

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**5 March 2012**

Present: Councillor C B Pickard (Chair)  
Councillors J M Allan, L Birkenfield, B Burdis,  
C Gambling, R Glindon, J Harrison, F Lott,  
D McLellan and N Redfearn.

## **OV63/03/12 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Barrie, J Bell, G Brett, M Rankin.

## **OV64/03/12 Substitute Members**

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution, the appointment of the following substitute members was reported:

Councillor M J Huscroft for Councillor G Brett  
Councillor M Green for Councillor M Rankin

## **OV65/03/12 Declarations of Interest**

Item 6 – Study into the Joint Venture Agreement - Kier

Councillor J Harrison declared a prejudicial interest – had previously raised an local business issue with regards to Kier North Tyneside using local suppliers.

Item 8 – Sheltered Accommodation Lifts – Final Report

Councillor M Green declared a personal interest – a relative resident in one of the Sheltered Accommodation Homes affected

## **OV66/03/12 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2012 be confirmed.

## **Chairs Announcement**

The Chair announced that John Liddle – Performance and Scrutiny Officer was to leave the authority after over 30 years of Council service. The Committee wished to convey its gratitude for all his assistance and particularly for his recent support to the Budget and Council Plan Study Group and wished him well for the future.

## **OV67/03/12 Change Efficiency and Improvement Programme (Previous Minute OV58/02/12)**

The Committee received the monthly overview of progress of each of the three themes of the Change Efficiency and Improvement (CEI) programme. Information specifically on the individual CEI projects that had been monitored by the Finance Sub Committee was also appended to the report.

Key progress for the themes was detailed as follow:

**Theme A:**

- Children and Education Services: detailed project plans were being drawn up following consultation with the Schools Forum, head teachers and chairs of governing bodies on the proposals. Equality impact assessments (EIA's) were being prepared for key projects.
- Adult Social Care: engagement was nearing completion with detailed project plans to include any mitigating/remedial actions.
- Governance was being developed to link in plans for Public Health Transition joint commissioning arrangements with the NHS

**Theme B:**

- Information to current service delivery was being shared with the four companies per package.
- Unions and staff were continuing to be updated on progress, with a system being developed to allow questions to be received.
- Twenty applicants to be Trustees of the Community Based Trust had been selected for interview and meetings with key stakeholders.
- A new Pay and Reward policy had been developed that would provide the authority with terms and conditions that more suited constant changing needs.

**Theme C:**

- Procuring potential ancillary waste contracts across Tyne & Wear had been explored
- Investigation of joint procurement options
- Scope for the use of sustainable resource re-use across the public sector had been investigated
- Street lighting Saving Survey been produced
- Energy conservation training for school governors and leisure staff delivered.
- 1,061 solar PV arrays installed on North Tyneside homes.
- Continued reduction in gas, electricity, water, fuel, mileage and vehicle damage
- Consultation taken place with staff, charities and service users are changes

A Member questioned that following a recent decision at full Council, if Theme B and the Community Based Trust had been cancelled. The Chief Executive informed the committee that the nothing had been cancelled and that there was a need to discuss and advise the Mayor and Cabinet on the responsibility for delivery and implementation of the Council Plan and Budget.

The Chair stated that there was a need for Members to have a clear understanding to where the responsibility lay when decisions were made by the majority of full Council.

He suggested and it was agreed by the Committee to convene an Extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the relevant officers attend and present who has the responsibility of making the decision with regards to the Council Plan and Budget as to the North Tyneside Constitution and relevant legislation. That a meeting be convened to take place before 1 April 2012.

A Member enquired to how many solar PV arrays had been installed and to what effect would the change to the tariff have.

The Head of North Tyneside Homes stated that 1230 arrays had been installed with the expectation that 1500 would be in place by the end of the financial year. The initial number to be installed under the tariff was to be 3000 however the change to the tariff was made from December 2011 and at that time 750 arrays had been installed.

A Member raised that the report did not comment on any agreement with the Trade Unions. The Chief Executive stated that regular meetings with the Trade Unions had taken place, with discussions of all aspects of the CEI programme.

A Member asked to see the notes/minutes taken at the meetings that had taken place with the Trade Unions. The Chief Executive stated that that would be arranged following agreement of the Trade Unions involved for the notes to be circulated.

A Member suggested that further information to all the projects with the status red should be circulated to members of the Committee. The Strategic Director of Finance and Resources stated that more detailed information had been shared with the Finance Sub Committee and this would be circulated to Members.

It was **agreed** that (1) an Extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be convened and that the relevant officers attend and present who has the responsibility of making the decision with regards to the Council Plan and Budget as to the North Tyneside Constitution and relevant legislation and that the convened meeting to take place before 1 April 2012; (2) upon consent of the Trade Unions that notes/minutes of regular meetings with the Trade Unions that discussed aspects of the CEI programme be circulated; and (3) information previously submitted to Finance Sub Committee with regards to CEI projects with a status red be circulated to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee.

### **OV68/03/12 Study into the Joint Venture Agreement - Kier**

*Cllr J Harrison left the meeting and took no part in relation to this Item.*

Councillor R Glindon presented the findings of the Joint Venture Working Group. On behalf of the working group he thanked all the officers of the Council and Kier North Tyneside for their assistance, with particular thanks to Michael Robson – Democratic Services Officer for his work throughout the study and compiling the finalised report.

The working group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to examine the effectiveness of the Council's joint venture agreement with Kier North Tyneside.

The working group was appointed in December 2010 and was made up of members of each of the interested committees.

Members were reminded that the Council had entered in a joint venture because its housing repairs and maintenance service was judged to be fair with uncertain prospects for improvement. The aim of the joint venture was to improve the quality of the housing repairs and construction services, which would then deliver value for money and establish a long term relationship with a private sector partner and promote employments and training.

During the course of 2011 the working group met to examine and assess whether the joint venture had achieved that which the Council intended and report its findings to Cabinet.

The working group found that there was demonstrable evidence that service quality had improved. That customer satisfaction had risen, however response time needed to improve.

Value for money could be demonstrated through the extensive procurement process that had been undertaken and cost compared with in-house and previous partner rates. The report detailed that there was ongoing reviews to the value for money in relation to the joint venture.

Recruitment and training of apprentices had continued although workforce numbers had reduced.

The report included a number of recommendations for the Cabinet's consideration with the aim to strengthen the joint venture arrangements, improving quality of the service provided and improving value for money.

A member asked to the number of current apprentices employed with Kier North Tyneside. Councillor Glindon informed the committee that there were current 16 training apprentices.

It was **agreed** to approve the final report – Study into the Joint Venture Agreement and (2) that the report and its recommendation be submitted Cabinet.

*Cllr J Harrison re-entered the meeting*

### **OV69/03/12 Council Strategic Plan Quarter 3 of 2011/12**

The Committee received details of the progress made during the third quarter of 2011/12 on projects in the Council's Strategic plan 2011 -15 that within the Committee's area of responsibility.

Two projects relating to Customer Care, Area Forums had met the second quarter milestones. Community Engagement did not reach its milestone and this was due to an Area Forum being held in the run up to Christmas. Of the 5 associated performance measures, only 3 had measures for the third quarter and 2 had met their target.

The performance measures were:

- Percentage of calls answered in 20 seconds at the contact centre – 72%
- Call abandonment rate at the contact centre – 10%

The targets for the year were 80% and 5% and it was expected the cumulative performances for the year would be 76% of calls answered within 20 seconds and 7% abandoned.

It was **agreed** that the Council Strategic Plan quarter 3 for 2011/12 be noted;

### **OV70/03/12 Sheltered Accommodation List – Final Report**

Councillor N Redfearn gave a presentation to the work that had been carried out by the Lifts Task Group.

On behalf of the task group Councillor Redfearn thanked all the officers for their assistance throughout the investigation.

The Committee was reminded that following a Council Motion, which received unanimous agreement at its meeting on 24 November 2011. The Motion stated:

*“This Council calls for the immediate investigation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee into the repeated confinement of residents to the upper floors of the Council’s sheltered accommodation due to the frequent breakdown of lifts. The Council also calls for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate, what has been described as totally inadequate by residents, the provision by the Local Authority to give access to the ground floor and help to those residents trapped and unable to move freely throughout the buildings during the day, evening and night.”*

The Task Group met on 4 occasions, visiting sheltered schemes and meeting with the Strategic Director of Community Services and Cabinet Member for Housing.

The group found that lifts in a small number of sheltered accommodations schemes had suffered from repeated and in some cases long term breakdowns. During these breakdowns residents had been unable to access all areas of their accommodation, which led into risks of social isolation.

It found that whilst a substantial remedial effort had been made to minimise the discomfort and inconvenience to residents, the proposals for lift refurbishment and replacement was not due to begin until November 2012.

It was **agreed** that the Sheltered Accommodation Lifts – final report be approved; and (2) the report and its recommendations be submitted to Cabinet.

### **OV71/03/12 Update Council Protocols**

The Committee received copies of the updated Council Protocols that had been considered at the Council meeting 26 January 2012. At the Council meeting it was requested that the updated protocols be referred to Overview and scrutiny before adoption by full Council.

It was recommended that;

- a. the committee noted the request to review the protocols and that a working group be established to carry out the review.
- b. the group comprise of the Chair and deputy Chair of Overview and scrutiny and a member from both the conservative and liberal democrat groups.
- c. an appropriate report be brought to the next meeting of Overview and scrutiny on the 2 April 2012.

Members indicated that it may be beneficial to the established working group to have examples of protocols from other Mayoral authorities to be available for the working group to see how the Councils protocols compare.

Members were asked to consider the updated Council Protocols appended to the agenda and forward any questions/queries to Performance and Scrutiny who would collate them to be considered at the working group once its membership was established.

It was **agreed** that the requested for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the update Council Protocols prior to adoption by full Council be noted; (2) a working group be established comprising of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee and one Member from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups; (3) that examples of protocols from other Mayoral authorities be provided to aid the review; and (4) that the finding of the review be reported to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2 April 2012.

### **OV72/03/12 Youth Facilities**

The Committee received the responses and actions in respect of the recommendations made to Cabinet by the Children, Education and Skill Sub Committee regarding the facilities and activities in North Tyneside.

It was **agreed** that the responses and actions in respect of the recommendations made by Cabinet be referred to the Children, Education and Skills Sub Committee.

### **OV73/03/12 Forward Plan**

The Committee were presented with the Forward Plan covering the period March – June 2012 to identify any issues for inclusion in the committee's work programme.

- Section 117 Reserve – to consider the latest position regarding the section 117 Reserve.

Members asked for an understanding to the reasons for the timing of this report going to Cabinet. Members were informed that a written response would be provided.

It was **agreed** that the March – June 2012 Forward Plan be noted; and (2) a written response be provided to Members with regards to the Section 117 Reserve.