

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Wednesday, 20th July, 2016.

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

Officers: Neil Schneider (CEO), Graham Birtle, Julie Danks, Michael Henderson, Peter Mennear ((DCEO), Ian Coxon (DF&BF),

Also in attendance: Cllr Gillian Corr and Cllr Norma Stephenson

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2016 - for signature.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March were signed by the Chairman.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2016 - for approval

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2016 were agreed.

4 MTFP Outturn Report - March 2016

The Committee received a report that provided details of the Council's financial performance and position at the end of 2015/16 financial year and updated the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as at 31 March 2016. It was noted that the report had previously been submitted to Cabinet, which had approved:-

- that surplus General Fund Balances of £250,00 be allocated to the developments at Londonderry Bridge.
- that the balances, identified at paragraph 16 of the report be transferred to the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
- a recommendation to Council to accept a delegation from the Tees Valley Combined Authority to undertake the administrative functions summarised in Appendix C.

and noted:-

- the MTFP and the current level of General Fund balances.
- the revised Capital Programme, attached at Appendix A of the report.

Members considered the information provided and discussion could be summarised as follows:-

- it was noted that the Council received an income for undertaking

administrative functions on behalf of the Combined Authority.

- the overall trend in terms of children entering the Council care services was still high and increasing. It was noted that savings in the allocated budget for these services had been achieved through efficiencies, different ways of commissioning etc. Also, there had been reductions in the usage of independent fostering agencies and a reduction in residential agency costs due to placements ceasing. It was explained that a report would be going to Cabinet in September or October providing a position statement on the work of the Joint Venture. Some of this work was feeding into an improved financial position.

- issues associated with timing around the street lighting replacement scheme had meant that the full predicted savings were not achieved during the year, However, it was anticipated that, ultimately, the predicted savings, for the scheme as a whole, would be achieved. It was explained that the timing issues related to connections to the National Grid and was out of the direct control of the Council. The Council continued to work hard with relevant agencies to resolve any issues.

- members noted the increased investment in vehicles of £286,000 planned for 2016/17 and requested details of the total planned investment in this area.

- members noted that there had been £440,000 investment in school kitchen improvements and income had increased.

- with regard to works to the Newport Bridge, Members were reminded that an original estimation for repainting only had been produced. However, an assessment of the Bridge had revealed that in addition to the repainting, important works to the structure had been found to be necessary and the total cost had risen to £4.2 million. Members asked for details of the original repainting estimate.

- it was noted that income from disposal of assets was identified in MTFP reports, under one off resources.

- reference was made to external funding of park schemes. It was indicated that the Mill Park, at Ingleby, had been well received but it was suggested that it would benefit from some promotion via Stockton News.

- it was explained that the Council used reserves to replace its vehicle fleet, rather than entering expensive, long term, leasing agreements. The Council increasingly bought from auctions and then maintained those vehicle in-house. This would provide savings over the long term. It was suggested that a report on the Council's approach to vehicle management and maintenance be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

- the Council had a fleet of electric cars and officers would continue to look at different technologies and consider their suitability.

RESOLVED that

1. the report and discussion be noted and additional information requested be circulated.

2. the Committee receive a report, to a future meeting , on the Council's approach to vehicle management.

5 Non-Financial Performance 2015/16

The Committee considered a report that provided details of the Council's non-financial performance in 2015/16. It aimed to give a perspective on the overall achievements of the Council and provided details of performance indicators.

The Council had continued to maintain an absolute focus on its key policy principles of:

- Protecting those who are most vulnerable.
- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Developing strong and healthy communities.
- Creating economic prosperity

Discussion on the information provided could be summarised as follows:-

- Members supported the new look report.
- New Ways of working - staff were very well engaged and challenged why things were done in a certain way, with a view to streamlining processes and creating capacity and achieving efficiencies. Members commented positively on their visit to the DoLS Administration Office.
- with regard to the MORI Survey, members noted that the methodology used was robust and met all the requirements to be deemed statistically valid. It was noted that a member policy session has been held before the survey was undertaken that provided details of the methodology. The total number of people surveyed by MORI was requested.
- Members noted the figure of 57% satisfaction with providing Value for money could be perceived as low. Officers indicated that this compared well with the Council's comparator group.
- 160 landlords (owning 850 properties) had signed up to the landlord accreditation scheme. The Council would clearly wish to see all landlords signed up to the scheme as it was looking to improve housing management and living standards. The Council tried to target where improvement was needed and the most impact could be made.
- it was noted that the performance information was a snap shot of performance and did not provide any trend, comparator information. Members noted that the report represented a new way of reporting and the document was still evolving. Directors were reviewing indicators and assessing their appropriateness. Future reports would provide more trend and regional/national comparator

information.

- members specifically highlighted a number of the achievements detailed in the report including green infrastructure projects and the opening of Winford House, an independent living complex.

- there was a discrepancy on the number of empty homes that had been brought back into use, and this would be clarified.

RESOLVED that the report and discussion be noted/actioned, as appropriate.

6 Statutory Forward Plan

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

RESOLVED that the plan be noted.

7 Scrutiny Developments

Members were provided with a report that provided an update on the work of the Regional Joint Member Network, new guidance and other events and relevant items.

It was explained that the Network had considered issues relating to the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans and an update from the Care Quality Commission on its new strategy.

Members were reminded that the Network met on a quarterly basis and they were encouraged to attend.

The new guidance related to two recently published guides on the devolution process and Local Immunisation Services. Links were provided to the guides.

Members were also provided with a link to the Centre of Public Scrutiny website.

The Committee was informed that Cllr Derrick Brown's term of office as member Chair of the Regional Scrutiny Network had come to an end. The Chair would now be taken up by a member from Newcastle City Council. The Network was seeking nominations for Vice-Chair and any members interested in this role were asked to contact the Scrutiny Office.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8 Select Committee Chairs' Updates

Members considered the Chairs' updates on Select Committees' reviews and other work.

There was considerable discussion, particularly around:

- the Better Health Programme
- Employment and Education for young people

- a range of issues relating to School Parking
- Disadvantage in Early Years and Schools
- Flooding

During consideration of the update relevant to Children and Young People, a member explained that he had been contacted by a number of residents concerned about incidents, where men had approached family groups, with a view to having their photographs taken with the children in that group. Residents had indicated that they had reported incidents to the Police. One particular incident had been the subject of social media posts. The Chair of Cleveland Police and Crime Panel, Norma Stephenson, was present and undertook to raise the matter at a forthcoming meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

9 Chair's Update and Committee's Work Programme

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved.