

At a meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 13th JUNE, 2013 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Tate in the Chair

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

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Debra Waller the new Scrutiny Lead Member for Children's Services who was attending her first meeting as a member of the Scrutiny Committee.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kay and from Ms. R. Elliott.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Committee held on 25th April and of the Extraordinary Meetings held on 16th April and 13th May, 2013

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 25th April and of the Extraordinary meetings held on 16th April and 13th May 2013 (copies circulated), be confirmed and signed as correct records.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Future Library Services

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated), which introduced a Cabinet report on the future Library Services (copy circulated separately following the publication of the Cabinet agenda).

(for copy reports – see original minutes).

Mr. Neil Revely, Executive Director of Health Housing and Adult Services presented the report together with Julie Gray, Head of Community Services and Julie McCann, Library Operations Manager. Members were informed of :-

- a) the results of the recent consultation programme regarding the future of the library services
- b) proposals for a new service model to deliver a new vision for library services taking into account the consultation programme results

- c) the proposed approach to the final stage of consultation on the future service model and implementation milestones.

The Chairman then invited questions from Members. He asked that members restricted their comments to City wide issues rather than individual ward concerns. Ward issues could be addressed as part of the local aspect of the final consultation programme.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Mr Revely advised that it would be neither practical nor feasible, given the timescales, to have every aspect of the proposed new service model in place before the planned closure of the existing facilities identified. Implementation would be incremental and be subject to the letting of contracts etc, however as much as possible of the new model would be in place at the time of the planned introduction date in October, 2013.

Councillor N. Wright noted the withdrawal of the mobile library service and expressed concern at the potential for this to exacerbate social isolation especially amongst the elderly. She asked what arrangements would be put in place to prevent this. Ms Gray advised that the vehicle was suffering a number of mechanical problems and that there was an element of duplication with the Books on Wheels Service. Individuals who regularly used the mobile service had been contacted and signposted to the Books on Wheels Service. Stocks of books had also been placed in sheltered accommodation.

Councillor Wright further asked how the new model would be reviewed once implemented. Ms McCann advised that the new service would be monitored and reviewed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis including usage, opening hours and possible alternatives. Consultation would continue regarding the community outreach and the content of stock provided would be reviewed. For example the stock placed in Children's Centres was currently aimed at children and parents but that could change as a result of feedback received. Mr Revely added that the service would be monitored from day one and tweaks made as required prior to a formal review by the panel.

The Chairman requested that a report reviewing the operation of the new service be brought back to the Committee 12 months following the implementation of the new model.

Councillor Shattock stated that she was not at all happy with the report before the Committee and expressed concern that members had only received the lengthy Cabinet report 24 hours prior to this evenings meeting. It was unreasonable to expect members to have read and digested its contents in such a short timeframe. She believed that the process was meaningless, drawing members' attention to the list of dates and milestones in the Cabinet report as an indication that the decisions had already been made.

She mourned the loss of the Carnegie Libraries and stated that they were at the centre of communities and extremely important to the elderly and disabled. The loss of these libraries would leave whole communities such as Southwick centreless. Fulwell and Bunnyhill were being offered as alternatives however Bunnyhill was difficult to access being at the top of a steep hill. Councillor Shattock stated that the Government was decimating the Council which was public service not a business. It was a 'nonsense' to continue to expect local authorities to do more with less. She

believed the proposals were draconian and in the wider scale of things that the estimated savings of 850,000 were a drop in the ocean.

Councillor T. Martin paid tribute to the commitment and hard work of the library staff and thanked them for the services they had provided. He also regretted the loss of the Carnegie Libraries and hoped that the buildings could be preserved in some way. He acknowledged that access, especially for the elderly and disabled, had become an issue in some of the older buildings. He highlighted the excellent accessibility of Ryhope library and proposed it as a model for the future.

Councillor Howe recalled the hours of enjoyment he'd experienced at Hendon library. He concurred with Councillor Shattock's view that the Government were decimating Local Authority finances but added that this had resulted from the failings of the banking system. He believed that the proposed closure of the 9 libraries would do little to deliver much in the way of savings but acknowledged that the library service needed to become more efficient and recognise the increasing pace of technological change in the twenty first century.

Councillor Bonallie stated that the library service as we know it had been designed for a different age and was now in decline. The Council could not afford to be sentimental. The financial and technological landscape had changed. Change would come and the Council would need to adapt accordingly. It could not hold back forever.

Mr Revely having replied to the comments raised by Members, at the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that Cabinet be advised that the Scrutiny Committee commented as follows :-

"Library provision continues to be an important service for our communities however the economic situation we find ourselves in means that we have no choice but to look at different ways of delivering services to residents. Having scrutinised the proposals the Scrutiny Committee is in support of the development of a new service which makes the best use of the resources we have available to us to target those who would benefit most from them. We are also pleased to note that with regard to the retained static provision all residents will have access within a 2 mile radius of their home and that the proposed future arrangements account for almost 88% of the overall visits to library buildings last year."

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel Referral: Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Update

The Children's Services Scrutiny Lead Member submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Scrutiny Committee with an update on the findings and recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel in relation to a commissioned item from the Committee regarding concerns over waiting times for CAMHS Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Debra Waller, The Children's Services Scrutiny Lead Member, presented the report outlining the following conclusions reached by the Panel.

The Children's Service Scrutiny Panel recognised the work and progress the Children and Young People Service had made in taking over part of the CAMHS service from previous service providers.

The Panel also acknowledged the robust monitoring arrangements that had been developed and implemented in the new service contract specifications. The series of KPI's, monthly monitoring meetings and performance data would ensure that the new service was transparent and accountable.

The Panel also felt it worthwhile to continue to monitor the situation and chart the progress of the Children and Young People Service in meeting targets around waiting times.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Norma Wright regarding the composition of the Monitoring Group, Meg Boustead Head of Safeguarding advised that it had recently changed and now comprised of representatives from North of Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust, the Clinical Commissioning Group, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Councillor Christine Shattock, acknowledged that the new provider would require time to clear the backlog but that the Committee would be expecting to see the situation improve thereafter.

Ms Boustead thanked the Panel for their investigation and advised that the Committee's interest had served to raise the profile of CAMHS within the Trust.

3. RESOLVED that the findings and recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel in relation to concerns over waiting times for CAMHS Tier 2 and Tier 3 support be received and noted and that the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel receive two further updates in December 2013 and April 2014.

Composition of the Supporting Scrutiny Panels 2013/14

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) in respect of the above matter. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Coordinator, briefed members on the commissioning model for Scrutiny in Sunderland and the revised membership of the Panels for 2013/14. The model would allow for a more focused, flexible and responsive function in challenging times.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that:-

- i) The report be received and noted and;
- ii) The proposed membership of the informal Scrutiny Panels detailed in appendix 2 of the report be endorsed.

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 21 May 2013.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman asked any Members having issues to raise or requiring further detail on any of the items included in the notice, to contact the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Helen Lancaster for initial assistance.

5. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions as detailed above be received and noted.

Urgent Item

In accordance with Section 100(B) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman stated that the following item was to be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgent business in order that no unnecessary delay was caused to the delivery of the Policy Reviews.

Annual Work Programme for 2013-14

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the determination of the annual Scrutiny work programme for 2013-14 including the selection of policy reviews to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Lead Members and their supporting Panels.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Coordinator, presented the report and drew Members' attention to the draft Work Programme as detailed in appendix 1 and the shortlist of Policy Review topics as detailed in appendix 2.

Each Scrutiny Lead Member together with their supporting Scrutiny Officer provided a brief presentation on the development of the proposed Policy Review Topics and discussion ensued thereon.

Councillor Norma Wright, with regard to the Children's Services Panel's review of Child Obesity, expressed concern that its scope was potentially too broad and suggested that it could benefit from a narrower focus. The Chairman requested that Councillor Waller and Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer give consideration to this and once the review had been scoped that the Chairman and Vice Chairman were again consulted. In addition the Chairman asked whether any thought had been given to the undertaking of a second review.

The Chairman having thanked Ms Lancaster for her report and the Scrutiny Lead Members for their presentations it was :-

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Approval be given to the draft Annual Scrutiny Work Programme for 2013-14 and that emerging issues be incorporated as and when they arose throughout the year; and
- (ii) Approval be given to the list of suggestions for policy reviews (subject to the discussion detailed above) and that the relevant Scrutiny Lead Members be commissioned to undertake this policy review work, as part of the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme, and
- (iii) The Scrutiny Committee receives regular updates on the progress of the work of the Lead Scrutiny Member and the supporting Panels through the Lead Scrutiny Member Update mechanism.

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

(Signed) R.D. TATE,
Chairman.