

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**3 September 2012**

Present: Councillor C B Pickard (Chair)  
Councillors J M Allan, A Austin, B Burdis,  
S Day, I Grayson, C Gambling, R Glindon,  
J Harrison, N Huscroft, D McGarr, J McLaughlin  
M Rankin, D Sarin and J Stirling.

Church Representative - Rev M Vine

Also present

Mrs L Arkley – Elected Mayor

### **OV25/09/12 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Redfearn and M Huscroft.

### **OV26/09/12 Substitute Members**

Pursuant to the Council's constitution the appointment of the following substitute Members was reported:-

Councillor B Burdis for Councillor N Redfearn  
Councillor N Huscroft for Councillor M Huscroft

### **OV27/09/12 Declarations of Interest**

The following declaration of interest was made:

Councillor M Rankin – non-registerable interest – relative employed for North Tyneside Council and was directly affected by the proposal.

### **OV28/09/12 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meetings held on 2 July and 6 August 2012 be confirmed.

### **OV29/09/12 Mayors Annual Address**

The Elected Mayor, Linda Arkley, attended the meeting to present her annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on her and the Cabinet's key priorities.

### **Economic Growth**

Economic growth remained a top priority and since 2009 there has been 4000 jobs created in the borough.

In 2012 around 2000 jobs had been created following announcements from:

- OGN
- Accenture
- Spicers
- CountryStyle Foods
- Fabricom and
- E-Achieve

The North Bank of the Tyne project was a focus for economic activity. Enterprise Zone status has been confirmed and the potential of this and other related zones is good.

The Mayor had met with new business start-ups and 2011 151 new businesses had been created with 183 jobs.

The new Tyne Tunnel has together with the improvements at Silverlink helped to unlock the potential of the A19 and beyond.

### **Regeneration**

The Wallsend Forum development was finally moving forward and included;

- a new supermarket
- £200,000 investment in the Boulevard
- 33 new affordable homes
- A town centre customer service facility

In Forest Hall, £100,000 had been invested in the town centre.

In North Shields

- the Fish Quay continued to receive national recognition
- work on Northumberland Square was progressing
- new Metro station and
- the new Customer First Centre was about to start onsite.

In Whitley Bay

- the Spanish City island project continues with outline planning permission in place for the wider site
- the Joint Service Centre was on course for opening early 2013
- £1m was going into Rockcliffe Viaduct for remedial work

In Cullercoats

- £1m from the Coastal Regeneration Budget to deliver
  - the popular play park
  - new traffic calming measures
  - improvements to the Boat Yard
  - more car parking

In Tynemouth

- levels of tourism had increased and
- improvements to parking

### **Housing**

New council homes are being built at George Street, North Shields that would provide family homes and more would be starting in the near future.

The New Beginnings scheme at Purley Close to support young parents had been open for nearly a year and 12 affordable homes were now available at Eden Court in Wallsend. The Quality Homes for Older People scheme continued to move through the Government's processes, with £1.1m to replace the lifts in the current schemes that would be completed by October.

North Tyneside delivered the most successful solar panel installation scheme in England to over 1500 properties with savings to energy bills for its residents. North Tyneside Warm Zone had also continued to deliver insulation to homes, saving residents over £2m, with an additional £3.8m of additional benefits entitlements for residents.

### **Education and Skills**

North Tyneside Council's was working with employers to shape the curriculum, particularly for the over 16s, creating more apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds as part of the business growth strategy.

Recent A-Level and GCSE results confirmed the talent and abilities of young people. Education provision had been recognised as 'outstanding' in a number of places in the past year including;

- John Spence High School
- Amberley Primary
- George Stephenson High
- Benton Dene Primary
- and Childcare Wallsend

Churchill Community College was recognised as one of England's top 100 Performing Schools.

The Priority School Building Programme would see four schools rebuilt or improved. In addition to £8m that has been invested in improvements to school buildings across the borough up to 2017.

The Mayor also informed the Committee of the news of the creation of an independent State funded academy based on a merger between Priory Primary and Kings School and assured Members that the first she had heard about it was when she was contacted prior to the issue of the press release. Assurances were given to Members that there had been no prior consultation with council officers and that the Mayor had written to the DfE to complain about this lack of consultation given the potential impacts of school places in the borough.

### **Protecting the vulnerable**

Despite the challenging financial climate, protecting vulnerable people and supporting those who need it, must be continued. Personal budgets continued to be offered to all adult social care users as part of their assessment or care package review. North Tyneside were well on track for achieving the national target of 100% by March.

Investment continued in dementia services with £8m on care home placements and community based services and Dementia Adviser Service continued to support people.

Young carers who were often overlooked therefore a special event was organised for them to mark the Jubilee. The Council would also pilot a Carers Break and Opportunities Fund.

The Council had secured over £250,000 to improve support for disabled children by improving short break care. Children's Services have been rated by Ofsted as 'performing excellently' for the second year in a row. North Tyneside were the only Council in the region to be awarded the achievement.

### **Community Safety**

For the third consecutive year, North Tyneside was the safest Metropolitan borough in England. The Mayor stated that she would ensure that North Tyneside was seen as one of the best there is, with the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner.

Lockey Park and Consort Place in Longbenton had seen successful partnership working with the Police and community services, to provide activities and support to address anti-social behaviour.

### **Leisure and Culture**

Young people had a range of activities to inspire them. The Olympics showed the importance of sport in the community and the Council had provided £830,000 investment in youth facilities.

Leisure services continued to flourish, with rising satisfaction rates at the same time that the cost per user were reducing.

North Tyneside had put in place an Armed Forces covenant and a new Community Services Partnership would also look to access the £30m national pot to strengthen the Council's support for armed forces personnel.

Every beach in the borough had blue flag status with two parks also achieving green flag status, showing the quality in North Tyneside.

The £7m programme to transform Richardson Dees Park was well underway and £2m had been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve Northumberland Park.

### **Flooding**

The Council and community response to the extreme flooding in June was excellent and Task and Finish Group was set up with representatives from outside bodies and from all parties to look at what the Council could do in future.

### **Outsourcing Packages**

The approach taken to outsource some services would guarantee jobs with no viable alternative.

The measures taken would bring investment into services and spin off benefits for the wider community and economy.

Aspects detailed were areas that resident's value, being:

- Delivering more jobs
- Delivering new homes for families
- Getting more people back into work
- Protecting those who need it most
- finding innovative and better ways for services to continue despite a 28% cut in funding
- Delivering higher satisfaction with services than ever before

The Mayor stated that it had been a tough year with difficult decisions made. But the choices made were to deliver on the priorities that North Tyneside residents had asked for.

Members requested details the number of start-up businesses with the jobs created and details of apprenticeships created for 16-18 year olds as part of the business growth strategy. The Mayor stated that she would provide the requested information.

The Chair thanked the Mayor for her presentation and attendance.

**Agreed** that the following be circulated to the Committee (1) a breakdown of the 151 new businesses start ups and the jobs created; and (2) details of the apprenticeships and opportunities created for 16 - 18 year olds as part of the business growth strategy.

### **OV30/09/12 Council Tax Support Scheme**

The Committee received a report the raised the awareness of consultation to the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme that had been agreed at Cabinet on 13 August 2012.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 the Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent, this included the abolition of Council Tax benefit with effect from 1 April 2013. As a result each billing authority in England is required to have a scheme that 'states the classes of person who are to be entitled to a reduction under the scheme' that would replace the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme.

The council is required to consult with such other persons as it considers are likely to have interest in the operation of the scheme.

The Government provided clear policy objectives and intended effects of the reform which:

- Supports the improved work incentives to be delivered through Universal Credit, as part of Government's programme of welfare reform;
- Is consistent with Government's localisation agenda, and in particular supports local decision-making and accountability over spending decisions;
- Ensures that vulnerable groups, in particular pensioners, are protected from increases in council tax as a result of this reform.
- Gives local authorities a greater stake in the economic future of their area, creating stronger incentives to support people into work.

The council would be receiving a fixed grant to deliver its own Council Tax Support scheme. A reduction in the region of 10% was estimated to be around £1.8M less than that needed to deliver the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme.

The report outlined 6 (six) options to provide a Localised Council Tax Support Scheme.

The report recommended and was agreed by Cabinet that the preferred scheme for formal consultation be option 6 and the report detailed the reasons to the recommendation. The final decision to adopt the scheme would be taken by Full Council. An outline plan of community engagement was attached to the report as an appendix.

Members requested that copies of the equality impact assessment carried out on the draft scheme be circulated to Members of the Committee. Also that the further equality impact assessment to be conducted following the outcome of the consultation responses be appended to the final report when presented to Full Council for adoption of the scheme.

In relation to the outline plan for community engagement, Members raised concerns that there was no planned consultation with the Area Housing Forums and for the inclusion to be considered.

The Committee were informed that an article to raise awareness was to be published in the September issue of Widening Horizons. Members raised their concerns as not all residents in the borough are able to receive Widening Horizons and asked that it be considered that those identified be written to informing them of the consultation.

**Agreed** that (1) the equality impact assessment carried out on the draft scheme be circulated to Members of the Committee; (2) the further equality impact assessment following the outcome of the consultation responses be appended to the final Council Tax Support Scheme report when presented to Full Council for its adoption; (3) to enhance the consultation process that information of the scheme be made at Area Housing Forums; (4) consideration be given to write to inform residents not receiving the Widening Horizons of the consultation.

### **OV31/09/12 Council Strategic Plan and 2012/13 Budget Implementation Plan (Previous Minute OV16/07/12)**

The Committee received the latest version of the Implementation Plan revised following the Cabinet meetings of the 9 July and 13 August 2012. Appended to the plan was additional information requested by the Committee at its meeting on the 2 July 2012, relating to the summary of the financial information for items on the plan.

Members questioned the responsibility for items in relation to Area Forums. The Senior Manager Legal Services reminded the Committee of advice provided in relation to Area Forums and stated that the advice would be re-circulated to all Members of the Committee.

**Agreed** that (1) the Council Strategic Plan and 2012/13 Budget Implementation Plan be noted; (2) the advice previously presented to the Committee be re-circulated.

### **OV32/09/12 Change Efficiency and Improvement Programme – update**

The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the position of the Change Efficiency and Improvement Programme. It was stated that the programme had been remodelled to ensure clarity and that the latest update would be available to the Committee for its meeting on 1 October 2012.

The Chair with agreement of the Committee stated that following its presentation to the Committee on 1 October that the Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme be presented on a bi-monthly basis.

**Agreed** that (1) The Change Efficiency and Improvement Programme be noted; and (2) that following the meeting on the 1 October 2012 updates be considered on a bi-monthly basis.

### **OV33/09/12 Council Strategic Plan Quarter 1 2012/13**

The Committee received the Senior Leadership's Team Progress report that gave an overview of the key achievements made against the North Tyneside's ambitions in the quarter to 30 June 2012. Members were informed that detailed assessments of progress against key priorities would be produced separately and available on the Council's intranet at the end of September 2012.

Members asked to the title of the strategic plan that the received report was being aligned to as they was uncertainty. The Chief Executive stated that the Council Plan agreed at Full Council on the 1 March 2012 was impracticable following legal advice received. It was therefore thought that the Sustainable Community Strategy that had been approved by the Council and was part of the Budget and Policy Framework should be used.

The Chair of the Committee proposed that the progress report should reflect the alignment with the key themes/priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy. He also asked that Members be reminded to when Full Council approved the Sustainable Community Strategy and that the link to the website where the strategy could be accessed to be provided to all Members of the Committee.

**Agreed** that (1) the title of the performance report reflect the alignment to the Sustainable Community Strategy and (2) the link on the North Tyneside Council website where the strategy could be accessed be provided.

### **OV34/09/12 Capital Plan**

At the request of the Committee an update report was presented to the latest Capital Plan.

The Committee was reminded that the Capital Plan had been approved by Council at its meeting on 1 March 2012 and had been subject to changes approved by Cabinet.

The Capital Plan position was reported to Cabinet bi-monthly as part of the financial management report and then considered by Finance sub committee. Appended to the report was the Capital Plan approved at 1 March 2012, the May Financial Management Report 2012 Capital Plan summary and a copy of the Capital Plan Reserve List.

Any movement from the reserve list requires approval by Cabinet.

Members were informed that the Major Project Group, consisting of the Elected Mayor, Cabinet Members for Housing, Finance, Children Young People & Learning and Transport & Environment continues to meet with officers across the authority on a quarterly basis.

A discussion took place in relation to the governance of responsibility of Full Council on the Capital Plan, the distribution of information on the priorities within the plan, which items on the plan would be progressed, to who decides to move items forward from the reserve list and to the presentation of unsupported borrowing.

**Agreed** that (1) a report be presented to Full Council highlighting the concerns Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Council have been asked to make major financial decisions

on the Capital Plan without full knowledge of future commitments of a further £9m borrowing for the Council; (2) officers be requested to report to the governance of the Capital Plan in relation to the responsibilities of Full Council; and (3) an alternative approach to how unsupported borrowing information is presented be undertaken.

### **OV35/09/12 Overview and Scrutiny Report recommendations: Response from Cabinet**

The Committee received an update to the responses received from Cabinet to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect to the studies on the Joint Venture Agreement and Lift Failures in Sheltered Accommodation.

**Agreed** that the responses from Cabinet in respect of the studies carried on the Joint Venture Agreement and Lift Failures in Sheltered Accommodation be noted.

### **OV36/09/12 Forward Plan**

The Committee were presented with the Forward Plan covering the period September 2012 – January 2013 to identify any issues for inclusion in the committee's work programme.

A requested for further information was made in relation to:

- Changes to Polling Stations

Members raised concerns to the lack of ward information being provide to Ward Councillors and asked for an information to how Members are informed of changes to Polling Stations positioned in the Wards they represent.

It was **agreed** that (1) the September 2012 – January 2013 Forward Plans be noted;(2) that it be raised to the Member Support Group, Member concerns to the amount of ward information being provided to Ward Councillors; and (3) information to how Members were informed of changes to Polling Stations positioned in the Wards they represent.

### **OV37/09/12 Exclusion Resolution**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and having applied a public interest test as defined in Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

*Cllr M Rankin left the meeting and took no further part.*

### **OV38/09/12 Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme: Business and Technical Package Procurement: Response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee received an update to the responses received from Cabinet to the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme: Business and Technical Package Procurement.

Members repeated their concerns in relation to the level of information provided on termination costs and key performance indicators.



The Chief Executive gave an explanation that some of the information was commercially exempt and that definitive termination information could not be provided. He reassured Members that the team of specialised officers from both the legal and finance sections had worked on the contracts and that the transfer of services would guarantee the necessary savings whilst saving jobs and securing service provision.

The Chair proposed that the Committee ask Cabinet to revisit the information provided and ensure comprehensive checks have been carried out in regard to potential termination costs and key performance monitoring information before finalising any contracts.

The proposal was carried by 9(nine) votes to 3 (three) upon the showing of hands.

**Agreed** that Cabinet be asked to revisit the information provided and ensure comprehensive checks have been carried out in regard to potential termination costs and key performance monitoring information before finalising any contracts.