

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 5th August, 2014.

Present: Cllr Miss Tina Large (Chair), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry

Officers: Paul Diggins (DNS); Graham Birtle, Nigel Hart, Peter Mennear, Ms Judith Trainer (LD); Ms Kate Fulton (PIE); Tony Montague (R).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Cherrett, Cllr Javed, Cllr Kirby, Cllr Kirton, Cllr Lupton, Cllr Patterson, Cllr Stoker, Cllr Walmsley and Cllr Mrs Womphrey.

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest declared.

2 Minutes for Signature - 25th March 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2014 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3 Draft Minutes - 14th May 2014

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2014.

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

4 2013/14 Performance Outturn Report

Members were provided with details of the Council's performance in 2013/14, highlighting key achievements, areas for improvement and proposed actions; as well as statistical information relating to Freedom of Information requests, complaints and commendations, and the Staff Suggestion scheme.

In addition to providing a perspective on the overall performance of the Council, the report focused on the achievement of the basket of measures and associated targets agreed as part of the Council Plan 2013-16.

The Committee noted that performance against the targets set was equivalent to that achieved the previous year (67%) at a time when the Council continued to operate within severe budget constraints and had suffered job losses.

Members held discussion on the report and raised the following questions/queries:-

-The impact of the release of sanctions data from the DWP and its effect on the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance was awaited with some concern particularly given recently reported tragic cases ; and would feature in future reports on Welfare Reform. Details would be shared with the elected member who had voiced these concerns;

-58.1% of secondary school pupils, including those attending Academies, were attending good or outstanding schools. An overall performance report including a breakdown of the performance/identity of each school, would be produced in the Autumn by the Head of Education, Early Years & Complex Needs;

-The number of children in poverty within Stockton was 22.5%; which compared to 20.6% as the national average. Work was ongoing on a range of welfare reform indicators that would allow for targeted activity against this indicator;

-Members noted the option for areas not reaching their targets to be included in the development of the scrutiny programme for 2015-16, taking into account any areas presently being covered within the 14/15 programme.

AGREED that:-

1.The strong levels of performance in line with previous years be noted, acknowledging this level of performance has been achieved within a context of reduced financial resource, increased demand on services and reductions in staffing capacity and that future targets should be set to reflect this context.

2. The explanations and actions being taken in relation to those areas where target performance has not been achieved be noted.

3. The option for areas not reaching their targets to be included in the development of the scrutiny programme for 2015-16, taking into account any areas presently being covered within the 14/15 programme, be noted.

5 MTFP update

Members were provided with an update report that focused on the financial performance and position at the end of the 2013/14 financial year; including the updated MTFP position and Capital Programme.

Members noted progress against both General Fund Non Big Ticket areas; as well as progress against the Big Ticket reviews themselves, namely Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, and Energy and Waste.

Members held discussion on the report and raised the following questions/queries:-

-Members noted and supported the need for continued capital investment as part of the Spark of Genius Project including the allocation of £450,000 from the Transformation Reserve in the event that a bid to the Transformation Challenge Award was unsuccessful;

-Clarification was requested whether the Town Centre Schemes Capital Programme budget included the regeneration schemes at the Victoria Estate and Tarring St (Parkfield & Mill Lane).

AGREED that:-

1. The following recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 17th July 2014 be noted:-

i) The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the current level of General Fund balances and the allocation of £400,000 from the Transformation Reserve to fund transformation work supporting Adult Social Care be approved.

ii) The revised Capital Programme attached at Appendix A to the agenda papers be noted.

iii) Members note the increase in projected savings from the Spark of Genius Joint Venture to £600,000 per year and approve the allocation of an additional £450,000 from the transformation reserve to support the project's capital costs.

iv) Members approve £400,000 from the transformation reserve to support adult social care and £103,000 from the unallocated balance of schools capital funds for developments at Rosebrook School, and also endorse the bids for PSB programme funding.

2. Clarification be provided regarding schemes included within the Town Centre Schemes Capital Programme.

6 Progress Updates on Previously Agreed Recommendations

Members considered a report that provided an assessment of progress relating to the implementation of recommendations coming from a number of previous reviews.

AGREED that the progress report be noted and assessment of progress be confirmed.

7 Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14

Consideration was given to the content of the proposed Scrutiny Annual Report for 2013/14.

Following the Committee's agreement of its content, the report would be circulated to key partner agencies and would be published on the Scrutiny pages of Stockton Council's web site.

AGREED that the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2013/14 be approved.

8 Scrutiny Review of Tree Preservation Orders

The Committee considered the draft report of the Scrutiny Review of Tree Preservation Orders.

AGREED that the report be noted and be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

9 Scrutiny Review of Street Cafe Furniture and

A-Boards

The Committee considered the draft report of the Scrutiny Review of Street Cafe and A-Board Advertising.

AGREED that the report be noted and be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

10 Scrutiny Review of A Safer Place for Children

The Committee considered the draft report of the Scrutiny Review of A Safer Place for Children.

AGREED that the report be noted and be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

11 Forward Plan

Members were provided with the Statutory Forward Plan 1st July-31st October 2014.

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

12 Report on Chairs Updates

The Committee was provided with updates on Select Committee reviews.

AGREED that the updates be noted.