

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a Meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 13 September 2013 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Stradling, B Alderson, A Batey, D Boyes, J Chaplow, R Crute, B Graham, K Henig, A Hopgood, P Lawton, J Lethbridge, M Simmons, R Todd, J Turnbull, S Wilson and D Bell (substitute for A Bonner)

Faith Community Representative:

Revd K Phipps

Co-opted Members:

Mr A J Cooke and Mr D Kinch

Also Present:

Councillor M Wilkes

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bell, A Bonner, D Hall, T Nearney, C Potts, A Shield, A Kitching and M Sands.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor D Bell substituting for Councillor A Bonner.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to item 6, the Head of Planning and Performance confirmed that she had relayed the comments about the new homes bonus to the Head of Economic Development to pass on to the LEP representative.

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that she had responded to Councillor R Bell with information requested in Item 7 about funding for the Big Lottery Project in Bishop Auckland. The Head of Planning and Performance clarified that Area Action Partnership (AAP) members would in future receive information from the County Durham Partnership Manager to share best practise from AAP's. Councillor Boyes requested other members receive this information also, as not all were representatives on an AAP.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted members or interested parties

There were no items from Co-opted members or interested parties.

6 Quarter 1 2013/14 Performance Management Report

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs) and reported other significant performance issues for the first quarter of 2013/14. A presentation was given by the Head of Planning and Performance (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

Councillors Hopgood and Lethbridge referred to the summary of key performance indicators regarding housing providers, Dale and Valley Homes and Durham City Homes. They both felt that the quarter 1 figures were distorted as they included the work programme of improvements for the year, and the non decent homes level will be 0% by quarter 4. The Head of Planning and Performance would look into an alternative way of presenting the information.

In response to queries on performance appraisals, the Head of Planning and Performance informed the board that the appraisal target for next year would increase to 85%, then 90% the following year. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the Corporate Management Team were looking closely at the level of appraisal recording. Surveys were being undertaken of staff and that Head of Services were in fact being appraised on the appraisals for their service areas. Reverend Phipps requested that individual appraisal data also be separated down to team levels.

Mr Kinch referred to the suicide rates and asked if the children and young people's suicide figures could be separated. The Head of Planning and Performance would enquire as to whether figures can be broken down when reporting to Adults, Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Wilson referred to employment contracts for young people and asked whether there was any information relating to the types of employment young people go into.

Referring to the smoking target, Councillor Hopgood asked if it was possible to have figures for young people who have started smoking to compare with the number of people who stop. The Assistant Chief Executive responded that the only way to gather this information would be through surveys. It had already been reported previously that there was a higher level of girls starting to smoke but she would refer the matter to the Head of Public Health.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

7 Welfare Reform Update and Review of Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Board considered a joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate Director, Resources and Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which updated members on recent policy developments relating to the government's welfare reforms, the council's response and the expected impact on the county. The report also considers a review of the council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the requirement to agree the council's approach to Local Council Tax Support for 2014/15 as well as an early operational review of the Welfare Assistance Scheme and the Discretionary Housing Payments policy, which have been in place since 1 April 2013 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Policy and Communications highlighted the recent policy announcements relating to the following:

- a) Universal Credit pilots, pathfinders and roll-out;
- b) Benefit Cap roll-out;
- c) Personal Independence Payment toolkit and medical assessments;
- d) Employment Support Allowance;
- e) Discretionary Housing Payment guidance and changes to Housing Benefit reductions for specific groups;
- f) Welfare reform support services;
- g) Disability Living Allowance claims and Court of Appeal judgements;
- h) Social Fund loans budget allocations and guidance on discretionary payments;
- i) Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme;
- j) The government's response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report on the implementation of welfare reform by local authorities;
- k) Work and Pensions Select Committee review of progress with the implementation of Universal Credit;
- l) Food banks;
- m) Spending review.

Members spoke at length about the impact that the reform has had on families and local business in County Durham. It was early days and the true effect of this agenda had yet to be seen. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the Authority would continue to monitor and respond as appropriate.

Reverend Phipps asked if it was possible to provide a helpline for people affected by the Welfare Reform and economic downturn.

Referring to the arrears information, Councillor Hopgood asked if the information supplied had included retired people who were in arrears, if so, could this be separated out as they were not affected by the changes.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

8 Update on the Delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 3

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the progress made at the end of June 2013 on the delivery of the 2013/14 to 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 3) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Policy and Communications reported that the overall savings target for the period from 2011/12 to 2016/17 was £188m. Significant progress had been made on the savings target for the current year of £20.87m of which £15.12m had been achieved by 30 June 2013 which represents 72% of the 2013/14 target.

Councillor Wilkes explained that it was difficult to challenge and to make suggestions on savings when members were not aware of where the next savings were being proposed. In response the Assistant Chief Executive explained that there was a clear decision making framework and where to find the information.

Mr Cook referred to the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) and asked for the additional fly tipping cost associated with the HWRC changes. The Head of Planning and Performance responded that the fly tipping performance information would be reported to Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Kinch mentioned that Teesdale Parish Council will be meeting to discuss the MTFP consultation and asked whether officers would be able to attend if invited.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and the progress being made in delivering the £20.87m of savings for 2013/14 where 72% of the savings had been delivered by 30 June 2013 be noted.

9 Notice of Key Decisions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided a list of key decisions which were scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Hopgood was concerned that there had been no input from local members on the Durham City Regeneration Masterplan as this was the first time she had been made aware of the plan. The Assistant Chief Executive would relay Cllr Hopgoods concerns to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Update in Relation to Petitions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided a quarterly update in relations to various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor K Henig requested that the number of e-petition signatures be included in future reports, to which the Committee Services Manager agreed.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted, and the number of e-petition signatures be included in future reports.

The Chairman agreed that in order to keep members informed, the next item of business could be reported.

11 Review of the Garden Waste Collection Service

Due to large reductions in Government grants, Cabinet would consider a report on the 18 September on the future of the Garden Waste Scheme proposing consultation on future charging. The garden waste collection service currently provides 16 free fortnightly collections for more than 150,000 households across the county between April and November. Introducing a yearly charge would mean that the service would be substantially funded only by those who use it and would deliver the necessary saving of £933,000.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the press release on the 10 September 2013 and expressed concern on the number of residents that would not 'opt-in' to the scheme and anticipated that garden waste would end up in household waste bins rather than being recycled.

Councillor Graham, Chairman of Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee advised that the policy and implications that could occur from the introduction of the scheme would be reported to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.