISION TO HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide additional information to the Committee regarding the procurement process in relation to telephony services.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, at its meeting on the 27 August 2010, accepted the Call-In regarding the decision taken by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 12 August 2010 in relation to the Migration of Telephony Provision.

Minute No. 13 – Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council

“The Portfolio Holder noted the content of the report and agreed to proceed with the migration of telephony services to Daisy Group plc subject to satisfactory agreement being reached on the removal of costs from the ICT contract between Hartlepool Borough Council and Northgate and confirmation of service performance checks. The Portfolio Holder requested a further report be given to him.”

2.2 A report was presented to the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on the 5th November 2010 which provided information and analysis of the procurement position to support and advise Members in their consideration of the Call-in. Following consideration of the information provided, Members supported the proposal that the most appropriate way forward would be to renegotiate with the current supplier with a view to securing savings in line with those anticipated with moving supplier. It was highlighted that if these negotiations did

not prove fruitful then agreement would be sought with the Portfolio Holder on the most appropriate route to take and this could include a competitive procurement.

- 2.3 Members recognised that Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's comments were being pursued and that a further report to close the scrutiny on this call-in would follow which would outline the considerations in place to appoint a supplier for the services.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Since the last meeting negotiations with the existing provider have been undertaken to establish whether they could secure the savings the Council is seeking as proposed by the Committee .
- 3.2 The negotiations did not result in the level of savings envisaged and as an alternative and as outlined to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at its last meeting a competitive procurement is now being pursued considering both price and quality to ensure the Council achieves best value as well as the requisite savings.
- 3.3 The Council has received responses from 7 providers, including revised pricing from the incumbent, in response to the mini competition off the OGC framework of suppliers. Each response was analysed to understand fully the level of potential savings, reputation in the market of each vendor and the level of perceived risk in migrating services to them. Furthermore it was deemed advisory to ensure that any technical considerations have been considered as part of this process. To this end each bid was analysed by our ICT supplier to provide a view on the technical risk of the service offered. After consideration it was determined that any provider who was vague about the technical solution were either more likely to be using proprietary or IP based connectivity and this has significantly greater risk associated to the Council in the provision of services and continuity than using networks from known Tier 1 infrastructure providers as is currently the case. Tier 1 provision provides greater resilience and is deemed to be of significant importance in the provision of these services.
- 3.4 The results of the renegotiation with the current supplier and the competitive exercise will be reported to the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.
- 3.5 Scrutiny Coordinating Committee are asked to note and comment on the report with comments being reported to the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder to consider in his decision making.

4. CALL-IN PROCESS – NEXT STEPS

4.1 Having fully discussed the reasons outlined within the Call-In Notice (**Appendix A**) there are two ways forward:-

(i) Should the Committee be satisfied that the principles of decision making have not been contravened, the decision(s) will be effective immediately; or

(ii) Should the Committee remain concerned about the decision(s), comments should be agreed for consideration by the Portfolio Holder at the earliest opportunity. The next possible Portfolio Holder meeting being held on the 3 February 2011.

4.2 Following the receipt of comments from Scrutiny, the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder would be required to reconsider the decision in light of them and either reaffirm or amend the decision. A response from the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder must be referred to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, setting out the reasons for reaffirming or modifying the decision, in relation to the issues raised by the Committee.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 That consideration be given to the whether the decision detailed in Section 2.1 was taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making (as outlined in Section 13 of the Constitution).

5.2 That should the Committee be of the view that the decision detailed in Section 2.1 of this report was not taken in accordance with the Principles of Decision Making, comments be formulated for consideration by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.

5.3 That Members note and comment on the report to inform the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder decision making.

