



# Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11

Scrutiny provides Councillors, not part of the Council's decision-making Cabinet, the opportunity to review decisions, policies and performance that affect the Borough. Scrutiny is a Councillor-led process which helps to ensure that the Council's services and policies meet the needs of local people according to the Council's own aims and standards.

Corporate, Adult Services, and  
Social Inclusion Select Committee

Efficiency, Improvement and  
Transformation (EIT) Review of  
School Catering



February 2011

Environment Select Committee

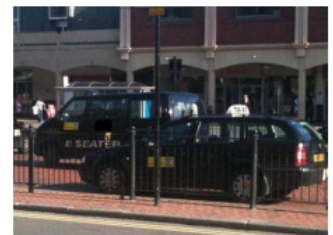
EIT Review of Built and Natural Environment



16 December 2010

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

Review of Taxi Licensing



2010

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The scrutiny process not only provides a means of reviewing the Council's own achievements against its planned targets but can also examine services provided by other public organisations on issues causing public concern. It provides the opportunity for Councillors to champion the issues of local concern to residents and participate in the development of new policies. At Stockton, the Council's scrutiny committees are called Select Committees and they make recommendations to the Council and other organisations following in-depth investigations.

## Work during 2010/11

During the past year, the Scrutiny Work Programme has focused on supporting Year 2 of the Council's **Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Programme**. This is a comprehensive review of all the Council's services over a three year period to ensure that they are being provided in the most efficient way and delivering excellent value for money services for the future. Year 2 EIT reviews have identified approximately £6.6 million of potential savings as well as suggestions for service improvements. Select Committees are looking forward to continuing their work supporting Year 3 of the EIT programme.

In addition to their review work programme, all Select Committees take the opportunity to review the impact of previous reviews and recommendations. Some key achievements and outcomes highlighted from the monitoring of past reviews include:

- Ongoing promotion of river based leisure facilities including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Take to the Tees event took place incorporating a triathlon, Stockton Summer Show and the 'Rat Race'.
- Obesity is being tackled with the establishment of the national 'Lets Get Cooking' programme in schools across Stockton-on-Tees which engages with the wider community to introduce basic healthy cooking skills.
- Further improvements to cemeteries including plans for memorial walls and more stringent health and safety checks of memorials.

This report presents a summary of the work of the Council's Select Committees during 2010/11. Details about the membership of the Select Committees and further information about all of the scrutiny investigations and reports and recommendations can be found at [www.stockton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/scrutiny).

Our **Executive Scrutiny Committee** co-ordinates the Scrutiny Work Programme providing a strategic steer for the work of the Select Committees. The Committee:

- sets the **Scrutiny Work Programmes** and allocates work to each Select Committee
- receives quarterly **Performance Management** information identifying potential areas for further scrutiny and reports on the Council's **Medium Term Financial Plan**
- receives the **Forward Plan** of decisions to be made by Cabinet so that Members can request further information about forthcoming issues and reports
- receives **Chair's Updates** from each of the seven themed Select Committees in order to share best practice and ideas on topics under investigation
- Undertook a task and finish review of outside bodies.
- has provided **Challenge** to officer led EIT reviews prior to recommendations being presented to Cabinet. The reviews were: Procurement and Commissioning, Devolved ICT, Building Assets (on going), Democratic Services, and Xentrall.

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Our **Housing and Community Safety Select Committee** completed its review of Regulatory Services by reviewing the issues raised by the taxi trade in relation to the value for money of the taxi licensing function. Due to the specific impact to the taxi trade it was imperative to have direct representation of the trade throughout this review. All taxi drivers registered in the borough received written notification about the review and contributed at the public meetings of the Committee.

## Key Outcomes/Impact

- Following a feasibility study, the introduction of operational timescales to reduce any delays in the production of plates and licenses will take place.
- The final determination of fees will be delegated to the Council's Licensing Committee.
- The trade will be consulted to determine the support for 3 year licenses which will include annual written reminders.
- IT equipment will be purchased using monies from the Taxi Trading Account to enable electronic documentation transfer from the vehicle testing centre to the Licensing Office.

Our **Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee** EIT review of sport, leisure and recreation covered Leisure and Sport Development, commissioning of services from Tees Active Limited (TAL), recreational management of the Borough's parks, countryside sites and other greenspaces, Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan, and the Play Strategy. The Committee found that the affected services were well-regarded and valued by users. Options were identified that would maintain service delivery wherever possible, however due to the financial position facing the Council, it was necessary to restrict the scope of service provision in some areas.

## Key Outcomes/Impact

- Transfer of management responsibility for Billingham Beck Valley Countryside Park and Cowpen Bewley Countryside Park from the Council to Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.
- Reconfiguration of Countryside Rangers to focus on maintenance activities.
- Removal of Countryside and Greenspace research budget and reduction in Environmental Development budget.
- Reduction and re-focus of Sports Development Team in order to shift towards strategic commissioning approach.
- Staffing efficiencies at TAL and consolidation of TAL river based activities at Tees Barrage.
- Further work to identify improved trading opportunities at TAL and a sub-regional approach to commissioning.
- Potential savings identified - £421,800 pa when fully realised.

## EIT Task and Finish Review of Finance, Audit and Risk Management

The review found that the services were providing an excellent level of service, but that opportunities would arise to re-structure the teams using retirement of key staff and vacant posts, and the need to reduce the focus on non-value adding activities.

- Overall savings for the review could amount to £358,000 pa when fully realised.

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Our **Corporate, Adult Services, and Social Inclusion Select Committee** had a busy year.

## **EIT Review of School Catering**

The Committee's EIT Review of School Catering examined the provision of school lunches by Stockton Borough Council's (SBC) catering service for 59 primary schools, one secondary school, and three special needs schools within the Borough. Although the service receives an income from schools and parents this income does not cover the cost of the service and the Authority currently provides a subsidy. The Committee believed that by reviewing the staffing levels and allowances to increase efficiency and reducing the amount of added value work within each school, savings could be achieved to reduce the subsidy while still providing a quality service to the schools, and a healthy, nutritious meal to pupils. It is estimated that the savings that could be achieved in 2011/12 are £120,986, rising to £252,576 in 2012/13.

## **EIT Task and Finish Review of Customer Services & Taxation**

In October and December 2010 the Committee was presented with the baseline information and final report of the officer led EIT Task and Finish Review of Customer Services and Taxation. The review focussed on service provision and identification of options for future service delivery and configuration finding that both Customer Services and Taxation were being delivered efficiently and effectively with a high level of customer satisfaction. However it was recommended that the service be re-structured and the discretionary rate relief policy be revised. Other recommendations included the use of an alternative bailiff, further work to explore the use of technology, and Community Access Points held at Tesco stores in Ingleby Barwick and Durham Road be replaced with occasional promotions for specific events. The review identified potential savings of a minimum £157,700 per annum, spread over a phased implementation.

## **EIT Task and Finish Review of Human Resources**

In November and December 2010 the Committee was presented with the baseline information and final report of the officer led EIT Task and Finish Review of Human Resources. The review comprised three main areas of responsibility: organisational development, advisory services, and health and safety. The service was well regarded by customers, achieved a number of external awards, and played a significant role in ensuring Employment Tribunal claims were kept to a minimum. The review recommended a phased approach to making efficiency savings, with phase one including the deleting of all vacant posts and hours, the health and well being service being reviewed, and exploring opportunities for raising additional income. Phase two would involve investigating the possibility of partnership working with Darlington Borough Council. In total the review identified potential savings of £322,000.

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Our **Children and Young People Select Committee** dealt with two interlinked reviews.

## **Scrutiny Review of Youth Services (Universal)**

### **Scope**

The review focused specifically on universal youth services provided through core funding from the Council, delivered primarily through the Council's 24 youth clubs. However, the Committee also received evidence about targeted activities (provided under time limited funding programmes) in order to understand the full picture of youth provision in the Borough.

### **Findings**

The Committee concluded that there was wide variation in the quality of youth club facilities and attendances. The Committee also acknowledged that some clubs represented better value for money than others. There were also gaps in provision with uneven spread of provision across the week and a lack of provision at weekends. The Committee supported a "mixed economy" approach involving the statutory and third sector as they believed that this had demonstrated an effective model in a range of settings. The Committee also noted that targeted activities were demonstrating better value for money in terms of footfall and outcomes and concluded that it was important to protect delivery of targeted youth services taking into account the impact of these services.

### **Key Outcomes/ Impact**

- Priority for targeted activities
- Reconfiguring the universal youth service around a smaller number of high quality settings
- Recommendation to review premises/lettings arrangements by the Building Asset EIT review
- Review of contractual arrangements for youth services staff to ensure consistency
- Pursue options for increased collaboration with the third sector and private sector

## **EIT Task and Finish Review of Integrated Youth Support Service (Connexions, Targeted Youth Support and Preventions)**

### **Scope**

The review included Information, Advice, and Guidance and related support services funded through the Connexions budget. The review also included targeted services core funded through the Youth Service and not included in the CYP Youth Review of Universal Services, and Preventions activity funded through a combination of Youth Justice Board and Positive Activities for Young People grants.

### **Findings**

Given the need to review services in line with budgetary requirements and national policy direction, it was apparent that structural change within the services was necessary. Such a review would look to future proof the Local Authority responsibilities whilst delivering an agreed level of savings.

### **Key Outcomes/Impact**

- The services be restructured to meet an agreed savings target.

As a result of the above reviews a newly designed service will deliver £1.4m of annual savings.

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Our **Environment Select Committee** dealt with the **EIT Review of Built and Natural Environment**.

## Scope and Findings

- The review sought to identify options in four service areas:
- **Blue Badge Scheme** - The National Regulations governing the Scheme give local authorities the discretion to charge an application fee, but this cannot exceed £2. In Stockton Council the staffing, stationary, and the purchase of badges has been calculated to cost £28 per badge.
- **School Crossing Patrols** - Currently 35 sites in the borough meet the numerical criteria and are provided at an annual cost of £350,000. 17 sites operate on light controlled or zebra crossings and 6 sites no longer meet the criteria but currently are served by a School Crossing Patrol.
- **Urban Design** - the team provide a co-ordinated input into the planning service on aspects ranging from transport to renewable energy funded partially from revenue budgets with other fees being generated via a Trading Account. The Committee believed that reduced fees following a review of the trading account arrangements with a view to bringing the service into a revenue funding position could improve the competitiveness and provide a compliance service to Tees Valley Unlimited and other Local Authorities.
- **Car Parking** - this is a non-statutory service. The Committee wanted to see parity across Stockton Borough wherever possible. With car parking charges payable in Stockton Town Centre it was considered inequitable not to charge in other town centres in the Borough. The Committee was keen to ensure that any introduction of charges could be 'ring-fenced' thereby guaranteeing the positive use of raised income.
- **Key Outcomes/Impact**
  - The introduction of a simplified model for applying for a Blue Badge similar to that operated by other local authorities.
  - An additional charge (initially £3) for the production of a digital photograph to be used on a Blue Badge be added to the administration charge levied.
  - The seven School Crossing Patrol sites identified where a puffin or pelican crossing is available or where sites no longer meet the criteria are closed.
  - Six further sites identified be surveyed to assess their position against criteria and closed if appropriate.
  - The principle of charging for car parking in Yarm and that it is introduced as part of a wider review of car parking charges across the Borough.
  - Income generated by car parking charging in Yarm contribute towards the provision, maintenance and security of car parking facilities and other public transport measures.
  - Projected overall saving - £388,000

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Our **Regeneration & Transport Select Committee** carried out an **EIT Review of Events, Arts and Tourism** the primary aim of which was to identify ways in which the service can be organised that will deliver efficiencies sustaining or improving the visitor experience and encourage more visitors to Stockton Borough, maximising the social and economic benefits.

## Findings

Events and Festivals are held in high regard with minimal cost to residents and specific mention was made to the commitment of Stockton Council to an events programme that helped to improve the quality of life for residents.

Recognition was also given to the difficult financial state facing the Council and events are likely to be affected but should, wherever possible, be retained to continue the enhancement of the borough especially for residents.

## Key Outcomes/Impact

- The Council commit to a programme of events and festivals and develop a co-ordinated and cohesive Strategy and Events service. This will provide the basis to:
  - develop a 5-10 year Events/Festivals strategy
  - develop a Medium Term Financial Plan including increasing income via a charging regime, offering season tickets, etc.
  - develop a business sponsorship framework to re-invest into events
- Savings from Arts Development budget will be delivered over the next five years.
- Consideration is given to providing tourist information outlets at the Customer Service Centres in the three town centres when they are available.
- Potential savings identified - £97,800

An additional item was overseeing a review of the winter maintenance provisions which saw the Committee argue for the retention of salt bins throughout the borough that were being considered for removal.

Our **Health Select Committee** completed the **EIT Review of Fair Access to Care Services** which it had begun in 2009. The review focussed on the level of eligibility criteria operated by the Council in relation to adult social care. Prior to the review, Stockton Council provided care and equipment for those assessed as having needs in the Moderate, Substantial and Critical bands, and equipment only for those people assessed as being in the Low band.

## Findings

The review found that Stockton Council has increasing pressures on its adult care budget, and that demand was projected to increase over the next few years. Stockton Council was providing care at three levels of the FACS criteria whereas the majority of councils had restricted care to the top two bands. By raising the criteria it was recognised that this would enable the Council to focus on those in the most need. The need for an investment in preventative, community services was recognised in order to mitigate the impact of the amended criteria and to help ensure that people did not need to receive care in the first place, wherever possible.

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## Health (cont'd)

### Key Outcomes/Impact

- FACS criteria to be raised to Substantial and Critical only for all services (including equipment) on 1 April 2011;
- Investment in preventative services will be considered, with particular reference being given to assistive technology;
- Greater and more effective promotion of community based services should take place in order to signpost people towards them;
- Many of these services are based in the voluntary and community sector, and consideration should be given to providing support to such services through established corporate schemes;
- Work would continue to take place in order to maintain the integrity of the Council's adult social care data as this had been identified as an issue during the review;
- Savings generated could be in the region of £500k, assuming a saving in care packages of c. £1m (based on the number of clients as of Autumn 2010), and some re-investment of this money within community and preventative services.

### EIT Task and Finish Review of Adult Service Structures

The Review included the Adult Strategy and Operational structures and also considered the implications of the end of funding from Health partners and the move away from Joint Management posts. The overall aims of the Review were to review the current Adult structures and models of delivery in response to the end of Joint Arrangements, and to identify a revised Adult Service structure.

The review identified potential savings of £400,000 per annum from Adult Services budget.

### NHS Consultations

The NHS has a duty to consult the Committee on any service re-configurations that are felt to be substantial, alongside its general duties to involve the patients and public in the planning of local health services. During the summer of 2010, Members of the Committee worked on a response to the NHS White Paper, in particular its proposals for democratic accountability, and this response was aligned to the response co-ordinated by the Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

### Other Work

Members of the Committee attended a regional joint health scrutiny committee which worked on an innovative regional project to investigate the health needs of the ex-service community. The review has made a valuable impact in bringing together a wide range of individuals and organisations to agree priorities and actions to tackle the specific needs of the ex-service community.

The review received national recognition at the Centre for Public Scrutiny 'Good Scrutiny Awards 2011' winning the award for joint working as well as the prestigious 'Overall Impact Award'. The North East Health Scrutiny Joint Committee entry was considered to be a great leap of the imagination, by the CfPS judges, for the way that it embraced regional working. The work was applauded for taking on such a sensitive subject and making a real difference to the ex-service community.

The Committee also provided a statement of assurance for inclusion in the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust's published Quality Account.

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## How can I get involved?

Select Committee meetings are all open to the public and information on the current work of a committee is displayed on our website ([www.stockton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/scrutiny)). If you have any experience of or an interest in any of the topics under review, you can get involved by contacting a member of the scrutiny team.

You may also have an issue that you feel a Select Committee should look at as part of its work. All requests will be considered and a decision will be made on the most appropriate way forward.

Please note that scrutiny is not the correct forum for dealing with individual complaints about Council services. There is no guarantee that all requests will be investigated by a select committee although you will always receive an explanation of what action has been taken.

If you have any suggestions please use the response slip below and send it to the following address:

Scrutiny Team  
Democratic Services  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
PO Box 11  
Municipal Buildings  
Church Road  
STOCKTON-ON-TEES  
TS18 1LD



Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Suggested topic for scrutiny review:

Alternatively please email your suggestions to: [scrutiny@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@stockton.gov.uk)

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If you would like this information in any other language or format for example **large print** or audio please contact 'Scrutiny Team' on 01642 528957.

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ARABIC

欲要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它版式例如大字體印刷/錄音帶，請致電 **01642 528957** 接洽 '多元化隊' (Scrutiny Team)

MANDARIN

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تيم دایورسیتی (گوندگونی) [Scrutiny Team] با شماره 01642 528957 به تماس شوید

FARSI

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez contacter l'équipe "Scrutiny" au n° 01642 528957

FRENCH

ئەگەر چەرت لێ بە ئەم زانبارە بە دەستت بگەوتت بە زمانەکانی تر یان بە شێوەیەکی تر بۆ نمونە جایی گەورە/یان بەتێبی نۆمارکراو نکایە بە یۆهندی بگە بە 'تیمی دایفرستی' [Scrutiny Team] لە سەر زمارەکی ئەلەفۆن 01642 528957

KURDISH

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਥੱਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Scrutiny Team' ਨੂੰ 01642 528957 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز (مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ) آڈیو ٹیپ یا دیگر شکل میں حاصل کرنا چاہیں، تو ذرا نیچے دیئے گئے نمبر (Scrutiny Team) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 528957

URDU