

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 **Thursday 17 December 2015 at 11.00am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Stradling, A Batey, R Bell, H Bennett, D Boyes, K Corrigan, R Crute, B Graham, A Hopgood, C Potts, L Pounder and J Turnbull

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Adam, P Lawton, J Lethbridge, T Nearney, J Robinson and A Shield.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on the 23 October 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Referring to points raised from the minutes of the meeting held on the 23 October 2015, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager provided the following updates:-

- Item 5 paragraph 5 – published national figures for zero hour contracts were 697,000, 2.3% of the workforce with a high representation in retail;
- Item 5 paragraph 7 – the link to the directory of services had been emailed to members following the last meeting;
- Item 5 paragraph 9 – unemployment figures as a result of the closure of Redcar Steelworks were 39 people registered in County Durham, with 26 registered in the Peterlee area. The figures did not include the number of people who may be affected by supply chains and the figures only reflected the number of people who had applied to Job Centre Plus;
- Item 5 paragraph 11 - the fuel poverty strategy was reported at a special meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 December and the invite was extended to all scrutiny members. Minutes of the meeting were available on the Councils website;
- Item 6 paragraph 4 – details of asset transfer timelines and action plans was reported to Cabinet on the 15 July 2015 and a copy had been emailed to Councillor Wilson;

- Item 7 paragraph 3 – the Barnard Castle walls were not owned by the Council, however Durham County Council were working with other organisations to progress the matter;
- Item 7 paragraph 4 – the petitions scheme criteria was reviewed and found to be a statutory stage by stage process.

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 an update on the progress made at the end of September 2015 on the delivery of the 2015/16 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP5) (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 £260m.

By the end of September 2015 over 86% of the savings target for MTFP5 had been met with £14m of savings having been achieved that amounts to the total savings delivered since April 2011 to over £151m.

Resolved:

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

6 Quarter Two 2015/16 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), Council Plan and service plan actions and reported other performance issues for the second quarter of the 2015/16 financial year, covering the period July to September 2015. A presentation was given by the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

In response to queries from Councillor Crute regarding tracking job seeker allowance figures, quality of jobs and the value of employment factors in other areas, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager advised that universal credit was tracked via figures published by the Office for National Statistics. Meetings had been scheduled to discuss what figures would be available as they were dependent on national bodies producing statistics and acknowledged that it would become more of an issue in the future. He added there were a small number of people who were already claiming Universal Credit in County Durham who have migrated from other parts of the country where the rollout had already started. Referring to the query regarding value of employment, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager would ask the service for further details. The Chairman requested that the information be provided to Councillor Crute for the next committee meeting.

Councillor Boyes commented on the successful treatment of drugs and alcohol and asked if there was a duplication of work across Scrutiny Committees. The Chairman advised he would meet with Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs to review the work programme.

Councillor Batey referred to the altogether safer performance crime figures and asked for a breakdown on the type of offences, particularly for young people in order to get a better understanding of the specific crimes committed in terms of re-offending.

Councillor Hopgood asked if the Authority was relying on external funding to support the apprenticeship scheme and if there were contingency plans in place should it be required. The Chairman commented that financial support was required and the grant from Europe could not be relied upon as there was a danger of losing that funding. He asked that information be supplied on what contingencies were in place.

7 Request for Call-in - Future DLI Museum Arrangements

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that advised of a request for call-in of a Cabinet decision, and of the decision made by the Chairman of the Board not to call-in the decision (for copy see file of minutes).

The Legal Manager, Governance and Elections advised that it was the Chairman's view that this was not an appropriate case for call-in, however he was of the view that it should be added to the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, and a meeting with Members, chief officers and Trustees be arranged to explore how the Council could continue to meet the desire of the public to have access to the DLI collection.

The Chairman commented that he was not approached about the call-in initially and first heard of the request to call-in the decision from an article in the media. He advised that call-in requires the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny, Chief Officers and the Monitoring Officer to consider the request in accordance with the relevant protocol.

He referred to the reasons for call-in and clarified that lead group members had no prior knowledge of the decision, contrary to the statement made in the call-in request. He added that Members had the opportunity to ask questions at County Council and the Cabinet meeting, however, no questions had been submitted.

On reviewing the process, the Chairman did recognise that there was a need to expand on certain issues and made arrangements for a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the 10 December 2015. The aim was to make the collection more accessible to the public and he felt that the meeting was very positive. The Cabinet Portfolio holder attended the special meeting and clarified that there were no plans for a housing development on the site and that the building would be advertised to internal services in the first instance, then placed on the asset register. The Chairman of the DLI Trustees was also in attendance and thanked Durham County Council for their support and for developing a plan for the future arrangements of regimental collections.

In response, Councillor Hopgood advised that the paperwork had been submitted on her request as she was away and was only informed of the report the night before the Cabinet papers were published. It was her understanding that members could only ask questions at Cabinet if the item being considered affected the electoral division they represented. The Legal Manager, Governance and Elections advised that she would provide clarification on the protocol for Cabinet questions.

Councillor Hopgood asked that the Future Arrangements of the DLI be reviewed after three months.

Resolved:

- (i) That the information contained in the report be noted;
- (ii) That an update report on the progress made against the implementation of the future DLI arrangements be considered after a period of three months.

8 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:-

- Office Accommodation – removed from the plan with the revised date to be confirmed;
- Bishop Auckland Regeneration Framework – removed from the plan with the revised date to be confirmed;
- Draft County Durham Plan – added to the plan for February 2016;
- Day Care Review – added to the plan for January 2016;
- Council Plan and Service Plans 2016-19 – added to the plan for March 2016.

Councillor Hopgood highlighted the recent DLI decision and referred to concerns she had raised in previous meetings regarding members not being made aware of important decisions that affect so many people not appearing on the notice. The Chairman advised the issue be raised at the Constitution Working Group and asked that the Head of Planning and Performance and the Monitoring Officer look at the issue regarding the constitution.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

9 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 October 2015 to December 2015 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.