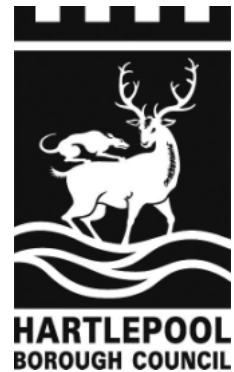


SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Friday, 18 February 2011

at 10.00 am

in Committee Room A, 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 5 November 2010 (*to follow*)
- 3.2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2011 (*to follow*)
- 3.3 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2011 (*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**

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**

No Items

10. **CALL-IN REQUESTS**

No Items

11. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

EXEMPT ITEMS

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 the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

12. **EXEMPT ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION**

12.1 Cabinet Response to The Call-In of the Cabinet's Decision Relating to the Senior Management Review (para 2) – *Cabinet*

12.2 'Directorship' or Directly Appointed Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive (para 1) – *Scrutiny Manager*

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

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting - Friday, 25 February 2011 at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

5 November 2010

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

Present:

Councillor: Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: S Akers-Belcher, C Akers-Belcher and Flintoff

Officers: Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

180. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cook, Cranney, Griffin, London, A Marshall, McKenna, Preece, Richardson, Shaw, Simmons, Thomas and Wells

181. Inquorate Meeting

In the absence of a quorum, the meeting was adjourned. The Chair determined that the meeting be reconvened immediately following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee scheduled for 2.00 pm on Friday 12 November 2010.

The meeting stood adjourned at 2.01 pm.

Upon being reconvened on Friday 12 November immediately following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee scheduled at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair);

Councillors Kevin Cranney, Ann Marshall, Arthur Preece, Carl Richardson, Chris Simmons and Stephen Thomas

Resident Representatives:

Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox

Officers: Graham Frankland, Assistant Director (Resources)
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

182. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Christopher Akers-Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Bob Flinitoff, Sheila Griffin, Jane Shaw and Ray Wells.

183. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

184. Confirmation of the minutes of the meetings held on 24th September and 15 October 2010

Confirmed.

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

None.

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

None.

187. Forward Plan

None.

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

None.

189. Consideration of financial monitoring/corporate reports

None.

190. Call-in Decision: Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council – Briefing Note/Additional Information *(Scrutiny Manager/Assistant Director)*

The Scrutiny Manager provided Members with the relevant information relating to the Call-In of the Migration of Telephony Provision decision taken by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder on 12 August 2010, in accordance with the Authority's Call-In procedure. The decision taken was that "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."

An extract of the relevant minute together with the report considered by the Portfolio Holder was submitted. Following the submission of an appropriate call-in notice (submitted as an appendix to the report) the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, at its meeting on 27 August 2010, considered and accepted the notice. A report from the Assistant Director (Resources) was submitted which provided additional information on the Telephony Provision as requested by Members when the call-in notice was accepted.

The Assistant Director (Resources) referred Members to the additional information as set out in the report which included background information, financial considerations, details of performance checks on Supplier A, choice of proposed alternative as potential supplier, Northgate/Infrastructure risks, alternative providers together with conclusions and recommendations.

In conclusion, Members were advised that it was considered that the most appropriate way to proceed was to renegotiate with the current supplier with a view to securing savings in line with those anticipated with moving supplier. This was now a viable option following the Council's proposals to switch supplier in addition to concerns over the lack of response from the previous account manager. This had recently resulted in the authority being allocated a new account manager.

The Committee supported the proposal to renegotiate with the current supplier and it was therefore suggested that the meeting be adjourned pending receipt of the outcome of the renegotiations with the current supplier.

Recommended

- (i) The contents of the report, be noted.
- (ii) That the meeting stand adjourned pending receipt of the outcome of renegotiations with the current supplier.

191. Call-in Requests

None.

The meeting stood adjourned at 3.35 pm.

**Upon being reconvened on Friday 28 January
immediately following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating
Committee scheduled at 2.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

Present:

Councillor Marjorie James (In the Chair);

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, Ann Marshall, Carl Richardson and Ray Wells

Resident Representatives:

Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox

In accordance with paragraph 4.2 (ii) of the Council's Constitution Councillor Worthy was in attendance as substitute for Councillor S Akers-Belcher

Officers: Graham Frankland, Assistant Director (Resources)
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

192. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Christopher Akers-Belcher, Stephen Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Bob Flinitoff, Sheila Griffin, Jane Shaw and Ray Wells.

193. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

194. Call-in of Decision: Migration of Telephony Provision to Hartlepool Borough Council – Additional Information *(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)*

The Assistant Director (Resources) presented the report which provided background information relating to the call-in together with additional information regarding the procurement process in relation to telephony services.

Since the last meeting negotiations with the existing provider had been undertaken to establish whether they could secure the savings the Council were seeking as proposed by the Committee. These negotiations had proven to be unsuccessful and, as suggested by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at its last meeting, a competitive procurement process was now being pursued considering both price and quality to ensure the Council achieved best value as well as the requisite savings.

The report included details of responses received from seven providers and the results of the analysis by the ICT supplier. The results of the renegotiation with the current supplier and the competitive exercise were to be reported to the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.

The Committee's comments on the report were sought for consideration by the Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder.

Members reiterated the view expressed at the adjourned meeting on the 5 November 2010 that:-

- i) The principles of decision making had been contravened, reinforcing the grounds for the call in;
- ii) The initial process had not been transparent in that the contract had not been subject to the correct tendering process and alternative options pursued; and
- iii) The initial process did not represent best value and that other providers had not had an opportunity to conduct the same exercise as the proposed provider.

Members were pleased to find that these views had been taken on board and welcomed the initiation of a competitive procurement exercise looking at both price and quality to ensure the Council achieved best value. Over and above the views previously expressed by the Committee, Members recommended that a tightening up of the procurement process was needed in future to ensure issues of this nature did not reoccur.

Members also requested that Members' future IT requirements be examined as part of the telephony procurement process. The Assistant Director

highlighted that the current telephony procurement exercise would examine line rental and whilst it would not include specific IT equipment requirements the issue of ensuring adaptability / compatibility to accommodate possible future changes to IT equipment would be included. Members noted this and reiterated the need for a full review of Members' IT equipment requirements and that this should be included in any future equipment procurement exercise.

Recommended

That following the Committee's full and detailed consideration of the information provided, the Performance Portfolio Holder be advised of the Committee's following recommendations:-

- (i) Members welcomed the procurement exercise currently being undertaken in relation to telephony provision.
- (ii) That the formal procurement process (as laid down in the Constitution) should be followed at all times to prevent an issue of this nature reoccurring again.
- (iii) That the current telephony procurement exercise should include a requirement for the new system to be adaptable / compatible with possible future changes to IT equipment.
- (iv) That a full review of Members' IT equipment requirements should be carried out and that this should be included in any future equipment procurement exercise.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm.

CHAIR

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

21 January 2011

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: James (In the Chair)

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, Griffin, A Marshall, Griffin, Richardson, Shaw, Simmons and Wells.

Resident Representatives:

John Cambridge, Ted Jackson, John Maxwell, Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox

Also Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond
Councillor Hill, Children's Services Portfolio Holder
Councillor Hall, Adult and Public Health Portfolio Holder
Councillor Hargreaves, Regeneration and Economic Development

Officers:

Paul Walker, Chief Executive
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Alan Dobby, Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services
Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Alison Mawson, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

153. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of S Akers-Belcher, Cook, Gibbon and Cabinet Member, H Thompson.

154. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

155. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2010

Confirmed.

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

None.

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

None.

158. Forward Plan

None.

159. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents – Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/12 to 2014/15 – Consultation Proposals *(Scrutiny Manager)*

The Chair reported that the Committee would continue and conclude its discussions as part of the second stage of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/12 to 2014/15 consultation process following its meeting on 14 January 2011 and finalise a response for consideration by Cabinet on 24 January 2011.

Members discussed Cabinet's proposals on the unsupported corporate capital borrowing allocations and funding allocations as set out in Appendix C to the report during which the following views/issues were raised:-

- (i) In response to a query regarding the potential of a contribution from the Trust that owned Carlton Camp for improvement works, it was clarified that there would be a contribution from the Trust and the Trust could access funding sources that local authorities were unable to access. The £15,000 referred to in the report represented the Council's allocation/contribution.
- (ii) Concerns were expressed that the overall cost of £70,000 for renewal of boilers and associated heating systems at Warren

Road appeared to be excessive. Whilst it was explained that multiple boilers were to be replaced, Members felt they needed a clearer understanding of what was included before a full view could be provided on the allocation and requested provision of further detail of the scheme.

- (iii) A Member queried if, given the work of the independent living centre, and the funding allocated for that, would there be a need for Warren Road in the future and whether the Council could afford to continue it?
- (iv) In relation to the cost of refurbishments and improvements of Stranton Nursery Lodge/café development, Members were of the view that £50k over 2 years was considerable and difficult to justify when community centres and libraries were under threat. The Committee was advised that the investment would generate greater income in the future and that the business case had provided an indication of the timescale of the investment to be recouped.
- (v) With regard to disabled facilities grants, a query was raised regarding the level of funding contribution from the Government. In response, Members were advised that a similar amount was received. However, full details of the level of Government funding would be provided to Members following the meeting.
- (vi) Members requested that the SCRAPT fund be renamed “The Council’s Special Capital Fund” and that decisions on the allocation of this fund should in future lie with Council.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding Cabinet’s proposed strategy for managing cuts and changes in Specific Grants, as outlined in Appendices 4a and 4b during which the following issues were raised:-

- (i) Attention was drawn to a letter circulated by The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. During the course of discussions Members queried a number of issues, and requested clarification regarding the monies transferred from specific grants to the area based grants and the formula grant. In providing clarification, the Chief Finance Officer advised Members that the Government had implemented a significant reduction in these grants and reference was made to the appendix to the report which set out Cabinet’s proposals for dealing with these reductions. The Committee noted Cabinet’s proposals in this regard.
- (ii) With regard to the Early Intervention Grant, attention was drawn to the monies transferred either from specific grants to the area based grant to the new Early Intervention Grant. Officers explained that the Government had implemented a significant

reduction in these grants and reference was made to the appendix to the report which set out Cabinet's proposals for dealing with these reductions. Concerns expressed by this Committee at its meeting on 14 January were reiterated regarding the mainstreaming of the Children's Fund funding.

- (iii) In terms of the Connexions Service grant, Members queried the quality of outcomes from the Connexions service and reiterated the need for an evaluation to be undertaken. In light of this, it was suggested that consideration should be given to an increased cut in Connexions funding and that the monies identified could then be redirected/redistributed. Members were extremely concerned regarding potential long term implications of cuts in funding for early intervention and prevention services (especially in services for children and young people) and felt that the redirected resources should be focused into these areas.

In response to this, it was noted that as part of previous discussions Members had identified the need to look more corporately at the provision of advice services. It was accepted that there were a range of different things that needed to be looked at in relation to this and this was to be undertaken over the next year, in preparation for next year's budget. The Committee welcomed and reiterated the importance of:

- A thorough 'mapping' exercise of all information services to young people as part of the process; and
- The need for the Connexions service to look at other ways of working (including outreach work).

The Committee welcomed support from the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development in relation to the importance of intervention and prevention services (particularly for children and young people in providing them with the best start and opportunities in life). The Committee welcomed, and supported, the Portfolio Holders suggestion that the allocation of area based grants in relation to intervention and prevention services needed to be looked at again by Cabinet.

To assist in these further discussions, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development also requested confirmation / clarification of the position in terms of the mainstreaming, or not, of the Children's Fund funding.

- (iv) In response to a request for clarification regarding the January guarantee, it was confirmed that this was a service provided through the Connexions Service. Members queried why £12,000 of funding was given in addition to other funding allocations and indicated that if these resources were spent in Children's Centres

on early intervention significant savings could be achieved in the longer term. It was reported that the January Guarantee had been an additional requirement from Government, hence the allocation of additional funding to cover its implementation. Following a lengthy debate, Members were mixed in their views as to whether the funding should be allocated separately for this work or the costs covered by the original funding or whether the guarantee process was really needed twice a year.

- (v) In relation to the Youth Crime Action Plan and given the level of cuts being implemented across all sectors, concern was expressed regarding the potential knock on effect in terms of increased crime and the impact of reduced funding for the provision of Community Safety services.
- (vi) Emphasis was again placed upon the vital importance of preventative services and Members reiterated their concerns regarding the potential long term implications of cuts in funding for early intervention and prevention services. Members were exceptionally concerned regarding the impact of the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance on the opportunities for young people in Hartlepool and the impact of government cuts on the most vulnerable sectors of the community, both nationally and locally. Members highlighted the need to bring the impact of cuts to the attention of the Government and hoped that conservative and liberal democratic colleagues would join in supporting this.

The Mayor, who was in attendance at the meeting, provided a response to earlier scrutiny views/suggestions submitted as part of the first stage of the budget consultation process.

A discussion ensued in relation to Cabinet's decision to reaffirm its original proposals relating to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny function. The Committee reiterated its views that it could not support the proposed cut in funding for these service areas. It was again indicated that given the other reductions being proposed in processes to facilitate face to face interaction between this authority and public scrutiny one of the remaining interfaces would be Scrutiny. It was also reiterated that the following year would be a more appropriate time to look at reductions in this area given the reduction in the number of Councillors that was to occur. Reference to the need for a cut in Cabinet size was also raised.

In relation to Cabinet's decision to reaffirm its original proposals regarding the Community Pool, concerns were reiterated in terms of the unfairness of targeting those groups through the reduction in funding for the community pool and emphasised the impact of this, in combination with the other cuts facing the sector. Following assurances that this was not the case, that the pool was not targeted to specific groups and there were opportunities for the sector, with the move to the commissioning of services, Members maintained the view that the proposal was unfair.

The Chair reiterated the suggestion put to Cabinet on the 20 December 2010 (as part of the first round of the budget consultation process) that the current remaining balance of the Community Pool budget be used as an in-year saving. The Mayor indicated that the removal of the remaining balance had not been included in the Cabinet's budget proposal. The Mayor highlighted that in considering this alternative proposal, the potential impact on those organisations who will be relying on the monies left this year would need to be assessed.

Members expressed concern regarding the implications of shared arrangements and the potential of this authority to have to pick up a larger slice of proportional costs. It was suggested that the use of buildings owned by the Council needed to be rationalised to ensure as many services as possible were delivered from Council premises. The potential to invite partners to operate from Council premises was suggested.

Recommended

- (a) In relation to unsupported corporate capital borrowing and funding allocations, as detailed in Appendix C:-
- the committee noted and accepted the majority of Cabinet's proposals for the allocation of resources under each of three categories identified.
 - Cabinet consider the views/suggestions as outlined above in relation to a number of specific proposals.
 - additional information be provided to all Members of this Committee in relation to the costs identified for the boiler replacement at Warren Road and level of Government funding in respect of disabled facilities grants.
 - that the SCRAPT fund be renamed "the Council's Special Capital Fund".
- (b) That Cabinet's proposals for dealing with reductions in the Formula Grant, as detailed in Appendix 4a, be noted.
- (c) In relation to Area Based Grants and specific grants transferred into Early Intervention Grant, as detailed in Appendix 4b:-
- the Committee noted Cabinet's proposals and expressed views/suggestions in relation to a number of specific proposals as outlined above.
 - that additional information be provided, as outlined above.
 - if the intention was to look at information/advice/guidance services and see how they could be rationalised (including the Connexions Services for young people) the Council may wish as part of next year's budget process redirect any monies identified to those in need and not absorbed into departmental budgets.

160. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents – Safer Hartlepool Partnership
(Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods)

Following a brief adjournment, the Assistant Director of Community Safety and Protection presented the report which provided background information to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership's draft strategy 2011-2014. The report included details of the regulations including the need to produce an annual strategic assessment as well as the purpose of the assessment. It was noted that a summary of the Partnership Plan must be published on 1 April 2011.

A summary of the findings of the strategic assessment were included in the draft strategy, attached at Appendix A. The Safer Hartlepool Partnership had reviewed its four strategic objectives contained in the strategy for 2008-2011 and adjusted their focus slightly for 2011-14, details of which were set out in the report. Members were referred to the annual priorities established from the strategic assessment conducted in December 2010, details of which were also included in the report.

Members' views were sought on the contents of the report and were requested to formulate any comments and observations for consideration by Cabinet.

In the discussion that followed Members commented on the impact recent Government cuts would place on the service, whether the appropriate areas were being targeted, the benefits of crime prevention, the various definitions of crime related incidents, interpretation of statistics and the increasing number of alcohol related crime and personal attacks. Members queried what action was being taken to address crimes of this type. It was reported that alcohol treatment services in Hartlepool were currently in the development stage and this was dependent upon funding from the Primary Care Trust. It was uncertain at the present time how the funding from the Coalition Government in relation to alcohol and drug treatment would be allocated. However, it was acknowledged that the two issues would be treated as a combined service.

A Member queried how effective the current drug and alcohol strategy had been in reducing levels of drug related crime. The Committee was advised that it was difficult to link a particular treatment service to a reduction in individual crimes. However, recent statistics confirmed a reduction in domestic burglary in the last five years which could be as a result of services such as drugs treatment, neighbourhood policing or other actions such as installation of alleygates to back alleys in the town centre area particularly.

In response to a query regarding the impact the forthcoming changes to the way health services would be delivered would place on the Council, the

Assistant Director reported that the PCT were part of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and had been for a number of years. Details of the Council's role would become clearer as the public health agenda developed. The Chair pointed out that whilst the Council envisaged an increase in responsibilities for public health there were concerns that there would not be a budget to address public health issues.

In formulating its response in relation to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership's Draft Strategy 2011-2014 for consideration by Cabinet, the Committee was of the view that:-

- i) Sustainable alcohol treatment is required to underpin activity to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Commitment to continued funding from the Primary Care Trust is critical. The Safer Hartlepool Partnership must ensure alcohol treatment is properly resourced.
- ii) The effect of drug and alcohol misuse on criminal activity was discussed. Members were keen to know whether the Partnership can demonstrate that investment in drugs and alcohol services does reduce crime. It was acknowledged that for an individual offender, this can be directly linked, but it is more difficult to demonstrate a general correlation that more offenders in treatment will lead to a reduction in crime, as other factors also lead to a reduction in crime (e.g. alley gates); and
- iii) The proposed trial of a 'family' delivery model for 2011/12 was discussed. Members were keen that young offenders should be part of this family approach i.e. the selection criteria should not be based purely on adult offending.

Recommended

That the contents of the report and comments and observations of Members, as outlined above, be noted.

161. Consideration of Financial Monitoring/Corporate Reports

None.

162. Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 – Implementation of Requirements *(Scrutiny Manager)*

The report updated Members on the views expressed by Scrutiny Chairs on the suggestions put forward by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership (SHP) for the implementation of the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

In relation to the views of partner bodies (Police, Fire Brigade etc) considered by this Committee on 12 November and subsequently considered by Scrutiny Chairs on 23 November, there was no support expressed for the permanent co-option of a representative on the membership of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee. The Chairs reiterated their support for the original recommendation made by this Committee on 12 November that:

“as and when required, additional police authority representatives be invited to participate in those meetings where the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is fulfilling its role as the authorities Crime and Disorder Committee as ‘expert witnesses.’ “

In the discussion that followed, Members reinforced their original view as outlined above, and did not support the permanent co-option of a representative on the membership of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

Members considered the potential process for consideration of crime and disorder issues through scrutiny, as set out in Section 3 of the report and were of the view that the suggestion of ‘one’ meeting a year, diaried (between January and June) to receive detailed baseline information in relation to the current position/activities and performance of the partner authorities, was an inappropriate time due to the workload of the Committee during that period on the budget setting process and forthcoming elections which may impact on Member attendances. Following discussion and clarification from the Scrutiny Manager, it was suggested that no specific timeslot be allocated for this purpose and the meeting be scheduled at an appropriate time.

Recommended

- (i) That the views expressed by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Scrutiny Chairs, be noted.
- (ii) That the finalised process for Scrutiny consideration of crime and disorder issues, as outlined in Section 3 of the report, be agreed subject to the removal of a specific timeslot in the Council’s diary for consideration of such issues, as outlined above.
- (iii) That the process to make the necessary additions/changes to the Constitution through the Constitution Committee and Council, be approved.

163. Call-In Requests

None

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

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute No. 165 Cabinet Response to the Call-in of the Cabinet's Decision relating to the Senior Management Review - paragraph 2, namely information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

165. Cabinet Response to the Call-in of the Cabinet's Decision Relating to the Senior Management Review *(Cabinet)*

Due to time constraints, it was suggested that this issue be deferred to a future meeting of this Committee.

Recommended

That this item be deferred to a future meeting of this Committee.

The meeting concluded at 11.40 am.

CHAIR

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

28 January 2011

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

Present:

Councillor: James (In the Chair)

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, Cook, Griffin, A Marshall, Shaw, Thomas and Wells

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Councillor Worthy was in attendance as substitute for Councillor S Akers-Belcher

Resident Representatives:

Linda Shields, Angie Wilcox and John Maxwell

Also Present: Councillor Rogan

Iain Wright, MP for Hartlepool
Joe Micha, Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau
Katherine Urwin, Senior Debt Advice Worker, West View Advice Service and Resource Centre
Alison Thompson, West View Advice Service and Resource Centre
Claire Jewson, Hartlepool Carers
Ray Harriman, Connected Care
Elaine Gel, Specialist Benefits Advice Worker
Brenda Parkinson, Job Centre Plus
Elizabeth Briggs, Age UK Teesside
Peter Carroll, Navigator
Rachel Lowry, Connected Care

Officers:

Carol Auckland, Project Officer – Job Smart
Carol Ann Jones, Financial Inclusion Partnership
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager
Sarah Tudor, Families Information Services Manager
Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

166. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Akers-Belcher, Cranney, Flintoff, Preece and Richardson.

167. Declarations of interest by Members

Councillors Cook, A Marshall, Griffin, Shaw and Rogan declared personal interests in minute 174.

168. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2011

The minutes of the meeting of 14 January 2011, a copy of which were tabled at the meeting, were confirmed.

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

None.

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

None.

171. Forward Plan

None.

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

None.

173. Consideration of financial monitoring/corporate reports

None.

174. The Provision of Face to Face Financial Advice and Information Services in Hartlepool – Evidence from the Member of Parliament for Hartlepool – Covering Report (*Scrutiny Manager*)

The Chair welcomed Councillor Worthy, the town's MP, Iain Wright and representatives from a variety of groups/bodies that navigated residents to, and provided face to face financial advice and information services in Hartlepool.

As part of the Forum's ongoing investigation into the provision of face to face financial advice and information services in Hartlepool, the town's MP, Iain Wright was in attendance to provide evidence in relation to his views on the provision of face to face advice information services in Hartlepool.

The MP emphasised the importance of face to face financial advice and paid tribute to a number of representatives in attendance at today's meeting who provided invaluable advice and support to the people of Hartlepool. The MP expressed concern in relation to the impact the reduction in public funding would place on the service at a time when demand for such services was continuing to increase and commented on the need to explore how face to face financial advice could be maintained with reduced public funds.

Recommended

That the information given, be noted and discussions be used to assist the Forum in completing the scrutiny investigation.

175. Provision of Face to Face Financial Advice and Information Services in Hartlepool – Evidence from Providers and Navigators in Hartlepool – Covering Report (*Scrutiny Manager*)

As part of the Forum's investigation into the provision of face to face advice and information services in Hartlepool, representatives from Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau, West View Advice and Resource Centre, Connected Care, Job Centre Plus, Age UK Teesside, Families Information Service, The Albert Centre and Job Smart who provided and navigated residents to face to face financial advice and information services available in Hartlepool were in attendance at today's meeting to contribute to the Committee's investigation.

A representative from Hartlepool Citizens Advice Bureau provided a report of the results of a recent client feedback survey, a copy of which was attached as an appendix to the report. The overall results from the client feedback survey were good and this was consistent with the previous

surveys previously carried out. Reference was made to the current staffing structure, the increase in paid staff over the years, the continued reliance on volunteers and the impact the reduction in public funding would place on staffing levels and future service provision. The Committee Was advised of the type of advice provided, the various methods of communicating with the Bureau, appointment arrangements, appointment waiting times, key areas of advice which included debt related issues and self help proposals to address debt related problems .

A discussion ensued which included the following issues:-

- In response to a query regarding the level of funding from the Council, the representative stated that core funding of approximately £80,300 was provided by the Council. However, future funding levels were currently unclear.
- With regard to the issue of self help proposals, the disadvantages of these arrangements as opposed to face to face advice were highlighted.
- In response to a request for clarification in relation to appointment waiting times from initial advice and second appointment, Members were advised that the waiting period for specialist advice ie debt related issues was 4/5 weeks and general advice was on average 2/3 weeks. However, urgent appointments could be arranged in exceptional circumstances.
- A Member commented that based on the number of enquiries and length of interviews, employment levels appeared to be high to which Members were advised that employment levels varied depending on the level of support from volunteers. Arrangements were in place to expand the number of volunteers.
- Some concern was expressed regarding the cuts in this area and the impact on the community as a result. The need to work in partnership with solicitors within the town to utilise the 30 minute fixed fee consultation support was emphasised. The representative confirmed that whilst there was a referral process in place with local solicitors, support was limited to two firms providing support whereas in the past all legal firms in Hartlepool provided advice on a rota basis. The Chair added that the advice provided by West View Community Centre was not limited to West view residents and was available to all residents in the town. The availability of out reach support from Turner Morgan Jamieson, Solicitors was also highlighted.
- Members discussed the potential operational difficulties facing the bureau as a result of a reduction in public funding which included a number of redundancies, reduction in staff working hours and potentially a reduction in opening times.

- A Member queried whether the clients were represented at tribunals to which the representative advised that assistance with preparation of submissions etc was provided. However, no representation was provided at tribunal hearings to which Members noted a gap in tribunal support in the town.
- A Member queried the feasibility of providing debt management workshops in group sessions as opposed to individually to which it was reported that money management seminars had been delivered to various organisations. However, for confidentiality and personal reasons it was envisaged that take up of group sessions would be low.
- Members commented on the need for provision for clients with literacy and numeracy problems.

A representative from West View Advice and Resource Centre who was in attendance at the meeting, as a provider of the service, provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which focused on the following:-

- brief history of the service
- details of current staffing structure
- How services are provided
 - 11 outreach service
 - comprehensive service at main office in Miers Avenue
 - home visits for the housebound
 - hospital/hospice
- Services available by type include
 - health conditions
 - welfare benefit advice
 - personal/family matters
 - budgetary advice
 - debt advice - continued to be the main source of advice, average of £123,000 new debt enquiries per month. Previously the most common debts involved door step lenders. However, this had changed in recent years with personal loans/credit card debts being a more common problem.
- Impact of service provision
- Outcomes/feedback from various case studies
- Examples of partnership arrangements
- Suggested improvements

Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Committee raised a number of comments/views/queries which included the following:-

- (i) In response to a query regarding the level of funding from the Council, the representative stated that it was envisaged that the only source of funding was from the Council's community pool.
- (ii) In terms of the staffing levels within the centre, the Committee was advised that the structure consisted of 6 advice workers, 1 admin officer and 1 receptionist.

- (iii) In response to a request for clarification regarding the number of clients to which support had been provided independent of Sure Start referrals, it was reported that advice had been provided to 2,026 clients in a 6 month period.

Representatives from Connected Care who were in attendance at the meeting, as providers of the service, provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which focused on the following:-

- What is Connected Care
 - provide south Hartlepool with a holistic approach to issues and assist with access to information guidance and support
 - Community Led Programme
 - Encourage co-operation between services
- Connected Care Service
 - Navigator Service
 - Handyman Service
 - Benefits & Welfare Advice
 - SAILS Project
 - Meals on Wheels
 - Supported Living Project
- Who Can Access Connected Care
- Agencies Connected Care Work With
- How Connected Care Work
- What does the Future Hold
- Community Engagement Events
- Feedback and outcomes of Case Studies

A discussion followed which included the following issues:-

- (i) A query was raised as to which areas of the town the service was available. The representative stated that whilst the service was set up predominantly for the south area of the town, the service was also available to all Hartlepool residents.
- (ii) Concerns were reiterated in relation to the impact of a reduction in public funding on services of this type.
- (iii) In terms of funding provided by the Council, Members were advised that joint funding from the Council and PCT had been provided the previous year. It was estimated that a £50,000 funding contribution was received from the Council.
- (iv) In response to a request for clarification in relation to the number of full time staff dealing with benefits advice, the representative advised that approximately 2,500 clients per year were supported often with multiple needs and information of this type was not currently recorded.
- (v) The MP emphasised the benefits of early intervention and investing in preventative services, the views of which were supported by Members. A representative from Job Centre Plus referred to the various sources of face to face advice provided by Job Centre Advisors who were willing to advise in various

- community settings.
- (vi) The MP indicated the importance of providing accurate independent, impartial financial advice and information to all sectors of the community.
 - (vii) The Financial Inclusion Officer stated that the Council were currently working with the College of Further Education and various schools delivering a money skills programme in partnership with Barclays Bank. However, it was pointed out that no funding was allocated to support this initiative.

A representative from Age UK, Teesside who was in attendance at the meeting, as a navigator of the service, advised that whilst no face to face financial advice was provided information advice and guidance was provided to the over 50s age group. The service operated from 26 Lister Street on Thursday mornings utilising volunteer staff, interviewing an average of 3 clients per session. The type of advice provided was mainly signposting individuals, carers and supporters. Although the service was provided mainly by volunteers, there were a number of resource implications in terms of ensuring volunteers were adequately trained and sources of information were up to date and accurate.

A representative from The Families Information Service who was in attendance at the meeting, as a navigator of the service, advised that the team provided information advice and guidance services to parents, parents to be, carers, mothers, fathers and grandparents of children aged 0 to 19. the provision of this information is a Local Authority duty under S12 of the Childcare Act 2006. Members were advised that the team provided specialist advice on child care issues, various other information and advice was provided including tax credit advice, advice for young parents who may wish to continue in education, signposting individuals to relevant organisations, referrals to Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, West View Advice and Resource Centre as well as other relevant organisations. The service also had close working links with Sure Start Children's Centres.

Representatives from the Albert Centre, who were in attendance at the meeting, reported that this a voluntary organisation which had operated for 2 years dealing with misuse issues. Anyone with misuse problems could utilise the service which operated on a walk-in basis with an option to self refer and seek advice. The team consisted of 8 paid members of staff and 6 volunteers, based at York Road.

In response to a request for clarification, it was reported that no funding was provided by the Council in support of this service.

The Job Smart Project Officer who was also in attendance at the meeting advised that this was a council service based at 41 Park Road where face to face guidance was provided in relation to employment and training issues. Reference was made to the Job Smart Consortium where over 40 agencies providing similar support met regularly to share information and agree the most appropriate methods of communicating information to the public. The

representative referred to the importance of working links and support from voluntary and private sector organisations to enable the service to operate.

The Committee went on to discuss the various methods of publicising information to individuals and the feasibility of utilising the Council's Hart Beat magazine to facilitate this was suggested.

Members commented on the need to develop partnership working, diversify funding opportunities and invest in services to achieve savings in the longer term.

In conclusion, the Committee discussed the national position, the impact of the national debt on services locally and commented on the importance of the current Government addressing the national debt.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their attendance and valid contribution to the investigation.

Recommended

That the information given, be noted and discussions be used to assist the Forum in completing the scrutiny investigation

176. Call-In Requests

None

177. 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.

178. Any Other Business – Joint Neighbourhood Forum Meetings

The Chair reported that a joint meeting of the Neighbourhood Forums to discuss dog control issues would be held on 8 February at 12 noon in the Council Chamber to which invitations had been extended to all Elected Members.

179. Any Other Business – Site Visit to Stockton

Members were reminded of a site visit to Stockton on 9 February to which arrangements had been made for transport to leave the rear of the civic

centre at 2.30 pm. Interested Members requiring transport should inform Democratic Services as soon as possible.

The meeting concluded at 4.15 pm.

CHAIR