

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 21st February, 2017.

Present: Cllr Gillian Corr (In The Chair), (Chair); Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Philip Dennis, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Matthew Vickers and Cllr David Wilburn.

Officers: Garry Cummings (F&BS), Peter Mennear, Peter Bell (DCE).

Also in attendance: None.

Apologies: Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Tracey Stott and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley.

1 Declarations of Interest

Councillor David Harrington declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 – MTFP Update as he was a member of the Teesside Pension Fund.

Councillor Eileen Johnson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 – MTFP Update as she was a member of the Teesside Pension Fund.

Councillor Sonia Bailey declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Scrutiny Work Programme 2017 – 18 as she was a governor at a school within the Stockton Borough.

Councillor Gillian Corr declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Scrutiny Work Programme 2017 – 18 as she was a governor at a school within the Stockton Borough.

Councillor Phil Dennis declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Scrutiny Work Programme 2017 – 18 as he was a governor at a school within the Stockton Borough.

Councillor David Wilburn declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Scrutiny Work Programme 2017 – 18 as he was a governor at a school within the Stockton Borough.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3 Minutes

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 be approved.

4 MTFP Update

Consideration was given to a report that focussed on the financial performance and position at the end of the second quarter of the 2016/17 financial year and updated the Medium Term Financial Plan accordingly.

A table within the report detailed the projected budget outturn position for each directorate in 2016/17, based on information to 30th September 2016. The reasons for any significant variances (In excess of £100,000) were set out for each directorate. Officers would continue to manage budgets carefully and explore opportunities to reduce the projected pressure. This pressure would require to be funded from revenue balances.

As part of the Council's managed approach to delivery savings, a range of savings and reviews were agreed by Cabinet and Council in September 2015. Excellent progress was being made against the reviews and updates would be provided within the MTFP report.

As part of the programme, there were a number of reviews where it was agreed that further reports would be provided to Cabinet. A number of updates had been provided in respect of reviews completed and ongoing including:

- Care for Your Area
- Housing
- VCSE Support
- Community Transport
- Libraries
- Youth Services
- Children's Centres

A review was also underway within Community Safety Services. This would re-organise the service to target resources on areas of the Borough in most need and deliver savings and resolve the budget pressure outlined within the report.

Additional savings were expected from re-commissioning a range of services and reviewing how a number of time limited schemes are funded. This saving would be included in the budget report.

The Capital Programme was attached to the report and summarised within the report.

The main revisions to the programme (those exceeding £100,000) were:-

1. A Section 106 footpath/cycleway Ingleby Barwick Manor Free School has been added to the capital programme.
2. Works to install a new synthetic bowling green in John Whitehead Park is being managed by the Council (£122,000), with external funding secured by the Bowling Club.

With regard to the New Homes Bonus, DCLG had announced their long awaited response to the consultation on the New Homes Bonus, together with 2017/18

allocations. The number of years that the scheme would be based upon (currently 6 years' in 2016/17) would reduce to 5 years in 2017/18 and 4 years from 2018/19 onwards. Crucially, the scheme would now also only reward growth in homes above 0.4% per annum. The impact on Stockton was a significant reduction in NHB income across the MTFP. The government was also considering options to further reduce NHB for homes built after appeal and where a council was deemed not to have a robust local plan.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comment on the report and recommendations. These questions and comments could be summarised as follows:-

- Thanks should be given to the Finance Officers for the time that they had spent on the forthcoming budget process.
- The impact on Stockton Council would be a significant reduction in New Homes Bonus income across the MTFP.
- The impact of business rate changes would be mixed across the Borough, with some businesses benefitting and others needing to pay more; although the Town Centre area would in general see a benefit.
- The impact on business rate retention and the income to the Council was yet to be fully determined
- The street lighting LED project was currently achieving £700k of saving per annum and the full saving of £1.8 million pa had been delayed. There had been delays in delivering the savings and this was down to Northern Power Grid and their connections. Assurances had been given that this was now back on track.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.
2. The key issues from the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and the emerging issues for the MTFP be noted.
3. The revised Capital Programme attached at Appendix A be noted.

5 Scrutiny Work Programme 2017-18

Consideration was given to a report that presented proposals for the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2017/18.

The current programme (including in-year referrals) was summarised within the report.

The process for work programme setting had been reviewed with even greater emphasis placed on efficiency and review outcomes focusing on reducing demand for services. In inviting topic suggestions, Members were also reminded that the scrutiny work programme should be seeking to support the Council's policy principles. Councillors, SMT and key partners were invited to submit topic suggestions for the scrutiny work programme for 2017/18.

All of the appropriate suggestions received were summarised in the schedule

set out as an attachment to the report and given a PICK score.

SLF was invited to identify the priorities for scrutiny reviews for 2017/18 for consideration by Executive Scrutiny Committee on 21 February. An attachment to the report set out how reviews could potentially be allocated to Select Committees.

Each suggestion was cross referenced with supporting information, and all suggestions received (apart from those already identified / carried over) were outlined as an attachment together with an explanation of the PICK scoring method.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comment on the report and recommendations. Some these questions and comments could be summarised as follows:-

- The Disabled Parking (Short Task and Finish Review) should include private car parks.
- The length of the Disabled Parking (Short Task and Finish Review) should be looked at as the Task and Finish Group will need to speak to a number of groups / organisations. This could be looked at further when the review was scoped.
- A previous motion to Council considered the issue of disabled parking and the wording of the motion should be circulated to Members.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2017-18 be confirmed as follows:-

Adult Services and Health Select Committee-

- Defibrillators
- Gambling

Children and Young People Select Committee

- SEND
- Educational Role of the Council

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

- Membership of Local Govt. Bodies (carry forward)
- CCTV
- Security in Preston Park (Short Task and Finish Review)

People Select Committee

- Sickness Absence
- Mental Health and Wellbeing (carry forward)
- Digital Optimisation

Place Select Committee

- Asylum Seekers (carry forward)
- Management of Memorials
- Consolidation of Thirteen Group
- Disabled Parking (Task and Finish Review)
- Food Hygiene (Short Task and Finish Review)

6 Statutory Forward Plan

The Committee considered the Statutory Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the Plan be noted.

7 Chairs' Updates

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

With regard to the Adult Services and Health Select Committee it was noted that there were 3 Stockton Councillors on the Better Health Programme Joint Scrutiny Committee. There would be public consultation from June / July 2017 and the Council's views would be fed in via the Joint Committee process. Updates were also being provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board. There had been a series of public events informing the public about the Better Health Programme, and the Joint Committee would be considering the plans for engagement during the formal consultation in due course.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

8 Executive Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Chair's Update

The Chair reported that Liverpool Council were considering offering free Council Tax for a year to anyone that produced evidence that led to a successful prosecution for dog fouling.

With regard to 21 March 2017 meeting it was highly likely that it would be stood down. Confirmation of this would be circulated to Members.

9 Scrutiny Developments

There were no scrutiny developments reported.