

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a Meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 17 June 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor P Stradling in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, A Batey, R Bell, J Blakey, B Graham, A Hopgood, J Lethbridge, T Nearney, C Potts, J Robinson, J Turnbull and N Martin (substitute for M Simmons)

Also Present:

Councillor N Foster

The Chairman informed the Board that the Council had won a Municipal Journal Achievement Award for 'Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny' and congratulated everyone involved in achieving such a prestigious national award.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Corrigan, R Crute, J Hillary, P Lawton, M Nicholls, L Pounder and A Sheild.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor N Martin, substitute for Councillor M Simmons.

3 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on the 22 March 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Referring item 7 of the minutes of the meeting held on the 22 March 2016, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager advised that Councillor R Bell and Councillor Adam had received the breakdown figures requested for obesity and suicide rates.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Update on the Delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 5

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided confirmation that the 2015/16 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP5) had been successfully delivered (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Policy and Communications reported that the MTFP5 was agreed by Council in February 2015 and for 2015/16 the savings target was just over £16m. This forms part of the overall savings target for the period from 2011/12 to 2019/20 of around £257 million.

Through a robust approach in managing the programme to deliver savings required, the plans for 2015/16 had now been successfully delivered. £1.7 million of savings were made during the last quarter of 2015/16 to deliver MTFP5, mainly from proposals that had already been put in place during the year including: children's centres; looked after children care provision; restructuring of environmental health and consumer protection; street lighting's 'invest to save' programme; and a review in finance. Since 2011, £153 million of savings had now been made.

Councillor R Bell referred to staff redeployment and enquired whether enough had been done regarding retraining and reskilling employees. The Head of Policy and Communications responded that there was a more flexible approach regarding matching job descriptions that would allow scope for training and trial periods.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report and the progress made in delivering the MTFP5 be noted.

6 Update on the Future Arrangements for the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the implementation of future arrangements of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) collection. A presentation was given by the Head of Culture and Sport (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

The Head of Culture and Sport gave a detailed presentation highlighting the following areas:-

- Previous Decision and Background
- Project Delivery
- DLI Collection Update
- Wider DLI/WW1 Programme
- Next Steps

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration updated members on the Somme event that took place on palace green on the 16 June 2016 and advised that the feedback recorded in the visitor book was very positive. A small number of concerns were raised that required reassurances and clarification of plans regarding

family collections. Residents were to be encouraged to come forward and be involved in the stories they would want to be told over the next 4 years.

Councillor Hopgood was delighted with the recent exhibitions and events taking place. She asked for clarification regarding exhibit items as she was under the impression that exhibit items were not leaving the County. The Head of Culture and Sport responded that no items would leave the County, however due to the size and weight limitations on temporary exhibitions sites the Wakenshaw gun would be housed at the Sevenhills site and the Bren Gun carrier and name plates at Shildon Locomotion. A replica jeep which does not form part of the collection was in storage as no interest had been generated at the present time.

Councillor Nearney queried when the qualitative data would be available to reflect the priorities of the people who visited the Somme exhibition. The Head of Culture and Sport advised that visitor numbers were tracked and the Somme exhibition was on target. He added that the figures for the centenary of the Somme would be an exception and that next year would produce more secure figures that would be reported back to the Board.

Councillor Martin was impressed with the activity, however struggled to see how the £70,000 allocated would cover costs, even with careful budgeting. The Head of Culture and Sport explained that the £70,000 included arrangements with the University for curatorial expertise and exhibition and permanent gallery space, Sevenhills site and the education programme with additional resources from capital money accrued and funding grants.

Councillor Adam had attended the very emotional Somme event and commented on the considerable amount of work carried out resulting in the smooth transition. After speaking to trustees and friends of the DLI there were still some concerns, however overall the comments had been very positive. He added that the educational programme and online service would broaden the field and be beneficial for collection and future of the DLI.

Councillor R Bell welcomed digitising material and questioned links to the County Records Office. He appreciated that it was not the responsibility of the Council, however, queried the plans for the £10,000 raised by the 'Save the DLI' Campaign. Councillor Foster commented that written records were part of a wider collection that would be kept in the County Records Office and the digitalisation would help to join records together. The Head of Culture and Sport understood that large donations had been returned and advised that the Ogilby Trust would administer small donations ensuring appropriate use of money with the sole purpose to preserve the memory and promote the DLI collection.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report and presentation be noted.

7 Quarter Four 2015/16 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), Council Plan and service plan actions and reported other performance issues for the 2015/16 financial year. A presentation was given by the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

Councillor Hopgood expressed concern regarding the period of time covered by the fuel poverty figures which only go up to 2014. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager explained that the indicators were compiled nationally through the Office for National Statistics and suggested it could be possible to set proxy indicators around issues that were more immediately available.

Councillor Martin referred to the garden waste charging policy as part of the savings programme and commented on the land fill tax savings due to the 3.1% reduction going to land fill. He asked how the cost of policy charging compared to the savings on landfill tax. Councillor Graham suggested that she raise the issue at Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager added that regular waste updates were reported and he would ask the Head of Projects and Business Services to look at this.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

8 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2015/16

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided information on the work of all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2015/16 for comment and approval prior to its submission to County Council on the 20 July 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager highlighted several key achievements from the scrutiny review activity and site visits including:-

- Skills Development;
- Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger;
- 20 mph Speed Limit Zones;
- Alcohol and the Demand of Emergency Services;
- Attendance Management;
- Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS);
- Parking on Council Land;
- Hitachi and South West Durham Training at Newton Aycliffe, New College Durham, Infinite Learning and Development at Peterlee Site Visits as part of the Skills Development Working Group;
- Durham City Centre Night time Economy and Ambulance Crew Observation;
- Civil Contingency Live Exercise;
- School meal with pupils at Seaham School of Technology;
- School Road Safety Assembly at Etherley Lane Primary School.

Resolved:

That the report be presented to County Council on the 20 July 2016.

9 Notice of Key Decisions

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

The Senior Committee Services Officer reported that since the last update there had been the following movement in items being considered at Cabinet:-

- County Durham Plan Issues and Options – moved from the 11 May and would be considered at Cabinet on the 15 June 2016;
- Durham Key Options Letting Policy – new to the plan for September 2016.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

10 Update in Relation to Petitions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that provided an update on the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of minutes).

The Senior Committee Services Officer reported that since the last update, 5 new paper petitions had been received, and 8 petitions had completed the process. 4 new e-petitions had been submitted and currently there was 1 live e-petition on the council's website collecting signatures relating to Save Startforth School that would run until 23 June with the final numbers being passed to the service as part of a consultation.

Councillor J Robinson referred to e-petitions that did not qualify under the Councils petition scheme. He previously suggested that the criteria be reviewed to determine if the scheme was user-friendly and asked if the procedure was on the Council's website. The Senior Committee Services Officer confirmed that all the information was available on the Councils website and explained that petitions that were the same or similar to a petition considered by the Council within a 12 month period would not be accepted and the reason would be explained to the petitioner in the acknowledgement of the petition.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

11 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update of overview and scrutiny activity from the 22 March to 17 June 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

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

12 Carer Concessionary Bus Pass

Councillor Hopgood referred to the carer concessionary bus pass scheme and advised that at present Durham County Council issues bus passes to parents/carers of disabled children who are unable to travel unaccompanied on public transport, however these passes are only issued to the parent/carer if the child is over 5 and therefore has a bus pass in their own right. Interpretation of the guidance is that the Council should only issue a pass to a parent/carer alongside the child's pass.

This provides an anomaly for under 5's in that they do not need a pass as travel is already free so therefore a parent/carer cannot obtain a pass until their child reaches the age of 5, a child with a disability whether they are under or over 5 years of age can still not travel unaccompanied.

Councillor Hopgood asked that the relevant Scrutiny Committee look at the scheme and establish a case either for or against the issues of passes.

Councillor Potts, Chairman of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny agreed that the feasibility and costing of the scheme requires examination.

Resolved:

That Children and Young People's Scrutiny examine the Carer Concessionary Bus Pass Scheme.