

# Item 5

## REPORT TO CABINET

20th JANUARY 2005

## REPORT OF HEAD OF STRATEGY AND REGENERATION

### All Portfolios

### SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION FINDINGS AND ACTION PLANNING

#### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Audit Commission (AC) in respect of the Council's Services for Children and Young People, as set out in its report of December 2004.
- 1.2 The report rates the Council's Services for Children and Young People as **fair** (one star), with **promising prospects for improvement** and recommends four broad improvement areas...
- Setting out formally the Council's approach in a Young People's Charter
  - Ensuring that services are focused on outcomes
  - Determining the value for money of the current approach
  - Developing a structured consultation framework
- 1.3 An Action Plan has been prepared addressing these four improvement areas and the report seeks approval for the establishment of an officer working group to develop and deliver the Action Plan in accordance with the AC's three month deadline.
- 1.4 In addition the report provides an estimate of the financial resources required to support the Action Plan.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet...

1. Notes the findings and recommendations of the Audit Commission in respect of the Council's Services for Children and Young People, as set out in its report of December 2004.
2. Agrees that the Service Review Action Plan be developed and delegates authority to an officer working group to develop the Plan as appropriate to achieve the overall objectives, within the agreed resource parameters.

### **3 INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### **Background to Inspection**

- 3.1 The Council's CPA report, published in April 2004, identified Services for Children and Young People (the 5-19 group – the standard youth work age range) as presenting 'high risk of service failure'. As a result, a 'light touch' inspection of this crosscutting service area was agreed with the AC as part of the Council's post-CPA Improvement Plan.
- 3.2 The timetabling of this project dovetailed usefully with the Council's growing involvement in the development of children's services across the Borough via the LSP structure, particularly its Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP). This was established to oversee strategic developments in respect of Services for Children across the Borough e.g. the integration of core services for children as set out in the Children Act 2004.
- 3.3 The Children's Act 2004 places a reciprocal duty on other organisations (including shire district councils) to enter into partnerships with the top tier and other local partners to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. The Council's leading role in the CYPP offers an opportunity to develop the contribution of its various services to the improvement of the overall outcomes for children and to explore joined up consultations with other organisations working with children in the Borough.

#### **Inspection Methodology**

- 3.4 The methodology agreed with the AC was akin to that used for service area diagnostics under CPA i.e. the preparation by the Council of a self-assessment against pre-determined 'Key Lines of Enquiry' and an Action Plan to address the gaps identified, followed by an on-site inspection testing the Council's findings through evidence checks, visits, focus groups and interviews. Inspection informs two judgements...
  1. How good is the (crosscutting) service?
  2. What are the prospects for improvement?...with each judgement scored on the Poor to Excellent scale.
- 3.5 Accordingly a self-assessment and outline Action Plan were produced by Strategy and Regeneration in consultation with the Council's key youth-focused services and submitted to the AC in advance of its on-site inspection (31 August – 3 September 2004), as agreed following Cabinet's discussion of an initial report on the inspection process in July 2004.
- 3.6 To support this work a short-term Members Panel, comprising relevant Cabinet Members and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, was established to oversee the final self-assessment and to help shape the Action Plan. The Panel concluded its work in October 2004.

## Inspection Findings

- 3.7 Published on 2 December 2004, the AC's Inspection report rates the Council's Services for Children and Young People as **fair** (one star), with **promising prospects for improvement**.

| PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT? |      |      |      |           |           |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|
|                            | Poor | Fair | Good | Excellent |           |
| Excellent                  |      |      |      |           | HOW GOOD? |
| Promising                  |      | ★    |      |           |           |
| Uncertain                  |      |      |      |           |           |
| Poor                       |      |      |      |           |           |

**Sedgefield Borough Council – CYP Services**

- 3.8 The identified strengths and weaknesses underpinning these judgements largely reflect the conclusions of the Council's self-assessment and are as follows...

### Judgement 1 – A Fair Service

#### **Strengths**

- Good knowledge of area, identifying broad local needs & baseline data for CYP
- CYP are cross cutting issue in Community Strategy and Corporate Plan
- Council actively involved in LSP's CYP Partnership
- Strong partnerships in place to improve range of opportunities
- Frontline staff knowledgeable and committed
- Good range of leisure activity at different locations and social pricing policy
- Good quality housing and training services for young people
- Some effective local projects working with disadvantaged CYP

#### **Weaknesses**

- Baseline information not used to set challenging targets
- CYP Partnership relatively new and at an early stage
- Information available to assist targeting activities poor
- Outcomes not systematically measured by the Council
- No clear statement of what CYP can expect from the Council
- No systematic, consistent approach to consultation and engagement with CYP
- Marketing not fully effective
- Council cannot demonstrate whether it obtains value for money

## **Judgement 2 – Promising Prospects For Improvement**

### **Strengths**

- Council has open, honest & accurate picture of its strengths & weaknesses
- Draft Action Plan proposes sound actions to address key improvement areas
- Officers & Members have good understanding of issues and are committed
- Council is open to external challenge and is acting on previous inspections
- Investment in buildings and staffing resources to enhance opportunities
- Corporate Plan 2005/2006 nearing completion – CYP crosscutting issue
- PMF is in place and improvements in establishing consistency are underway
- Council demonstrates track record of improvement in its services for CYP

### **Weaknesses**

- Some key strategies for CYP out of date or not in place
- Little work on developing local PIs & challenging targets relating to outcomes

The full report is available on the Council's website.

### **Audit Commission Recommendations**

- 3.9 Based on its findings, the AC recommends that within three months, the Council consults with children and young people and finalises Action Plan and in implementing it ensures that the following are given high priority...

- A structured approach to engagement & consultation which results in the Council listening to & acting on the views of CYP
- The production of a set of local PIs that: -
  1. Measure outcomes in relation to the issues most important to CYP
  2. Set challenging targets for service improvement
  3. Enable the Council's effectiveness to be benchmarked against others
- The completion of a charter that shows clearly what CYP can expect from the Council.
- Determine whether the Council is achieving value for money in CYP Services

- 3.10 Again, these recommended actions largely reflect those set out in the outline Action Plan appended to the Council's self-assessment. As a result the Council did not contest the report and suggested only minor amendments to the AC's report. The AC reports favourably on the inspection and the Council's approach in both its Annual Audit Letter and Direction of Travel report but stresses that further progress must be made in this area.

### **Next Steps – Action Planning**

- 3.11 The principal output of the self-assessment process was an outline Action Plan that sets out from the Council's perspective the key activity required to strengthen the strategic framework for the delivery and improvement of the Council's Services for Children and Young People and mechanisms for the participation of young people in the planning and delivery of services.

3.12 The AC inspection validates the outline Action Plan in recommending four broad improvement areas...

- Setting out formally the Council's approach towards services for Young People in a Young People's Charter
- Ensuring that services are more focused on outcomes
- Determining the value for money of the current approach
- Developing a structured consultation framework

...to these must be added two issues emerging from the self-assessment process – the co-ordination of services and safeguarding children.

3.13 The AC recommends that the Council develops and finalises the Action Plan by the end of February 2005 in consultation with children and young people. The current version of the Action Plan – addressing these issues – is attached at Appendix 1.

3.14 Properly resourced co-ordination is fundamental to achieving improvement in crosscutting areas, as evidenced by relative progress in the previously inspected areas of Procurement and Equality and Diversity. To this end it would appear logical to convene an officer working group, led by Strategy and Regeneration in line with its corporate role, to develop and deliver the Action Plan. Departments will be required to nominate relevant officers to the group, with these officers will be required to deliver change at a departmental level. The group will also serve as a service co-ordination and information-sharing forum.

3.15 Key to improvements in youth engagement is the ongoing research of the focus group of young people identified via County Durham and Darlington Investing in Children. This group has interviewed on behalf of the Council a variety of youth groups (over 100 young people) across the Borough to identify preferred methods of communication and involvement and will report in February 2005. Its recommendations will be considered alongside current arrangements and plans of partners to establish a sustainable participation framework for children and young people across the Borough. As key contributors, this group will be a valuable consultee on the Action Plan but additional options will be explored (e.g. a focus group of the Council's Modern Apprentices, School Councils or a case study exercise for school citizenship classes) to ensure the plan reaches as wide a range of young people as possible.

3.16 The LSP's CYPP will also be engaged in the Action Plan preparation process so that duplication of effort can be minimised and potential areas for joint working identified.

### **Corporate policy implications**

3.17 The Action Plan set outs activity to develop the Council's Policy Framework in respect of children and young people.

3.18 Children and Young People are identified as a crosscutting theme for LSP service delivery in the Community Strategy and is the subject of a significant workstream via the CYPP. As such, a Children and Young People's Strategy specific to the Council would serve little purpose. However, in consultation with local children and young people and the CYPP, the Council will develop a corporate Charter that will

set out its approach to working with children and young people and its contribution to priority outcomes. All corporate strategies and business plans should be consistent with this Charter.

- 3.19 In addition, the Action Plan prescribes the introduction of a corporate Safeguarding Children Policy. The purpose of this is to provide an overarching framework in which Departments can introduce service specific policies.
- 3.20 The delivery of this Action Plan will help to foster social inclusion, citizenship and community cohesion across the Borough and support corporate policy commitments to improving the wellbeing of local people and securing best value service delivery in consultation with users as detailed in the Corporate Plan.

#### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The delivery of the Action Plan will clearly require significant officer time. The majority of work will be undertaken by Strategy and Regeneration and has been factored into the Division's work plan. Service Departments will also provide inputs to deliver actions specified in the plan.
- 4.2 Commitment to service improvement must be backed by resources where necessary. Cabinet has identified youth development as a priority area for investment/improvement and as such actions set out in outline Action Plan were submitted for consideration during the preparation of the Council's draft Medium-Term Financial Plan in October 2004.
- 4.3 Given the status of youth development as a corporate priority, its audit status and contribution the Council's Direction of Travel assessment and the number of young people consulted throughout the development of the Action Plan to date, it is imperative from both a service improvement and a risk management perspective that the Council allocates appropriate resources to this area in determining 2005/06 service budgets.

#### **5 CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 The self-assessment and inspection process involved an array of consultees including Council employees, service users, partners and local community and voluntary groups, as well as the LSP's CYPP.
- 5.2 A short-term Members Panel, comprising relevant Cabinet Members and the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, was established to oversee the self-assessment and outline Action Plan and signed off in October 2004.
- 5.3 As stated above, a focus group of young people identified via County Durham and Darlington Investing in Children has interviewed on behalf of the Council a variety of youth groups across the Borough to contribute to the development of the Action Plan and will report in February 2005.

- 5.4 To promote joint working developments in respect of the Council's approach to youth engagement will be shared with partners via the CYPP, which will also be a key consultee on the Action Plan.
- 5.5 Approaches and techniques developed in respect of youth engagement will form part of a corporate Consultation Strategy and its associated guidance.

## **6 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 A focus on outcomes for children and young people has now become an integral part of local government service delivery. The AC's proposed changes to CPA from 2005 suggest that achievement will be assessed against the following shared priorities agreed by central and local government...

- Sustainable communities and transport
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthier communities
- Older people
- Children and young people

Activity set out in the Action Plan, properly resourced, will ensure that the progress in this area is ensured and a positive contribution is made to the Council's overall Direction of Travel.

- 6.2 Adherence to a corporate Charter will ensure that Council strategies and business plans are in line with the Community Strategy commitment to young people as a crosscutting theme in service delivery.
- 6.3 In addition, the Council is a partner in the County Durham and Darlington Investing in Children Partnership (IICP). The IICP's Statement of Intent supports the UK adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which asserts the right of children and young people to be involved in those matters that affect them and the Government's Children and Young People's Unit's *Learning to Listen* document, which sets out core principles for the involvement of children and young people in service development. The implementation of a sustainable corporate consultation framework for children and young people will enable the Council to meet its commitments in this area.
- 6.4 Where appropriate activity set out in the Action Plan will be subject to risk assessments and factored into corporate and service planning as appropriate.

## **7 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Once finalised, the Action Plan will be monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 in line with corporate procedures for the monitoring of service improvement plans.

## **8 LIST OF APPENDICES**

- Services for Children and Young People Action Plan

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**Wards:** N/A

**Key Decision Validation:** Involves no direct expenditure or impact on specific wards

**Background Papers:**

- Local Government Act 1999
- Local Government Act 2000
- Every Child Matters (DfES, November 2003)
- SBC CPA Report (AC, April 2004)
- CYPP Draft Terms of Reference (April 2004)
- SBC Services for Children and Young People – Self-assessment and outline Action Plan
- Sedgefield Borough Community Strategy 2004-2014
- SBC Corporate Plan 2005-2008
- SBC Medium Term Financial Plan 2005-2008
- Children Act 2004
- SBC Services for Children and Young People Inspection Report (AC, December 2004)

**Examination by Statutory Officers**

|  | <b>Yes</b>                          | <b>Not<br/>Applicable</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 3. The content has been examined by the Council’s Monitoring Officer or his representative     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 4. The report has been approved by Management Team   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>  |

**APPENDIX 1**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES ACTION PLAN**

| <b>1 CO-ORDINATING CYP SERVICES</b> |  |              |               |                               |                  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>REF</b>                          | <b>ACTION</b>  | <b>START</b> | <b>FINISH</b> | <b>RESOURCES</b>              | <b>LEAD</b>      |
| 1.1                                 | Provide corporate lead on Children and Young People's issues...<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Represent the Council in its role as community leader on the LSP's CYP Partnership in order to progress the Every Child Matters agenda in the Borough.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Establish and co-ordinate corporate CYP Services Planning Group to develop and deliver Action Plan addressing areas for improvement identified via Audit Commission inspection process and to act as a data sharing forum on youth issues and service developments. | Ongoing      |               | Officer time                  | S & R            |
| 1.2                                 | Re-engineer Youth Development Fund, revising terms of reference, identifying potential funding sources and establishing appraisal framework that involves CYP in a meaningful way and is consistent with corporate and LSP arrangements  | July 2004    | January 2005  | Officer time<br>Financial TBE | Leisure Services |

| <b>2 DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH</b> |  |              |               |                                       |                |
|--|--|--------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>REF</b>                               | <b>ACTION</b>  | <b>START</b> | <b>FINISH</b> | <b>RESOURCES</b>                      | <b>LEAD</b>    |
| 2.1                                      | Develop corporate Children and Young People's Charter setting out the Council's policy in respect of young people in conjunction with local CYP and promote to stakeholders. | January 2005 | July 2005     | Officer time<br>£500<br>Promotion TBE | S & R          |
| 2.2                                      | Ensure that all corporate strategies and business plans are consistent with the standards set out in the corporate CYP Charter.  | July 2005    | Ongoing       | Officer time                          | All Depts      |
| 2.3                                      | Monitor corporate strategies and business plans to ensure consistency with corporate CYP Charter.  | July 2005    | Ongoing       | Officer time                          | Planning Group |

### 3 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

| REF | ACTION   | START        | FINISH       | RESOURCES                    | LEAD        |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| 3.1 | Develop and disseminate Corporate Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.   | October 2004 | January 2005 | Officer time                 | S & R       |
| 3.2 | Review existing CRB check policy in line with Corporate Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures, addressing transfers of check from previous posts outside of the Council.           | January 2005 | March 2005   | Officer time                 | Service Imp |
| 3.3 | Implement Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures across the Council and develop service specific procedures where appropriate, appointing departmental lead where appropriate.      | January 2005 | July 2005    | Officer time                 | All Depts   |
| 3.4 | Identify representative from each Department to train as trainers via DCC Child Protection Training Programme.   | March 2005   |              | Officer time<br>Training TBE | All Depts   |
| 3.5 | Implement induction and training programme for Members and staff, outlining Corporate Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures and setting out individual roles and responsibilities. | March 2005   | July 2005    | Officer time<br>Training TBE | Service Imp |

#### 4 IMPROVING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

| REF | ACTION  | START        | FINISH        | RESOURCES                     | LEAD        |
|-----|---|--------------|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 4.1 | Improve current statistical baseline on the circumstances and needs of local CYP and audit CYP services and initiatives across the Borough in conjunction with County Durham Every Child Matters Partnership.   | October 2004 | March 2005    | Officer time                  | S & R       |
| 4.2 | Evaluate potential of commissioning LSP local Quality of Life Surveys, including specific youth surveys.  | April 2005   | July 2005     | Officer time<br>Financial TBE | S & R       |
| 4.3 | Develop performance indicator suite for the Council's youth focused services in conjunction with managers...<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Identify key service outputs and how these impact on priority outcomes for CYP.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that PI suite is set out in Corporate Plan and monitored in accordance with the Council's performance management arrangements.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Benchmark corporate arrangements, indicators and investment levels with other public, private and CV sector service providers to promote improvements. | March 2005   | December 2005 | Officer time                  | Service Imp |
| 4.4 | Analyse service budgets to identify corporate expenditure by age group where possible and cross-reference with PI suite to produce value for money formula for corporate CYP Services.  | March 2005   | December 2005 | Officer time                  | Resources   |
| 4.5 | Explore potential of developing standard skills matrix for staff working with CYP in conjunction with CYP Partnership and local children and young people. If viable...<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that matrix is applied in preparation of job descriptions to ensure new joiners have the appropriate skills.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Develop and implement training programme to develop the skills of current staff working with CYP in line with the matrix.   | January 2005 | July 2005     | Officer time                  | S & R       |

## 5 IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT

| REF | ACTION  | START         | FINISH        | RESOURCES                     | LEAD  |
|-----|---|---------------|---------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 5.1 | Develop consultation standards and framework for local CYP in conjunction with Investing in Children group.   | July 2004     | February 2005 | Officer time<br>£500          | S & R |
| 5.2 | Incorporate CYP consultation framework within corporate Consultation Strategy, aligned to LSP Strategy to ensure consistency with partners' approaches. | February 2005 | July 2005     | Officer time                  | S & R |
| 5.3 | Update Corporate Consultation Guidance to include CYP consultation standards and approaches and issue to Service Heads.                                 | February 2005 | July 2005     | Officer time                  | S & R |
| 5.4 | Implement agreed CYP consultation framework in conjunction with all Departments.  | July 2005     | March 2006    | Officer time<br>Financial TBE | S & R |
| 5.5 | When framework implemented, develop rolling programme to ensure that all appropriate services achieve Investing in Children accreditation.              | July 2005     | Ongoing       | Officer time<br>Financial TBE | S & R |