

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6 January 2014

Present: Councillor S Graham (Chair)
Councillors John Hunter, Marian Huscroft, P Mason,
A McMullen, J O'Shea, M Rankin and J Walker

Church Representatives
Rev Vine

School Governor Representatives
Mrs M Ord and Mrs J Little

Others in attendance
Councillor P Oliver and B Pickard

OV49/01/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor J Allan, A Cowie, D McGarr, P McIntyre and L Miller.

OV50/01/14 Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members.

OV51/01/14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

OV52/01/14 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 2 December 2013 be confirmed.

OV53/01/14 Community Safety Strategy 2014-19 – Final proposals

Dave Escott, Deputy Chair of the partnership presented the Committee the final proposals for the Community Safety Strategy, along with the action plan that detailed how Safer North Tyneside would deliver the Strategy.

On hearing the initial proposals at its 2 September meeting the Committee suggested that engagement take place with pupils from School Council's of senior schools and previous offenders to gain insights to their perceptions and experiences. With a specific need to look at the reasons for reoffending.

Safer North Tyneside has consulted residents and Council members through a number of means that were detailed in the report. The responses confirmed that the priority issues of greatest concern to communities had been identified by Safer North Tyneside partnership.

With regards to the issue of reoffending, the majority of the previous offenders had stated that accommodation and employment were priorities for them and that the information had been shared with the thematic group for Reducing Reoffending.

It was stated that North Tyneside was the safest metropolitan borough in England.

Members asked to the provision of priority support to vulnerable, repeat victims and witnesses of anti-social behaviour (ASB). The Committee was informed that the Council employs a Victim Support Officer as part of the Housing Team.

Agreed that the Community Safety Strategy 2014-19 – final proposals be noted.

OV54/01/14 Change, Efficiency and Improvement - Update

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the monitoring of the Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme (CEI). The report provided details of all the schemes within the CEI programme as at 5 December 2013 and highlighted the status of each scheme.

It was noted that 2 schemes had a rating of Amber and it was asked what would be proposed if the 2 schemes did not make their required savings.

Councillor Bruce Pickard – Cabinet Member with responsibility for the CEI stated that if the savings were not realised through the schemes they would need to be found by elsewhere although there was confidence that the required savings would be met.

Following discussions with Scrutiny Chairs/Deputy Chairs it was proposed that Overview & Scrutiny should continue to receive the CEI updates on a bi-monthly basis and that the CEI reporting to the scrutiny sub-committees should cease to a save both duplication and resources.

Agreed that (1) Change, Efficiency and Improvement - update be noted and (2) Overview & Scrutiny continue to receive the CEI updates on a bi-monthly basis and that the CEI reporting to the sub-committees to cease.

OV55/01/14 Child Poverty sub-group report

The Committee received the findings and recommendations from the review undertaken by the joint sub-group that comprised of Members from Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing and Children, Education and Skills sub committees.

Councillor P Oliver presented the sub-groups findings and recommendations. Due to the size of the topic the sub group decided to focus on 'best start in life, early intervention and prevention'.

It was detailed the work undertaken by the sub-group that included:

- a) looking at relevant plans and strategies that the Council and its partners produce to combat child poverty,
- b) Children Centres
- c) Local Welfare Provision
- d) Barrier to Employment

The sub-group identified a total of 26 recommendations, 14 requiring action from the Council and 11 from Jobcentre Plus and one from the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Agreed that the Child Poverty Sub-group report and recommendations be referred to Cabinet :-

R1: Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in receiving the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18, focus on ensuring that appropriate actions and measures to address the causes and effects of child poverty are included within the Plan.

R2: Children, Education and Skills sub-committee receive a bi-annual performance report on the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18.

R3: Wallsend Children's Centre look at the possibilities of selling produce grown on its on-site allotment to parents at low cost price and that the possibilities of extending this scheme to other centres in the borough be examined.

R4: Cabinet ask officers to conduct an analysis of the demand for learning courses at children's centres across the borough and provide additional courses or venues if demand outweighs current capacity.

R5: Cabinet ask officers to explore the possibilities of utilising the after school room at Riverside Children's Centre to allow parents/carers to access some informal advice in relation to health and well-being issues.

R6: Cabinet ask officers working within children's centres to prioritise outreach and integrated working with healthcare professionals to identify the most vulnerable families so that the provision available is directed to those most in need.

R7: Cabinet ensure that officers from Public Health and Children, Young People and Learning continue to work together and prioritise the integration of health and children's services for children under 5.

R8: Cabinet ask officers to liaise with the relevant authorities on order to obtain live birth data that will assist in the delivery of early intervention and prevention services.

R9: Cabinet ask officers in Adult Social Care to ensure that all frontline services are aware of the Local Welfare Provision scheme, where to signpost individuals for assistance and that regular updates are provided where necessary.

R10: Cabinet ask officers to regularly review the number of successful applications made to the Local Welfare Provision fund and the criteria used to assess applicants.

R11: Jobcentre Plus incorporates / appends the Customer Charter to the Jobseekers Agreement or the Claimant Commitment (once it is in place).

R12: Jobcentre Plus take account of the negative comments received from unemployed residents in relation to the service received, in particular about the attitude of some advisors and the intimidating environment which is created.

R13: Jobcentre Plus hold regular reviews with advisors to ensure that they are meeting customer service standards and that this includes contracted staff such as Customer Services Officers employed by G4S.

R14: The local Jobcentre raise claimants concerns at a national level regarding the intimidating environment created through Customer Services Officers wearing security style uniforms.

R15: Jobcentre Plus ensures that claimants who receive sanctions understand the reason why this has happened and that they are made aware of the appeals process.

R16: Jobcentre Plus ensures at the outset that new claimants are aware of the sanctioning process and the reasons why their benefit will be sanctioned.

R17: Jobcentre Plus ensures that all advisors are up to date regarding the alternative support available.

R18: Jobcentre Plus produces an information pack outlining the alternative support available and makes this available to claimants who have been sanctioned.

R19: Head of Adult Social Care explores the possibility of allowing external agencies to speak on behalf of their client when applying to the Local Welfare Provision.

R20: Jobcentre Plus as part of their programme to increase computers in local jobcentre offices ensures that this is at an adequate level to meet demand and that suitably qualified support is on hand to help claimants' complete forms.

R21: Jobcentre Plus ensures that all claimants who are not digitally ready are identified and given information on where they can access computers and IT support / training.

R22: Head of Environment and Leisure Services explores the possibility of gaining external funding or partnership working in order to provide IT support across the library service.

R23: Head of Environment and Leisure Services explores how unemployed residents can have more access to email on library service computers.

R24: Jobcentre Plus ensures that Work Programme providers receive all the necessary details relating to a client prior to them commencing the programme and that they keep the Work Programme providers up to date with a client's change of circumstances.

R25: The Elected Mayor writes to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to highlight the issues which arose in relation to the suitability of the Work Programme in meeting the needs of clients with more severe health issues.

R26: North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group considers as part of the new Talking Therapies contract to allow self-referrals or referrals from others, such as external agencies.

OV56/01/14 Budget sub-group report

The Committee received the findings and recommendations undertaken by the Budget sub-group during its review of the budget proposals.

The main issues highlighted were:

- a) Adult Social care – Local Welfare Provision
- b) Children, Young People and Learning
- c) Contingencies
- d) Strategic Human Resources
- e) Wallsend Customer First Centre
- f) Zero Base Budget
- g) Commercial Approach
- h) LA7 Joint Working

There were 6 recommendations for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget setting process to be referred to Cabinet.

The Committee raised its concerns to the leasing agreement for the Wallsend Customer First Centre and asked that officers present a report at the 4 February meeting of the Committee. The information required should detail the decision making process for the progression of the centre, the breakdown of the leasing arrangements, the financial arrangements undertaken with the options to utilise the 2 floor of the building.

Members also asked that arrangements be made to allow Members to visit the building prior to its opening.

Agreed that (1) a report on the Wallsend Customer First Centre be presented at the 4 February meeting; (2) a visit to the building be arranged for Members; and (3) the following be referred to Cabinet for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget setting process;

R1: The Chief Finance Officer and relevant Cabinet Members assure that appropriate challenge and checks are in place when service areas apply to use contingency funds.

R2: Cabinet ask officers to ensure that, during future staffing restructures, the idea of reduced working hours is promoted to staff affected and that managers be provided with the appropriate training to support this process.

R3: Cabinet ask officer to prioritise exploring the possible uses for the 2nd floor of the new Wallsend Customer Service Centre.

R4: Cabinet ask officers to consider the feasibility of carrying out a zero budget exercise as part of the budget setting process for 2015/16.

R5: Cabinet ask officers to examine the current charges in place relating to public events and explore whether these could be reviewed to generate additional income for the Council.

R6: Cabinet ask officers to explore all options for collaborative working with other local authorities in the region.