

**At an Extraordinary Meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2013 at 5.00 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Tate in the Chair

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

**Also Present:-**

Councillor P. Watson, Leader of the Council – Item 3

Councillor P. Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Item 3

Councillor J. Kelly, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Wellness and Culture – Item 3

**Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Errington.

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

There were no interests declared.

**Response from Cabinet – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013 – Scrutiny Policy Reviews**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide feedback from the Cabinet meetings held on 13<sup>th</sup> February and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013, regarding three of six of the first round of scrutiny policy reviews undertaken by scrutiny in 2012/13.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members of the Cabinet had been invited to attend for this item of business to provide feedback on Cabinet’s consideration of the policy reviews undertaken by the scrutiny panels and how it intends to deliver the recommendations of each panel as follows:-

<b>Scrutiny Panel</b>	<b>Policy Review</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>
Skills, Economy and Regeneration	The Government’s Work Programme	Leader of the Council
Children’s Services	Improvement, Admissions and Planning; the implications of the Education Act 2011	Cllr P. Smith
Public Health, Wellness	The Role of the Local Authority	Cllr J. Kelly

Councillor P. Watson provided a comprehensive feedback account of the work undertaken to progress the actions on the appendix to the report relating to the policy review on 'The Government's Work Programme'.

Councillor Watson advised that according to the Office of National Statistics, employment in the private sector in Sunderland had increased by 15.5 %, whereas the average increase for the rest of the region was 2.8%. Sunderland was the biggest private sector employer in the region. He added that the strategy of the Economic Masterplan had been influential in this.

In response to Members' questions, Councillor Watson advised that the employment rate in Sunderland was approximately 10% at present. Whilst there had been some improvements in the unemployment rate, it was above the regional average, although not the highest in the region.

Members commented that the workforce in the area was highly valued and on the importance of training programmes and apprenticeships where these workskills could be brought to the fore and further developed.

Councillor P. Smith provided feedback on the progress of the actions relating to the implications of the Education Act 2011.

Mr Keith Moore, Executive Director of Children's Services emphasised that the Authority was keen to work with and support all types of schools for the benefit of school children in Sunderland. Officers were in the process of developing the Education Strategy which would sit alongside the Economic Masterplan so that business was more closely linked into schools to ensure a wider understanding of the City going forward.

Councillor J. Kelly provided feedback on the progress of the seven actions identified in relation to the policy review on the Role of the Local Authority in Health Issues.

Ms Nonnie Crawford, Director of Public Health highlighted the recommendation to increase the number of Health Champions explaining what the role entailed. She invited Members to put themselves forward as community health champions pointing out that the Coalfields and East Areas of the city were under represented.

Members of the Cabinet thanked the Committee for the opportunity to attend the meeting, provide feedback and answer questions asked by Members of the Scrutiny Committee. Once they had presented their feedback and answered questions they left the meeting.

The Chairman having thanked the Cabinet Members for their attendance it was:-

1. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the proposed actions detailed within each of the Action Plans appended to the report at appendices 1 to 3 and the information brought out during the discussion be noted; and
- (ii) each of the action plans be referred to the relevant scrutiny panels for further consideration.

## **Future Library Services**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Scrutiny Committee with the findings of the Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Future Library Service.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Karen Brown, Scrutiny Officer referred the Committee to the findings which were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Ms Julie Gray, Head of Community Services briefed Members on the current position of the review. She advised that the intention was to report the findings of the first stage of the consultation process to the Cabinet in June and following this a comprehensive consultation process would be undertaken on detailed proposals for the future library service at the second stage; the findings of which would be analysed and reported back to Cabinet in July with a recommendation for a proposed future service model.

Ms Gray advised that more than 2,700 responses had been received following the first stage of the consultation process. She informed the Committee that one of the areas for consultation included developing a network of volunteers to add value to the overall service offer and whilst only a small number had come forward, there was already a range of programmes in place to try to get people interested in volunteering.

Ms Gray advised the Committee that a report would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration at its June meeting.

Members queried whether it would be possible to achieve the timescales which had been reported given the extensive consultation and engagement sessions that were planned to inform the review.

Ms Gray advised that in all likelihood there would need to be a Special meeting of the Cabinet convened in July in order to allow for a four week period of consultation on the proposals.

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

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the findings of the Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Future Library Service, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee;
- (ii) a report be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration at its June meeting; and
- (iii) the Head of Community Services and Scrutiny Coordinator discuss in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman whether/when a further report on the detailed proposals for the future service model needed to be

submitted to the Scrutiny Committee/ Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel after this as part of the consultation process.

### **Scrutiny Policy Reviews 2012/13: Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel – Final Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Scrutiny Committee with the draft recommendations of the Health, Housing and Adult Services' Policy Review looking at Empty Properties in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Lead Member for Health, Housing & Adult Services, Councillor Shattock referred the Committee to the draft recommendations of the Empty Properties in Sunderland Policy Review as set out at section 9, on page 33 of the agenda papers.

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

3. RESOLVED that the Policy Review of the Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel and in particular the recommendations arising from the Review as outlined in section 3 of the report of the Chief Executive, be endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee and submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at a future meeting.

(Signed) R.D. TATE,  
Chairman.