

**At a meeting of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2014 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Tate in the Chair

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

**Also Present:-**

Mr Kevin Morris – Chair of Health Watch

**Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished them all a Happy New Year.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Howe and Waller.

**Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2013**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2013 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

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

There were no interests declared.

**Reference from Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 – Revenue Budget 2014/2015 Proposals and Provisional Revenue Support Settlement 2014/2015**

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 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, on the provisional budget proposals and Revenue Support Settlement, as the basis for consultation, prior to the receipt of the final Local Government Finance Settlement. Members' views were requested in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

Ms. Sonia Tognarelli Head of Financial Resources presented the report and drew member's attention to the stark statistics outlined in paragraph 4.5 which showed that the revenue support grant for Sunderland would reduce by 17.4% for 2014/15 and 27.7% for 2015/16. The funding gap being faced by the Council over the next two financial years was detailed in the table highlighted in paragraph 7 of the report.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Wright regarding the freeze grant, Ms Tognarelli advised that the grant was made available to Local Authorities who wished to freeze council tax based on a 1% increase. The funding would be built into the spending review baseline for 2014/15 and 2015/16 however there was no clarity as to whether the funding would be made available thereafter.

Councillor Wright noted that cuts were continuing to be made to support services and asked how this would be managed in the context of the massive cuts that had already been made. Ms Tognarelli replied that it was now extremely difficult to make savings in these areas as they had already been heavily targeted. A decision had been made to make proportionate cuts across the board once the issue of business continuity across the whole of the Council had been assessed.

There being no further questions for Ms Tognarelli, the Chairman thanked her for her report and it was :-

2. RESOLVED that the Council be advised that the Scrutiny Committee was satisfied with the information provided on the Revenue Budget proposals and Revenue Support Settlement and had no additional comments to make.

### **Reference from Cabinet – 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 – Capital Programme – Third Capital Review 2013/2014, Provisional Resources 2014/2015 and Treasury Management Review 2013/2014**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) setting out for the advice and consideration of the Committee an extract from the report of the Capital Programme Third Review 2013/2014 including Provisional Resources available for 2014/2015 and Treasury Management Review 2013/14 which detailed two new projects that had been added to the capital programme, which the Cabinet had referred to Council for approval.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Sonia Tognarelli, Head of Financial Resources referred the Committee to Appendix A of the report which provided details of the schemes namely the Clean Bus Technology Fund and the Trans Sunderland Cycle Route.

Ms Tognarelli advised that the report was referred to the Scrutiny Committee, for advice and consideration in the context of the inclusion of the two additional schemes for 2013/2014 which were over the £250,000 threshold.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor T. Martin, Ms Tognarelli advised that liabilities in respect of equal pay claims had been fully accounted for and earmarked in the reserves and would not impact on the budget.

In response to a query from Councillor Kay in relation to borrowing strategies and the re shaping of debt, Ms Tognarelli informed members that there had been no need to undertake new borrowing as cash balances had been utilised instead. Investments had been made in various areas where rates of return were good.

In reply to a further enquiry from Councillor Kay regarding the condition of the highways and speculation that the budget in this area may be at risk, Ms Tognarelli advised that this would not be the case. Extra government funding had been released with regard to pot holes and it was also a priority for the Council in its Capital programme. Accordingly additional capital resources would be made available for the highway maintenance programme however there would be a rationalisation of revenue expenditure in this area.

Councillor Kay commended members and officers on the Council's track record of financial management. He feared to think what the present position would look like had the Council not had such a fine heritage of treasury management.

Consideration having been given to the Capital Budget scheme variations, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the Council be advised that the Scrutiny Committee was satisfied with the Capital Budget scheme variations and had no additional comment to make.

### **Complaints and Feedback**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced Margaret Douglas, Complaints and Feedback Team Manager who presented the key aspects arising from the Complaints and Feedback Annual Report (a copy of which had been circulated to members under separate cover).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The joint report was the first since the Council's three complaints functions (Health & Social Care, Corporate and Children's Services) had merged into a single team based within the Commercial and Corporate Services Directorate. Marie Johnston and Beverley Boal were present to assist with any technical questions from members in relation to Adult Services and Children Services respectively. Ms Douglas was pleased to advise Member's that the Council had maintained its unblemished record with regard to Ombudsman complaints which had lasted for over a decade, the only Local Authority in the North East to have done so.

The Complaints and Feedback Team were currently migrating their complaints management system onto Microsoft dynamics which would make the reporting of complaints information easier and make the presentation of the data more meaningful for Members.

Councillor T. Martin welcomed the annual report and was also pleased to read the compliments section. He referred to the growing turn over time in processing the complaints received and asked if this reflected increased pressures on staff following cuts made to Council services. Ms Douglas replied that this was the case. Although

the Team continued to seek timely responses from Directorates, if Officers were faced with tackling a complaint or addressing a child protection issue, they would have an easy choice to make.

Councillor N. Wright referred to the sharp increase in the amount of compensation payments made in relation to adult social care and asked if this was a trend or a one off incident. Ms Douglas was confident that it was not a trend. Each year could prove to be very different from the last. This year only £200 had been paid out in compensation however in a previous year, a single complaint had led to a £44,000 pay out.

There being no further questions for Ms. Douglas the Chairman thanked her for her report and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Children and Young People Plan Refresh.**

The Executive Director of People's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed the Committee on work being undertaken to refresh the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) together with the consultation process being carried out prior to its submission to the Children's Trust and Council for adoption.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Beverley Scanlon, Head of Educational Attainment and Lifelong Learning who outlined the current position of the refresh, the consultation process and how the performance management of the Plan would be undertaken.

Consideration having been given to the matter, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report and the draft CYPP Refresh be received and noted and;
- ii) the Children's Scrutiny Panel be commissioned to be consulted on the Committee's behalf in the development of the CYPP refresh.

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

The Chief Executive submitted a report of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel (copy circulated) which provided members with the panel's findings and recommendations following its investigation into concerns regarding waiting times for CAMHS Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer presented the report advising members that as commissioned by the Scrutiny Committee, the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel,

had robustly monitored and challenged officers and partners around the waiting times. This had taken place over a period of 15 months and it has been demonstrated that a number of practices and measures had been put in place to not only tackle the waiting lists but also to ensure that targets were met and service performance enhanced. The members of the panel acknowledged the improvement and progress made by North of Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust (NTW) and the commitment to continued improvement through the initiation of Commissioning for Quality and Innovation target incentives. The Clinical Commissioning Group, NTW and the Council had worked together to ensure that the newly designed service was fit for purpose and robust enough to ensure a consistent level of performance.

Councillor Shattock stated that she found the report really heartening and provided evidence that Scrutiny still worked. She welcomed that NTW appear to be getting on top of the issue but feared that the number of referrals would start to increase as vulnerable families struggled to cope with the changes to the benefits system.

Councillor N. Wright endorsed Councillor Shattock's comments and commended her for bringing the problem to the attention of the Committee in the first instance. She also paid tribute to the Members and Officers of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel for their work in investigating the Committee's concerns.

Mr Morris highlighted that the report made no mention of how children's experiences of the service had been taken into account as part of the service re design. Mr Cummings reassured Mr Morris that NTW had consulted young people in this regard and that this would be reflected in the annual report prepared by NTW.

6. RESOLVED the report be received and noted and that future monitoring of the CAMHS services be undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

### **Effective Health Scrutiny in Sunderland**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider the role of the Council's Scrutiny Function in light of the Francis Inquiry into the failure of care at the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Coordinator presented the report and in particular drew members attention to paragraph 3 which highlighted the recommendations in the Francis report relating directly to Health Scrutiny.

Councillor Shattock highlighted as extremely important, the reference in the report that "Scrutiny can be better conducted at arms length rather than as a critical friend"

Councillor Kay commented that despite having the hospital and a walk in centre in his ward, he and members in general remained wholly in the dark about Health Service delivery. This had been a historical situation and he welcomed that members were now in a position to make a mark proactively. He referred to the Health and Social Care Integrated Transformation Fund and suggested that the Scrutiny Committee was involved in the shaping of any bid to use monies from the Fund. Nonnie Crawford, Director of Public Health advised that there was a whole range of

work currently being undertaken at the Health and Wellbeing Board including work around the use of pooled monies. It was important to note that the fund did not represent new money.

Ms Tognarelli drew member's attention to the table on page 35 of the agenda papers which showed the allocation of the fund as part of the Provisional Revenue Support Settlement.

Mr Morris suggested that there was a need to improve the flow of information and ensure the reports of individual organisations were readily available so that no one was operating in isolation. Councillor N. Wright asked if there was a simple mechanism for keeping members updated on the matter. Helen Lancaster advised that it was all about a two way flow of information and added that Members would be welcome to attend meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board or receive an electronic link to the agenda papers. Councillor N. Wright replied that it was not always possible for Scrutiny Committee members to get to the meetings of the Board, given their other commitments. She asked if it was possible to adopt a simple procedure where members received a very brief update on a regular basis.

7. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted;
- ii) the proposed actions for improvement to the scrutiny of health services in Sunderland as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report be endorsed; and
- iii) investigations be made into the most effective way of providing and exchanging information.

### **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 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2013. A copy of the most recent 28 day notice issued on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, following the publication of the agenda was also tabled for members information.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman asked any Members requiring further detail on any of the items included in the notices, to contact the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Ms. Helen Lancaster for initial assistance. Ms Lancaster advised that following on from discussion at the Scrutiny development day, investigations would be made into providing more information on the notice about the decisions to be made. Where Members had specific queries they should contact her in advance of the Scrutiny Committee in order that further detail could be provided at the meeting which would allow for a better informed view of whether Members needed a report or further information.

8. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

### **Annual Work Programme 2013/14**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the work programme for the Committee's work being undertaken during the 2013/14 council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

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

### **Lead Scrutiny Member Update**

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.

Councillor N. Wright referred to the dedicated scrutiny committee budget and suggested that consideration was given as to how the budget was best utilised to commission specific pieces of work, perhaps in conjunction with partners.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Consideration having been given to the report it was:-

10. 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.