

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 26th April, 2016.

Present: Cllr David Harrington(Chairman), Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Michael Clark, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Philip Dennis, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Lynn Hall (substitute for Cllr Matthew Vickers), Cllr David Wilburn

Officers: Graham Birtle, Michael Henderson Peter Mennear (DCEO), Ian Coxon (DF&BS)

Also in attendance: Cllr Gillian Corr

Apologies: Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Matthew Vickers

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th March were agreed.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2016 - for signature

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2016 were signed by the Chairman.

4 Review of Debtors' Write-Offs

Members considered a report that provided an update on the 'reporting in' Review of Debtors' Write Offs.

It was explained that, since the commencement of the Review, a number of other reviews and projects had started, or were coming up, across the Council. Within these reviews there would be opportunities to look at improving the approach to following up debt, including collecting income up-front. Given this it was recommended that the planned 'reporting in' review, should not be progressed at this time. It was suggested that, following completion of the reviews and projects, referred to above, a cross-cutting review of debtors be carried out, particularly in the area of Adults Services and Housing Benefits, as they represented the largest proportion of the debt.

Members discussed the report and that discussion could be summarised as follows:

- A member highlighted a scenario where a business (or individuals running a business) went out of business, with debts owed to the Council, and then started to trade again (perhaps with a different name). What did the Council do in terms of recovering money and ensuring such a situation did not reoccur. It was explained that the Council wrote off very little debt and recovery action was taken to the fullest possible extent.

- Members asked for further details of the value of written off debts. This

information was available in a previous report to the Committee and it would be recirculated.

- Members queried what success rate the Council had had in terms of securing compensation, from individuals or insurance companies, when its property had been damaged because of an accident, or by some other means.

RESOLVED that:

1. reviewing and improving the approach to following up debt and collecting income up front be carried out within the service reviews and projects that were on going, or planned.

2. a cross-cutting review of debtors' write offs be subsequently carried out, following those reviews and projects and a report be provided to the Committee.

5 Scrutiny Work Programme 2016-17

The Committee received a report relating to the Scrutiny Work Programme 2016/2017.

Members were reminded that, at its meeting on 8 March, the Committee considered and agreed the in-depth Select Committee policy review programme for 2016-17.

At its March meeting, during consideration of the suggested work programme, members had felt that, although street cleansing and grass verges, had not been prioritised for review, they were issues that were important to constituents and the Committee wished to explore if they could be accommodated within the current year's work programme. It was agreed to bring a further report to this meeting.

It was explained that initial work had taken place to scope the agreed reviews and indicative timescales were provided to members. Members recognised that scrutiny committees undertook a range of activities in addition to the in-depth review programme and agreed that there was an intense workload for the Membership of the Committees and supporting officers, from across the Council.

Following the Committee's last meeting, Community Services had provided the following update in relation to street cleaning/highway verges:

'Care For Your Area was currently being re-structured as part of its £650K contribution to the reduction budget. Given this, it was considered that a review at this time would be counterproductive due to the fluctuating situation, plus imminent staff and Union consultations'.

In line with this advice, and given the extensive work programme already agreed, it was suggested that an in-depth review of these issues would not be appropriate at this time. However, it was noted that a meeting of the Council's Urban Environment Task Group (UETG) was to be held to specifically discuss grass verges and the improvement and maintenance of the Borough's public realm. Following this a further update would be presented to Executive Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and an update report be provided to the Committee, following UETG's consideration of grass verges and the improvement and maintenance of the Borough's public realm.

6 Scrutiny Review of Kerbside Waste Collection

Members considered a report relating to the Place Committee's Review of Kerbside Collections.

Discussion included:

- the benefits of recycling and the need to educate the public in this regard.
- the need to drill down to all costs associated with the current collection arrangements.
- recycling advice on packaging.
- the bin collection rates within the Borough, which were some of the best in the Country.
- regular training days for collection staff to maintain/improve standards and consider any issues.

Members requested that Care for your area produce a template article about recycling for members to include in their ward newsletters.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. Care for your area produce a template article, about recycling, for members to include in their ward newsletters.

7 Scrutiny Review of Access to Services for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism

Councillor Sylvia Walmsley in the Chair.

Members considered a report that presented the outcomes of the Adult Services and Health Select Committee's review of access to services, for people with learning disabilities and/or Autism.

The aim of the review was to examine two main issues: the uptake of GP-led annual healthchecks for people with learning disabilities, and the general accessibility of universal, community services for people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

A key driver for the review was recognition that people with learning disabilities had significantly poorer health and shorter life expectancies than their non-disabled peers. Annual healthchecks for people with learning disabilities were intended to help address these issues.

The Select Committee had produced a range of recommendations, which members considered. It was explained that report would be presented to Cabinet on 19th May 2016.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8 Scrutiny Review of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Members considered a report relating to a review into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which had been undertaken by the People Select Committee.

It was explained that FASD was a term given for a range of permanent disabilities that could be caused when a baby, developing in the womb, was exposed to alcohol; this could include physical disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. FASD was caused solely by drinking alcohol during pregnancy and was therefore completely preventable. The review had focussed on what preventative measures had been taken and what more could be done.

The Committee found that the established Public Health message in Stockton was that there should be no alcohol during pregnancy.

The Select Committee had produced a range of recommendations which members considered. It was explained that report would be presented to Cabinet on 19th May 2016.

Members agreed that education was key to reducing incidents of FASD and highlighted the importance of the message being raised in schools.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9 Statutory Forward Plan

Councillor David Harrington in the Chair.

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

RESOLVED that the Plan be noted.

10 Select Committee Chairs' Updates

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

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

11 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme

Members considered the work programme and noted that there were no items identified for the Committee's next meeting, on 24 May 2016.

It was agreed that the Chair would liaise with officers, outside the meeting, and decide if the May meeting could be cancelled.

Members were reminded that the July meeting of the Committee would be held on a Wednesday.

12 Scrutiny Developments

There were no developments to report.