Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 8th March, 2016.

Present: Cllr David Harrington(Chairman), Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Sonia Bailey, , Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Philip Dennis, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr David Wilburn

Officers: Neil Schneider (CEO), Graham Birtle, Michael Henderson, Judith Trainer, Peter Mennear(DCEO), Laurayne Featherstone, Johanne Parker (DoF&BS),
Jane Wright (DoCS)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Carol Clark,Cllr Michael Clark, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Mohammed Javed

1   Declarations of Interest

The following members declared a personal interest in item 5 'Review of School Organisation and Admission Arrangement', as they were governors of various schools within the Borough:

Cllr Derrick Brown
Cllr Sonia Bailey
Cllr Phil Dennis
Cllr David Wilburn
Cllr Maurice Perry

2   Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2015 - for signature

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3   Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2015 - for approval

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2015 were agreed.

4   Review of School Organisation and Admission Arrangements

The Executive Scrutiny Committee considered a report that presented outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of School Organisation and Admission Arrangements (Phase 2), undertaken by the Children and Young People Committee during the Municipal Year 2015/16.

The review had sought to understand the demand for reception places across the Borough and had examined the wider aspects of the approach to school organisation in Stockton.

Members discussed the report and particular reference was made to the finding that there was a lack of support for a move to feeder primary schools. It was noted that there were strong arrangements between primary and secondary schools in terms of clusters and there was a transition guarantee. Parents wanted the flexibility around their choice of secondary school, when their child left primary.

It was explained that this report would be submitted to the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 23rd March 2016.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and be presented to Cabinet in March.

5   Consultation Review

The Committee considered a report that presented the final report of an officer led review of practice with respect to Consultation.

Members noted the findings coming from the review and these included:

- it was considered to be prudent to use external research providers when considered appropriate, to give a independent perspective.

- all consultation should use the corporate resource, advice and guidance to ensure a greater degree of consistency and coordination of consultation activity.

- a new IT solution and guidelines was needed to improve consultation activity.

- there should be one strategy covering Consultation, Community Engagement and Communications

It was explained that during the course of the review a comprehensive, multifunctional consultation software solution had been procured and was available for use by the whole Authority. It provided a web-based 'Stakeholder Consultation Portal' for the Authority and was called 'My Views'. It was explained that alongside 'My Views' a bespoke consultation training package had been developed.

Members were provided with a demonstration of how the 'My Views' system worked.

Members discussed the report and the demonstration. That discussion could be summarised as follows:

- the system automatically recorded IP addresses used and the system allowed the Council to manage multiple responses from the same IP address and exclude inappropriate responses. Demographic profiles provided by users would allow the Council to distinguish between respondents using the same IP address.

- the Council would continue to provide consultation opportunities other than online, such as paper and face to face. The Council would not expect people to only use online consultation, this was not the intention of introducing the system.

- the system provided improved control over the quality of consultations and would be monitored and approved centrally. Users would receive training and support to ensure quality and consistency.

- clear information about how to engage in consultation would be featured in Stockton News.

- Members could be supported to deliver certain consultations.

- the Council had close contact with the system supplier and there was a regional and national user group. The supplier was very responsive to necessary system improvements.

- a comprehensive public PR campaign was planned and ways of promoting the system were being considered and this could include adding a 'My Views' icon.

RESOLVED that the recommendations contained in the report be agreed and the report be presented to the meeting of Cabinet, scheduled for 23 March 2016.

6   Approval of Scrutiny Review Programme 2016-17

Members considered a report that set out proposals for the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2016/17.

The Committee was provided with a schedule detailing outstanding/carried forward topics from the current year. The schedule also included those topics that had been suggested for 2016/17, and these had been prioritised using the PICK system.

Members were reminded of other scrutiny work that had been undertaken by the Select Committees, scrutiny Members and Council officers, including:

- Annual Review Meetings
- Monitoring/Progress reports
- Performance Monitoring
- Quality Assurance
- Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
- Regional Health Committee
- Police and Crime Panel

Members considered the proposed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2016/17:

Adults Services and Health Select Committee - DoLS, Adult Care Assessment Process (Task and Finish), Availability/Sustainability of the Market for the Provision of Care (Reporting In).

Children and Young People Select Committee - Stockton LSCB, Youth Services, Academies, Educational Psychology (Reporting In)

Crime and Disorder Select Committee - DNA Testing/Dog Fouling, Railway Crossing Points, Membership of Local Government Bodies

People Select Committee - Mental Health and Wellbeing (including Suicide and Self Harm), Pupil Premium/ School Readiness, Welfare Reform (on going Monitoring).

Place Select Committee - Flooding Resilience, Asylum Seekers

Members agreed the Work Programme as detailed above and in Appendix 2 of the report. However, during consideration Members referred to two topics, Street Cleansing and Parking on Grass Verges, which had been given a relatively low score using the PICK system and had not been identified in the proposed scrutiny work programme for 16/17. Members felt that these were both important issues to residents and they asked that consideration be given to them being accommodated in the work programme for this year, or slipped to next year, as priorities. Further consideration of this would be undertaken at the Committee's April meeting, taking account of the potential capacity implications associated with the agreed work programme for 2016/17, and any other relevant matters.

It was noted that any issues relating to Select Committee and/or organisational capacity could be considered by this Committee at any time.

RESOLVED that

1. the Scrutiny Work Programme 2016/17, as detailed above and in Appendix 2 of the report considered by the Committee, be approved.

2. a report on whether it would be possible to include Street Cleansing and Parking on Grass Verges reviews in the 2016/17 Work Programme, be presented to the Committee's meeting in April.

7   **Feedback from Development Session held on 26 January 2016**

Members of the Committee considered a briefing note of the content and discussion from the Scrutiny Development Day held on 26 January 2016.

Areas covered on the Day included:

- a review of the 2015/16 scrutiny work programme.

- how the Executive Scrutiny Committee monitored the effectiveness of select committees, how it could support them and how Chairs could develop and provide detailed updates and feedback.

- Committees' relationship with Cabinet Members.

- information resources, including Centre for Public Scrutiny publications and the North East Scrutiny Network.

- Use of technology - audio recordings of meetings.

- 'Call in' procedure.

- the role of scrutiny in challenging and driving improvement.

Members agreed, at the Development Day that:

- a more detailed reporting format for Chair/review updates should be introduced for future meetings of the Executive Scrutiny Committee.

- Cabinet Member invitations to select committee meetings to give evidence on a more frequent basis would be investigated.

- information publications/guides be added to Executive Scrutiny Committee agendas when those were published.

- the minutes and other relevant material from the North East Scrutiny Network be added to Executive Scrutiny Committee agendas.

- more information regarding Freedom of Information requests of smartpen recordings be provided.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the outcomes agreed at the Development day be confirmed by the Committee.

8   Statutory Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Statutory Forward Plan, published 1st February 2016.

RESOLVED that the Plan be noted.

9   Select Committee Chairs' Updates

Members considered the Chairs' updates on Select Committees' reviews.

In respect of a number of the reviews Members highlighted how valuable they considered visits to service users and staff delivering services to be.

Members noted that the Review of Boundary Signs had been placed on hold, pending government legislation associated with this topic.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted

10   Chair's Update

The Chair indicated that he did not have any updates to provide to the Committee. He suggested that the Chair's update item be amalgamated with Executive Scrutiny Work Programme item, for future meetings.

11   Scrutiny Developments

Members were provided with the following documents:

- the draft minutes of the Regional Joint Member/ Officer Network meeting held on 12 February 2016.

- A guide to Social Return on Investment published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Members commented on how useful the guide was.

RESOLVED that the documents be received.

12   Executive Scrutiny Work Programme

Members were provided with the Committee's work programme.

The Committee agreed that the July meeting would take place on 20th.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.