



# Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10

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.

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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 Bodies following in-depth investigations.

## Work during 2009/10

During the past year, the Scrutiny Work Programme has focused on supporting Year 1 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 1 EIT reviews have identified over £2 million of potential savings as well as suggestions for service improvements. Select Committees are looking forward to continuing their work supporting Year 2 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:

- roll out of plastic and cardboard recycling across the whole Borough in conjunction with a waste awareness and education strategy
- capital investment secured to deliver the five year improvement plan for cemeteries and closed churchyards, including the extension of Billingham Cemetery
- the ongoing operation of the River Users Group, set up to co-ordinate all aspects of river-related activity and the continued expansion of the "Take to the Tees" festival
- the appointment of a nurse specialist for alcohol services based within North Tees Hospital on 2 year fixed term post and widening of the DAT agenda to include alcohol
- achievement of Customer Service Excellence
- progress on implementing a long term strategy to tackle obesity in the Borough
- launch of a "Think B4U Park" Campaign
- promotion of volunteering in the borough and further support to the voluntary and community sectors

This report presents a summary of the work of the Council's Select Committees during 2009/10. 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).

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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
- has provided **Independent Challenge** to three officer led EIT reviews on Advice and Information Services, Commercial Trading and Domestic Violence prior to recommendations being presented to Cabinet

Our **Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee** provided challenge to three officer-led EIT reviews that dealt with:

- Adult Operational Services (Day Care, Care Home, and In-House Home Care provision) which identified options for future strategy, policy, and service provision that would deliver efficiency savings while sustaining or improving quality outcomes for Stockton Borough Clients and their Carers
- Facilities Management which will see the consolidation of the management arrangements and responsibilities of all buildings (excluding schools), with an option to work in partnership with other councils, which will deliver savings of approximately £300,000
- Highways, Lighting and Network Management which focused particularly on street lighting and, as a result, should deliver significant annual revenue savings by changing the way the Council procures and delivers its street lighting energy and maintenance

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Our **Housing and Community Safety Select Committee** undertook a detailed EIT review of the Council's Regulatory Services. The review included licensing, trading standards, development services, the mandatory licensing of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), environmental health and building control. As a result of the review:

- the council committed to look at the opportunities for joint working with other Local Authorities in order to provide regulatory services
- the level of fees for mandatory HMO licenses will be increased
- the arrangements to support the River Tees Port Health Authority are being reviewed
- there will be increased co-operation between Building Control and Planning Enforcement officers, and Trading Standards will seek to develop services to enable residents to 'help themselves'
- minimum savings of over £120,000 over the next four years were identified

Our **Environment Select Committee** approached the review of carbon management with two objectives in mind: to find further ways of saving both carbon emissions and energy costs whilst at the same time further promoting Stockton Council's community leadership role in this field. Review recommendations included:

- new and refurbished Council buildings aiming to be as energy efficient as possible;
- greater use of technology to be made to reduce the need to travel to meetings and conferences by increasingly using video conferencing as well as limiting the amount of printing of agendas, reports and other documentation.
- providing education within schools and other community settings to ensure increased adoption of energy saving opportunities.

Our **Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee** conducted a wide ranging review of Communications, Consultation and Engagement. The Committee:

- found that the services under review were subject to a range of pressures emanating from the impact of the current economic climate, rising customer expectations and advances in technology
- concluded that whilst there were examples of best practice and good performance across the Council, there were also a number of areas where improvements could be made. The recommendations reflected a desire for a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to communications
- were pleased that, as well as delivering service improvements, the review recommendations were estimated to deliver significant savings of £300,000 per annum from centralised procurement arrangements

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Our **Children and Young People Select Committee** tackled one of its most complex reviews when it undertook an examination of residential, fostering and adoptive placements for children. The Committee:

- explored how this low-volume, high cost and high reputational activity could be provided to meet the assessed needs of the individual children in a more cost effective way without compromising the focus on achieving the five “Every Child Matters” outcomes
- found that the Council could improve its recruitment of, and marketing strategy for, prospective foster carers and adopters to make it more cost effective
- supported the view to extend in-house provision to better manage supply and demand in market provision
- supported an increase in the availability of sub-regional provision for “hard to place” children/young people with Complex Needs
- was keen to see a kinship care policy developed to address advice, information and support issues for parents, (or persons with parental responsibility) and carers.
- the recommendations from the review identified potential savings of between £259,000 and £691,000 per annum

Our **Regeneration & Transport Select Committee** carried out an EIT review of the Public and Community Transport, which looked at all the transport services that the Council provides including the subsidy which the Council gives to the local bus companies. The Committee:

- recognised the value of additional transport services but felt that changes could be made to ensure that these were delivered more efficiently and effectively
- recommended that the cost of the 16 – 19 year concessionary fare bus pass and home to school transport are increased to a level that still represents value for money for residents but reduces the level of subsidy required by the Council
- found that the Council’s Dial a Ride service, which provided transport for people unable to access mainstream public transport, did not represent value for money and that introducing a taxi based service would provide a more flexible and responsive service for users at a reduced cost to the Council
- identified potential savings of £150,000 per annum

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Our **Health Select Committee** has been concentrating on an EIT review of Fair Access to Care Services (FACS). This is the eligibility criteria for access to adult social care and the Committee considered the views of a range of Councils when looking at potential changes in Stockton. As part of the review, the Committee has carried out a wide-ranging consultation during the summer of 2010 and will be considering the results before making recommendations during 2010/11. In addition:

- the Committee has considered the Transforming Community Services project, phlebotomy services in Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby, the operation of the GP-led health centre at Tithebarn and has monitored the implementation of previous work including recommendations from the reviews of Audiology, and Alcohol services
- a regional health scrutiny Joint Committee has been established with representation from all North East Councils. The Committee will provide a mechanism for scrutiny of health and health inequality issues in the region
- the Committee has been involved in the arrangements for establishing a regional health scrutiny project that will look at the health needs of ex-servicemen and how well they are being met within the North East. This is the first time that all North East Councils have worked together on a project of this kind and the project has received national support and high profile coverage in the region's press and television
- some Members of Stockton Council also sit on the Tees Valley Health Joint Scrutiny Committee. This Committee keeps a watching brief on health services that affect the whole sub-region and over the past year examined the uptake of cancer screening services, and also received updates on the Momentum project.

## 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. 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.

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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)

# Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10

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.

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايفرستي تيم' (Scrutiny Team) على هاتف رقم 01642 528957

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 دايفرستي (Scrutiny Team) با شماره 01642 528957 به تماس شويد

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 لێن بە ئەم زانیارە بە دەستت بکەوت بە زمانەکانی تر یان بە شێوەیەکى تر یۆ نمونە چاپی گەورە/یان بە تێبى تۆمارکراو نکایە بەیوەندى بکە بە 'تیمی دايفرستی' (Scrutiny Team) لە سەر زمارەى ئەلەفون 01642 528957

KURDISH

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

PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا اندازہ نگار سے چاہتے ہیں یا ان کو بڑے حروف میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو ان کو اپنی ٹیم (Scrutiny Team) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 528957

URDU