

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 **Tuesday 25 March 2014 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Stradling, A Batey, R Bell, D Boyes, R Crute, B Graham, K Henig, A Hopgood, J Lethbridge, C Potts, A Shield, M Simmons, R Todd and J Turnbull

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Kinch

Also Present:

Councillor M Williams

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Alderson, D Hall, P Lawton, H Liddle, T Nearney, S Wilson, and Mr A J Cooke.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17 February 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Head of Planning and Performance referred to item 6 of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2014 and advised that Councillor Martin had been forwarded the information regarding the number of primary schools kitchens still requiring works to bring them up to standard.

Referring to item 10 of the minutes, the Head of Planning and Performance advised that the review of non-voting co-optee appointment arrangements were covered in item 10 on the agenda.

The Chairman of Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny confirmed he would set up a cross party scrutiny working group to look at the issue of the unfairness of certain funding

methodology, as raised by Councillor R Bell at the previous meeting, linked to future MTFP scrutiny.

4 Declarations of interest, if any

Mr Kinch declared an interest in Item No. 10 on the Review of Overview and Scrutiny Co-optee Arrangements.

5 Any items from Co-opted members or interested parties

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

6 Quarter 3 2013/14 Performance Management

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 third 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).

Councillor R Bell commented on the number of empty properties in his community and asked who they should be reported to. He also asked if there was any reason for the number of planning applications determined within 13 weeks being down from the previous quarter. The Chairman responded that it may be due to some contentious issues and pointed out that the planning applications were still on target which was an improvement on quarter 3 performance figures for 2012/13.

Mr Kinch referred to page 50 of the report regarding the increase in the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents and asked if the figures referred to children who were injured whilst in a car or hit by a car. Councillor Boyes responded that there should be a differentiation between the two. He further advised that there had been no fatalities.

Councillor A Shield commented on speed limits and traffic safety around schools and that he had raised the issue with the Police and Crime Commissioner who considering introducing 20mph speed limits for all school areas. The service had advised that it was not within the policy adopted by the Authority to have 20mph speed limits. The Chairman indicated that the topic should be taken up by the appropriate committee.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

7 Update of 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 December 2013 on the delivery of the 2013/14 to 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP3) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Policy and Communications reported that the MTFP3 agreed by Council in February 2013 takes the overall savings target for the period from 2011/12 to 2016/17 to over £188m, however at Council on 26 February 2014, Members were advised that the latest forecast had increased the total savings required for the period from 2011 to 2017 to £224m, based on the impact of the 2015/16 Spending Round and the 2014/15 and 2015/16 Local Government Finance Settlement.

By the end of December 2014 the Council had delivered £20.16m of the £20.87m savings target for 2013/14 which represents 97% of the 2013/14 target.

Early planning and delivering savings through robust programme management continues to be an important aspect in overcoming the significant challenge of delivering the MTFP. It will become increasingly difficult to deliver the levels of savings required over future years, and will involve a number of difficult decisions. However £22m of savings proposals are in place for 2014/15 and planning work is already well advanced, in order that the appropriate consultations and decision making can occur in adequate time to deliver the savings necessary.

Councillor Hopgood acknowledged the need for early planning but expressed concern regarding appropriate communication as the first she had heard of asset transferring for example was after attending an AAP presentation, and expressed concern for those elected members who were not part of an AAP being informed of this. The Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement responded that he would take Councillor Hopgoods comment regarding communication on board.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and the progress being made in delivering the £20.87m of savings for 2013/14 where 97% of the savings have been delivered by 31 December 2013 be noted.

8 Sustainable Community Strategy

The Board considered a draft of the renewed Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham, prior to consideration by full Council on 2 April 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement reported that the present strategy covering 2010-2030, has been in place for the last three year and is now being refreshed to reflect the changing landscape and need to deliver services with fewer resources which reflect changes in local priorities as well as national policy changes.

He further advised that the strategy would still need to be agreed by the Partnership Board which was scheduled to meet in April 2014.

The Principal Partnerships and Communities Officer commented on the five thematic partnership work plans and individual strategies, highlighting the strengths and achievements to build on when looking to meet the challenges that have been identified.

In addition to the existing work of the thematic partnerships the revised SCS had a stronger focus on issues that cut across more than one thematic priority.

The six cross-cutting areas for focus are:-

- Job creation
- Volunteering
- Mental wellbeing
- Stronger families
- Alcohol
- Reducing Inequalities

Councillor Boyes agreed with the need to increase the emphasis on partnership working. A key element was ensuring all partners had compatible IT systems and the same operating procedures, to which the Chairman agreed.

Councillor Boyes also expressed disappointment that reducing organised crime was no longer in the SCS as he believed there had been some success in that area.

Councillor Stradling was impressed with the profile of the council and how easy the document was to read. He asked if copies would be produced and how the strategy would be published and circulated. The Principal Partnerships and Communities Officer advised that there was money in the budget to produce a certain number of copies which would also be available online and publicised through the County Durham News before a launch in early Autumn.

Councillor Hopgood commented on how the document highlights how diverse County Durham is and that it demonstrates that one size does not always fit all.

Resolved:

That the renewed Sustainable Community Strategy be endorsed and presented to full Council on the 2 April 2014.

9 Council Plan and Service Plans 2014-17

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided a draft Council Plan for 2014-17 for consideration and comment before being submitted for approval by Council on 2 April 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Improvement Manager highlighted changes to the current Council Plan. The main changes have been made to the Altogether Safer priority theme, to align with the Safe Durham Partnership Plan. Two objectives were removed from the council plan framework but retained with the Sustainable Community Strategy framework. One

objective was also removed from the Altogether Greener theme, but again remains within the partnership framework. Small changes were also made to the frameworks of the Altogether Wealthier and Altogether Healthier priority themes.

Councillor Boyes asked if members could see the changes that had been made to the document, the Head of Planning and Performance advised that a note of all the changes would be provided.

Resolved:

- That the content of the draft Council Plan as approved by Cabinet on 19 March, prior to submission to full Council be noted.
- That the content of the draft service plans be noted.

10 Review of Overview and Scrutiny Co-optee Arrangements

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided a draft proposal for updating the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee non-voting co-optee arrangements (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that after difficulties in filling the 30 co-optee places and low level of attendance by some co-optees it was proposed to reduce the number to the 5 Thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees from 6 to 2 non-voting co-optees each and remove all non-statutory, non-voting co-optees to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. Our statutory education co-optees and partner representatives on the Safer and Stronger OSC would remain unchanged.

Existing non voting co-optees will receive a letter from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny thanking them for their valuable contributions, referring to the refresh of the co-optee arrangements and asking them to indicate whether they would wish to be considered for a further term of office under the new arrangements.

The Chairman commented that the position of co-optee is a very important role as it provides the Council with an external viewpoint. He had discussions with Chairs and Vice Chairs of all Overview and Scrutiny committees as well as minority party representatives who agreed with the proposals.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Hopgood regarding the parent governor vacancies, the Chairman advised that many requests for representatives had been made by the scrutiny team and asked that the issue be looked at further with governor support.

Resolved:

That the proposal to reduce the number of non-statutory, non-voting co-optees as set out in paragraph 19 of the report be agreed.

11 Proposed Update to the Scope of Scrutiny Committees as set out in the County Council's Constitution

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided members with the opportunity to comment on proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution, which will ensure that the scope of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are up to date and reflect the current SCS and Council Plan (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the amendments to the Constitution reflect the proposed changes to co-optee arrangements and the proposed changes to the SCS and Council Plan.

12 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).

The Committee Service Manager reported that since the last update there had been some movement in items being considered at Cabinet meetings. Other items that had moved were:-

- Progress in stock transfer has moved from April to May 2014, as has the future of housing repairs and maintenance.
- New to the plan for April was the review of in-house residential provision, and a proposal to extend the age range of Belmont CE junior school and to close Belmont infant school from 1 January 2015.
- New items on Housing Stock involving the outcome of the consultation and principles of land transfer had been added to the notice for July 2014.

Councillor Hopgood asked for more detailed information to be provided on future notices on the main consultees.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

13 Information update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update of overview and scrutiny activity between February 2014 and March 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.