

At a meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 25th APRIL, 2013 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Tate in the Chair

Councillors Bonallie, Francis, T. Martin, Shattock, N. Wright and Ms. A. Blakey

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Errington and Howe and from Ms. R. Elliott.

Minutes of the Last Ordinary Meeting of the Committee held on 14th March, 2013

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14th March, 2013 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Reference from Cabinet – 17th April, 2013 – Sunderland’s Local Development Framework Evidence Base : The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Draft Settlement Break Review

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated), setting out for the advice and consideration of the Committee a report considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 17th April, 2013, on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Study and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for its use in developing the Local Development Framework and to assist in the determination of day to day planning applications. The Cabinet were further requested to approve the Draft Settlement Break Review for public consultation.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Neil Cole, Lead Policy Officer for Planning, presented the report to Members advising that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment were effectively technical reports and that there was no formal requirement to undertake any formal public consultation, although, both

the demand and supply of housing would be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report.

The draft Settlement Break Review would be made available for public consultation during April and May 2013 which would enable the findings and recommendations to be considered by local residents, statutory consultees, developers and landowners. These comments would be evaluated and reported back to Cabinet for further consideration and adoption.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Cole for his attendance it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the Council be advised that the Scrutiny Committee supported the Cabinet recommendation to endorse the 2013 updates to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Study and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and to endorse the Draft Settlement Break Review for consultation purposes

Monitoring the Delivery of Agreed Scrutiny Recommendations

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Scrutiny Committee with progress in relation to the implementation of agreed scrutiny recommendations from previous policy reviews conducted by the relevant scrutiny committees during 2010/11 and 2011/12 respectively.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Coordinator, presented the report reminding the Committee that the revised monitoring arrangements saw the Committee monitoring arrangements in relation to policy reviews for the two previous years only and to receive reports by exception.

Members were given updates on recommendations in relation to 'The Role of Culture in Supporting Sustainable Communities' by Ms. Trina Murphy, Heritage and Resorts Manager and Ms. Julie Gray, Head of Community Services and on 'Low Carbon Economy' and 'Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Service's' by Mr. Les Clark, Head of Street Scene.

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

3. RESOLVED that the progress towards the completion of the actions detailed within the action plans appended to the report be received and noted.

OFSTED Inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services

The Chief Executive and Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) providing the Committee with the final inspection report and draft action plan following the recently successful Ofsted inspection of the Council's Adoption Service. The report also provided a second progress update in the implementation of the action plan arising from the announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services which took place in February / March, 2012.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Shattock made reference to issue B4 and commented that although reports of the CAMHS Service improving it could still take over 20 weeks for a referral to be processed. Ms. Boustead informed Members that the providers advised that they constantly monitored and reprioritised any children on the waiting list so if any children were at risk or there was a particular issue that arose they could get those turned around in a week.

Councillor Tate spoke of previous concerns over people not turning up for appointment and asked how the service was tackling this problem. Ms. Boustead advised that they provided the service in community locations so it was more accessible for the individual and that they could choose which venue they preferred but informed Members that the majority chose Monkwearmouth Hospital and this option had not reduced the numbers of individuals not attending. Members were informed that meetings were held on a monthly basis where any issues or concerns around individual cases could be discussed and reprioritised where necessary. Improvements were being made and they would continue to monitor cases closely.

In relation to targets around adoptions within the City, Ms. Boustead advised that there were two key indicators, one was the whole journey from the child first becoming a looked after child to then moving in with a family. The target for this was currently 617 days and the authority was operating at 670 days. Ms. Boustead informed Members that performance in relation to this target was improving and explained that it was measured on a three year average so the 670 days would be the average from years 2010 to 2012.

The second was the family finder indicator and this was measured from the day the Courts agreed to place a child up for adoption to them being matched with a family and being ready to move in which was currently a target of 214 days. The Council were operating at 260/270 days but informed the Committee that the service did place a lot of older children in families and siblings together which could be more difficult and take longer but was more beneficial for the young people involved.

Ms. Ann Blakey, Headteacher, commented that she felt parents needed more support following the completion of the adoption and was informed that the local authority remained responsible for the child three years after an adoption was complete but even following that families were advised that they could contact their local authority to access any additional support or services and as an adopted child they should be made a priority.

Councillor Wright referred to the ongoing cutbacks and financial restraints being faced by the authority and asked if these would have any detrimental effect on the adoption service and Ms. Boustead advised that they did have efficiency targets and they were aware that future efficiencies would need to be made and it would be more difficult on the service but that the Council were committed to providing an adoption service that had the best interests of the child at the centre of it. Members were informed that Managers in the service had been reduced and realigned and that they had looked at different ways to support managers. With regard to frontline services and social workers Ms. Boustead advised that they had not been asked to make efficiencies in these areas as it was realised how critical these services were.

The Committee thanked Ms. Boustead for what was a positive and impressive report, and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the very positive Adoption Inspection report and the associated actions the Council plans to undertake in response be received and noted; and
- (ii) the progress to date in implementing the announced inspection action plan be received and noted.

Scrutiny Policy Review 2012/2013 of the Scrutiny Panels – Final Reports

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated), which provided the Committee with the draft recommendations of five of the six of the second round of scrutiny policy review undertaken between January and March, 2013 by the Scrutiny Lead Members and their supporting panels.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

The Committee were taken through the proposed recommendations from five of the six scrutiny policy reviews for endorsement, prior to their submission to Cabinet for consideration. Ms. Karen Brown, Scrutiny Officer, advised that with regard to the report of the Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel, the Health Protocol which will act as a framework for the Council, Healthwatch, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the NHS Commissioning Board to work together was currently out for consultation with the relevant bodies that will sign up to it.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee endorse the five scrutiny policy reviews, in particular the recommendations as outlined in Section 3 of the report, prior to submitting them to Cabinet in June.

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 16 April 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.

Councillor Shattock referred to Item no. 130416/03 – Proposal for Transfer of current in-house Care Provision to Local Authority Trading Company and asked the Scrutiny Co-ordinator to provide Members with an update.

6. RESOLVED that the Notice 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 undertaken during the 2012/13 council year.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

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

Lead Scrutiny Member Update: April 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).

The Committee received an update from those Lead Scrutiny Members present on the work that had been carried out by the Scrutiny Panels, the majority of which had now concluded and produced recommendations as previously considered under Item 7 of the agenda.

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

8. RESOLVED that the update of the Lead Scrutiny Members be received and noted.

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

(Signed) R.D. TATE,
Chairman.