

ACTIVE AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 29th August, 2013

Present:	Councillor George Cairns – in the Chair
Councillors	Councillor Reginald Bailey, Councillor Miss Julie Cooper, Councillor Glyn Plant, Councillor Miss June Walklate, Councillor Mrs Gillian Williams and Councillor Mrs Joan Winfield
Officers	Dave Adams – Executive Director, Operational Services Robert Foster – Head of Leisure and Cultural Services Simon Sowerby – Business Improvement Manager Martin Stevens – Scrutiny Officer Louise Stevenson – Scrutiny Officer
Also in Attendance	Jackie Wheeler - Development Team Leader at VAST

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Cornes, Councillor Mrs Heesom and Councillor Miss Olszewski.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. **MINUTES FORM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSIONING IN PARTNERSHIP (PSCiP)**

The Council's Business Improvement Manager introduced a report regarding Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP).

The Borough Council had been working with Staffordshire County Council to identify strategic collaborations with the potential for back office savings and additionality in contracts. The Borough Council had been actively involved with the funding and debt benefit and consumer advice contract since its commencement, and it would be ensured that the Council's service outlines and specification were included in the documentation that would be released in the market place. This process was run by Staffordshire County Council, but there was a Newcastle Borough Council officer on the panel.

There had been two interested parties: VAST and SCIO. The money in the pot was the same as it had been for the last three or four years, additionality in the contract

was the focus, rather than a monetary saving. Section 3.2.9 of the report detailed the feedback on outcomes that was beginning to be received.

The Debt Benefit and Consumer Advice service was currently being delivered by Age UK and the Citizens Advice Bureau. This service had been delivered separately by the two organisations previously. The organisations had been approached to investigate the possibility of working collaboratively, which had been a success. It had been indicated that this would be a short term contract and it was currently back in the market place, and would be due back for consideration in early October. There would be a Newcastle Borough Council officer on the evaluation panel. Market interest work had also been undertaken and it was expected that there would be a back office saving with the new contract. This potential saving would be investigated with a view to identifying it and then to take a decision on how to utilise the saving.

The Business Improvement Manager then introduced Jackie Wheeler, Development Team Leader at VAST and former Chief Executive Officer for the Newcastle Community and Voluntary Service (NCVS), who provided a verbal update regarding VAST and the progress it was making. The merger had taken place at the end of July with the contract with Staffordshire County Council beginning on 1 May 2013. There had been some changes in staff, but it had been possible to retain some staff from Newcastle-under-Lyme. NCVS merging with VAST had added value through VAST's strong background in the field, and VAST also had specialised teams in areas such as marketing and graphics. There were eight outreach areas, with a presence in every district and there had been very little change to NCVS.

VAST were also working with large organisations such as The Prince's Trust, Homestart and the British Heart Foundation to identify volunteers, and good relationships were being built with these groups.

The overall aim of VAST was to ensure that voluntary organisations received the support that they needed. This was considered to be easy to maintain in Newcastle as officers had been retained from the area. Work was taking place with Aspire with regard to Employer Supported Volunteering, with Aspire staff giving up two days per year to volunteer. VAST were also attending a job fair event where there would be a database that could match volunteers to the organisations that required them. A 'Business As Usual' event was due to take place on 2 October 2013, which following the recent merger would introduce the range of development and volunteering support services that were available to charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises across Staffordshire. The event would give voluntary organisations the chance to meet funders who support local groups, and to take part in a question and answer session with VAST and Staffordshire County Council.

There was a quarterly newsletter called 'Action' and a weekly e-bulletin to publicise information about VAST, and they were also on Twitter and Facebook. The Staffordshire Voice was also online and ready to go. Things were looking very positive and good positive results were being achieved.

Members of the Committee were supportive of the changes that had taken place and thought they were a very positive move for the Borough and its residents. Jackie Wheeler was thanked for her attendance.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

5. **BATESWOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

The Executive Director, Operational Services introduced a report updating the Committee of the progress that had been made with the project to allow fishing to be carried out on part of the large pool at Bateswood Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Extensive task and finish group work had been undertaken in 2012 regarding requests for fishing and bridle routes at the nature reserve.

Progress was being made to establish an arrangement with a local fishing club, with the intention to work in partnership with a local group. There had been a Parish Council meeting the previous week where the subject of fishing at Bateswood LNR had been discussed, with Borough Council officers present at the meeting. Concerns were raised at the meeting about the Borough Council's ability to enter into an arrangement with the Parish Council or a fishing club. It was considered that the language used had created confusion, and it would be a long term management agreement that was entered into, not a lease as it had been referred to. The Borough Council held freehold title to the land which contained the large pool and the land was acquired from the British Coal Corporation. Therefore, whilst the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) dealt with the affairs of the British Coal Corporation since it had wound up, there was no direct interest in or control of the large pool by CISWO in relation to the Councils proposals.

The Executive Director, Operational Services would clarify this with the Parish Council. The Parish Council were deciding whether they wished to be involved with fishing on part of the main pool and if they decided they did not wish to be part of this, then the Council would work with a local fishing club directly.

The Chair considered it important that controlled fishing be implemented at Bateswood LNR to protect the area from unauthorised fishing and its effects.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

6. **LEISURE AND CULTURE COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY**

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services introduced an update regarding the future potential of a Community Interest Company (CIC) to manage leisure and cultural facilities and services. A number of options were being considered, with approval granted to investigate the potential of a CIC as it would fit with the Council's aim of being a co-operative council.

Specialist advice was being sought, in particular for clarification of what the implications for pensions would be on both employees and Newcastle Borough Council as the employer, if a CIC was taken forward. There would also be implications for VAT, which would be subtle and minor changes, but the implications on the Council's VAT thresholds needed to be fully understood. One positive aspect of a CIC related to non-domestic rates, whereby the CIC could be eligible for up to 100% discretionary rates. The outline business case for a CIC made sense financially. The outline business case would be submitted to Cabinet in Autumn 2013 seeking a decision in principle, with further work to be undertaken after this.

The Chair was of the opinion that a CIC was the best option for the future management of the Council's leisure and cultural services and requested that the Committee receive the officer working group's completed report for consideration.

RESOLVED: (a) That the information be received.

(b) That the Committee receive the officer working group's completed report for consideration.

7. YOUNG PERSON'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services introduced a report regarding Young Person's Participation in Sports. The volume of information in the report was considerable, and the information provided for the Sports and Active Lifestyle Services reflected that there was a lot of activity taking place. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services had endeavoured to capture activities from providers other than the Council. The Council was not in a unique position and many bodies were fighting the tide of decreasing participation in sport. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport had undertaken a survey that indicated that even in the Olympic year participation in sport had been static or even declining. The Council's leisure service was working hard to obtain government funding to encourage greater participation in sport within the borough.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee was in attendance at the meeting to advise that the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend the 20 November meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee, in order to jointly consider Physical Activity in Schools. This had originated from a presentation that the Health Scrutiny Committee had received in June for the draft Health and Well Being Strategy, where it had become apparent that physical activity in schools was a cause for concern, as Newcastle had the lowest participation levels in Staffordshire, and the participation levels were significantly lower than the national average. A joint letter from the Chairs of the Health and Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committees was sent to the County Council Cabinet member for Learning and Skills. A response had been received which advised that since 2010 there had been no statutory requirement for the County Council to be provided with data from schools regarding their PE and sport curricular and extra-curricular activities. The letter did provide details regarding Entrust, a joint venture between the County Council and Capita, who had taken over the supporting schools to deliver physical activity. The letter also noted the changing relationship the County had with schools and its role as a strategic influencer. The Department of Education had recently made available £150 million per annum for the academic years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 to improve the provision of physical education and sport in primary schools, and would be received by all schools, even if they were academies. This funding equated to approximately £9,250 for a school with 250 pupils. The Health Scrutiny Committee Chair did not consider this a lot of money and there was concern about how the money would be spent. It was intended to invite Entrust, alongside other representatives such as a representative of the primary school head teachers to the meeting on 20 November. Prior to the meeting, information would be requested from Entrust, in order that Members would be able to consider the information prior to the meeting.

The Chair of the Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee considered that there was an issue with activities in primary schools, in particular with swimming, where there were associated costs such as renting coaches to transport children to swimming lessons. In this respect, he did not consider £9,250 a lot of money, and felt that thought needed to be given as to what activities could be provided through the Council and schools. It was noted that there were activities in centres once a week and the question was raised as to what was provided for the rest of the week. Members noted that the youth centres would appear to close down during school holidays, when they were needed the most.

A formal invitation would be extended to both the Health and Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee members.

RESOLVED: (a) That the information be received.

(b) That the Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee attend the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20 November 2013 in order to jointly consider Physical Activity in Schools.

8. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee gave consideration to its work plan. A Member stated that residents had expressed concern about Aspire and possible charges relating to their tenancy agreements. Another Member understood the charges to relate to the cutting of grass on greens and verges outside of Aspire properties, and suggested the best forum for raising the issue would be at a Locality Action Partnership meeting.

The Committee agreed that Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership would remain on the work plan in order for future reports to be received. The Portfolio Holder Question Time item at the Committee's next meeting was noted by the Chair, and the committee members were asked to give thought to questions to ask the Portfolio Holder(s).

It was noted that under Future Task and Finish Groups, Licensing of Premises (Takeaways) did not fall under the Committee's remit and it was requested this be removed and transferred to the correct committee.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

9. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business within the meaning of Section 100 B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

COUNCILLOR GEORGE CAIRNS
Chair