

**At a meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2013 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Tate in the Chair

Councillors Bonallie, Francis, Howe, T. Martin, Shattock and N. Wright.

**Also Present:-**

Ms Carol Robb, Contract Manager, North East Primary Care Services Agency – Item 2

Mr Peter Berry, GP Locality Contracts and Commissioning Manager – Item 2

Dr Iain Gilmour, GP and CCG Vice Chair, NHS Sunderland CCG – Item 3

Ms Sara Woolley, Operational Reform Officer, NHS South of Tyne and Wear – Item 3

**Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and they introduced themselves.

**Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Errington,

**Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2013**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2013 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

Councillor Tate made an open declaration in relation to being a Governor of Hetton School, a Director of Gentoo Sunderland and a Member of the Local Government Pension Scheme in relation to item 4 on the Capital Programme and in relation to the Revenue Budget, as his wife is employed by Children's Services, he is the Chair of Hetton Home Care, a Council appointed Member of the Empire Theatre Trust, a Member of Easington Lane Community Access Point and of Hetton Town Trust.

## **Variation of Agenda**

The Committee agreed a proposal from the Chairman that the items on the 'Proposal of GP Practice to Relocate Premises' and 'Improvement to Urgent and Emergency Care Services in Sunderland' be considered next on the agenda in order to allow those Health colleagues in attendance to leave following consideration of their reports.

### **Proposal of GP Practice to Relocate Premises**

The North East Primary Care Services submitted a report (copy circulated) seeking the views of the Committee on a request from Dr Mandal to relocate from 3 Eden Terrace to Riverview Health Centre and extend the practice inner boundary which has been approved in principle by Sunderland TPCT.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Peter Berry, GP Locality Contracts and Commissioning Manager briefed the Committee on the report highlighting the issues to be considered detailed at paragraph 4 and advising that once the results of the engagement process were known and evaluated, a further report would be prepared by the PCT to make a final decision on the proposed relocation and extension of the practice inner boundary.

Councillor N. Wright enquired how the results of the engagement exercise would be assessed.

In response, Mr Berry advised that this would consist of a report from the practice on the results of the views received from patients together with the views of the Scrutiny Committee and those of other practices.

Ms Carol Robb, Contract Manager, North East Primary Care Services Agency added that the consultation process was due to close that week. A meeting would be held with Dr Mandal to go through the responses. If a negative response was received to the proposed relocation, other options would be considered and the outcome reported back to the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor N. Wright enquired what assistance would be given to vulnerable people who wished to leave Dr Mandal's practice.

Mr Berry stated that there was a detailed planning process in place and the results of the consultation would be provided to all patients together with the options available going forward. Those patients who had not expressed a view would remain with Dr Mandal and work would be undertaken with the practice to ensure a positive result for vulnerable people.

In response to Councillor Shattock who enquired about 'Health Care Assistant sessions', Mr Berry explained that if the practice was able to relocate to better premises it was hoping to apply to become a training practice for junior doctors and medical students and increase the number of these sessions.

Members of the Committee commented that the views of the patients were crucial and should be supported and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the outcome of the engagement exercise and the decision of Sunderland PCT be reported to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### **Improvement to Urgent and Emergency Care Services in Sunderland**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Scrutiny Committee with the outcome, analysis and decision following the public consultation in improving urgent and emergency care services in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Dr Iain Gilmour, GP and CCG Vice Chair, NHS Sunderland CCG briefed the Committee on the report. He explained, in response to the concerns expressed by Members that the proposals which had been consulted on looked to be changing, that as the redevelopment was progressing, if the Accident and Emergency Service at the Sunderland Royal site was not ready by the time the services had been commissioned, there might be a need to support the changes by initially running services from a nearby centre such as Pallion Health Centre. Grindon Lane would continue to provide the services until all the changes were made and the Hospital site was up and running and so in effect there would be a 'double running' of services, in other words, an increase in services.

Ms Sara Woolley, Operational Reform Officer, NHS South of Tyne and Wear confirmed that the objectives of the consultation had not changed. The proposals in respect of Pallion Health Centre were a contingency measure, an interim arrangement, should there be any delay in the reconfiguration of the hospital site as the changes were particularly complex. There was no intention to move away from the proposals that had been consulted on, but to support the changes and ensure that people were kept informed of progress.

Ms Woolley stated that it was intended that a further report would be brought to the Scrutiny Committee in the new municipal year providing Members with an update as to when services would be in place. Work would also continue to look to make improvements to access and parking issues.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor N. Wright, Dr Gilmour advised that the new 111 service had been well used and there had been 49,000 calls since December 2012 covering Durham, Northumberland and Sunderland.

The Chairman having thanked the Officers for their attendance, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the recommendations made by the NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group Shadow Governing Body at their meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December and the independent review of responses to improving urgent and emergency care services in Sunderland be received and noted and that update reports be submitted to the Committee at key milestones in the service development.

## **Reference from Cabinet - 13 February 2013 – Budget and Service Reports**

### **(A) Collection Fund 2012/2013**

### **(B) (i) Capital Programme 2013/2014 and Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2013/2014, including Prudential Indicators for 2013/2014 to 2015/2016.**

### **(B) (ii) Revenue Budget and Proposed Council Tax for 2013/2014 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2012/2013 to 2015/2016.**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated), seeking the advice and consideration of the Committee on a number of reports considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2013/2014 to assist the Council with its service and financial planning arrangements.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

Mr. Malcolm Page, Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services drew the Committee's attention to the position in respect of the Collection Fund where it was estimated that on the basis of current collection rates and the recovery of Council Tax arrears, that there would be a surplus as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 of approximately £1.7m.

Mr Page explained the proposed uses of the surplus as detailed in paragraph 5.3 of the report. He advised that estimating the Collection Fund balance available in 2012/2013 for use in setting the Council Tax for 2013/2014 was a legal requirement which the Council must carry out. He stressed that the positive position reflected the continued strong focus on Council Tax collection, continuous improvement in systems and processes and wider proactive initiatives to address Welfare Reform challenges and advised that a similar approach would be adopted in respect of the collection of business rates.

In response to Councillor Shattock who asked what the Council would do about those residents who were not used to paying Council Tax, Mr Page advised that all the options were being looked at and Officers were in the process of writing to those individuals to offer ways in which to make payments.

Mr Page commented that the proposed Capital Programme for 2013/2014 was very positive. The total programme proposed amounts of approximately £111m as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report. There were ongoing commitments from previous years of approximately £85m and new starts of approximately £26m. It was a bold programme but it was affordable and prudent. The Council's approach to Treasury Management continued to be careful and prudent.

In response to Councillor N, Wright, Mr Page advised that the Capital Programme was funded through borrowing and grants where there had been significant levels of reductions. A sensible approach to a little more investment through borrowing had been taken which was still very prudent and at affordable levels as it was considered to be the right time to continue to support key services and investments. Mr Page advised that the Council's approach to Treasury Management would remain 'steady as she goes' next year. In terms of Treasury Management, the Council's

performance was good. It invested very carefully and with Government backed institutions.

Mr Page advised that the final Local Government Settlement was broadly similar to the Provisional Settlement. A detailed analysis had been undertaken and when all the relevant variations to funding had been taken into account the funding gap remained at £37m for 2013/2014 with reductions of circa £98m required over the three years to 2015/2016.

Mr Page drew attention to the spending pressures and commitments the Council faced over the period detailed in paragraph 6 of the report on the Revenue Budget, to the proposals to meet the funding gap 2013/2014 detailed in paragraph 7 and to the consultations on the budget. He referred the Committee to the proposed amounts of Council Tax for the year 2013/2014 advising that the recommendation to Council was that there was a Council Tax freeze. He pointed out that exact levels would only become known when formal notification of the precepts from the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority, which was proposing a freeze and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria were received. If the latter proposed an increase in the precept, this would mean an increase on the bill for 'Band D' of £2.93 or 6p per week. However as the Council was proposing a Council Tax freeze for 2013/2014, the regulations set out in the Local Finance Act 1992, which require all billing authorities to hold a referendum on their proposed level of basic Council Tax each year if they exceed government guidelines which are set out annually, would have no impact for 2013/2014 and not affect the Council's access to the Council Tax Freeze grant.

The Chairman enquired whether the Council would still be able to manage to protect frontline services given the £37m savings it needed to make.

Mr Page replied that as more was taken out of the budget it became more difficult to protect frontline services and that £14m of the £37m would need to be taken from front facing services. With respect to Library services, the primary concern was to modernise the service on offer, make it more accessible and drive efficiencies. However the proposal was to take out £550,000 of the budget for 2013/2014 as a saving.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services and his Finance Team for the work they had done on the preparation of the 2013/2014 budget proposals.

There being no further questions and the Chairman having thanked Mr Page for his attendance, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the Council be advised that the Scrutiny Committee commented that, having monitored the development of the proposals, overall it was in support of the detail within the Budget and Service reports and therefore supported the Cabinet recommendation to recommend the Council to approve the budget proposals.

## **Member Development Opportunities**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Scrutiny Members with details of forthcoming events in support of their role of scrutiny, including an invitation to attend the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Karen Brown, Scrutiny Officer briefed the Committee on the two events advising that subject to the Scrutiny Committee's approval, the Scrutiny Officers would contact all the Members of the Scrutiny Panels to find out who would be interested in attending the Parliamentary Select Committee Seminar on 1<sup>st</sup> March with a view to one Member from each Panel attending.

Councillor Shattock expressed her appreciation and thanks for managing to hold a Parliamentary Select Committee Seminar in Sunderland.

5. RESOLVED that:-

- (a) all Members of the Scrutiny Committee attend the Parliamentary Session, if commitments allow, together with one Member of each Panel; and
- (b) approval be given for the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, the Head of Area Arrangements and Councillor T. Martin to attend the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2013 at Local Government House, Westminster.

## **Notice of Key Decisions**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 15 January 2013.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

An updated version of the Notice issued 12 February 2013 had also been circulated to the Committee.

6. RESOLVED that the Notices of Key Decisions as detailed above be received and noted.

## **Annual Work Programme 2012/13**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the work programme for the Committee's work during the 2012/13 council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Coordinator, highlighted the Policy Review Topics which each of the Panels would undertake detailed at paragraph 2.2 of the report.

7. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme be received and noted.

### **Lead Scrutiny Member Update: February 2013**

The Lead Scrutiny Members submitted a joint report (copy circulated) providing an update to the Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of each of the six Lead Scrutiny Members and supporting Panels.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Coordinator referred the Committee to Section 3.3 of the report concerning the approach by Durham County Council's Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enter into a joint scrutiny arrangement with Durham and South Tyneside Councils' scrutiny functions with a view to giving further investigation to the consequences of mine water discharged into the sea and to be updated at all stages of the process.

In respect of Responsive Services and Customer Care, Ms Lancaster advised that an invitation would be sent to all Members to meet on 25<sup>th</sup> February with Vera Baird QC, the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss the future plans of the Commissioner with regards to domestic violence across the wider Northumbria force area.

The Chairman congratulated the Lead Members on the Policy Reviews they had completed advising that the Cabinet Members would be invited during the course of the year to update the Committee on progress on implementing the recommendations of the reviews.

Full consideration having been given to the report it was:-

8. RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the update of the Lead Scrutiny Members be received and noted; and
- (b) approval be given for the Scrutiny Committee to enter into a joint arrangement with Durham County Council and South Tyneside Council regarding the Tyne and Wear Aquifer Protection Scheme and for the Chairman and Councillor Bonallie to represent the Committee at any meetings; updates to be provided to the Committee as to progress as appropriate.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

(Signed) R.D. TATE,  
Chairman.