

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 15th January, 2019.

Present: Cllr David Harrington(Chairman), Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Barry Woodhouse,

Officers: Julie Danks, Peter Mennear, Judith Trainer, Sarah Whaley, Gary Woods (DCE)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Lisa Grainge, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Tony Hampton, Peter Snowden,

ESC 45/18 Evacuation Procedure

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

ESC 46/18 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Norma Stephenson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in relation to the item 'Crime and Disorder Select Committee', Scrutiny Review of Hate Crime' as she was an advocate for 'Show Racism the Red Card' initiative which was referred to within the report.

ESC 47/18 Draft Minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting which was held on the 20th November 2018.

Consideration was given to the Draft Minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting which was held on the 20th November 2018.

The Chair requested an amendment to the declarations of interest as follows:

'Councillor David Harrington declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 'Council Plan' particularly the Arts Leisure and Culture section which referenced 'Tees Valley Library Services' and a new 'Short Story Competition'. Cllr Harrington is an employee of one of the Library Authorities named and members of his family had entered the Tees Valley Libraries Short Stories competition'.

AGREED that the minutes be approved subject to the amendment as detailed above.

ESC 48/18 Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan

Members were asked to consider a report which presented the financial performance and position at the end of the second quarter of the 2018/19 financial year and updated the Medium Term Financial Plan accordingly.

Details of the following as at the financial position to 30th September 2018 were provided:-

- General Fund
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2018 – 2023
- Current Capital Programme

The Committee was advised that there would be Member discussion sessions for the second report of the MTFP following its presentation to Council in February.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

Children's Services

- There was continued pressure in Children's Services, particularly Looked After Children. This had been recognised nationally and a considerable amount of work was being carried out at a national level. Children's Services budget was one area which would feature in the Fair Funding review which was currently underway.
- In terms of finances, there was a predicted significant overspend in Children's Services however it was an improvement on the position reported in the first quarter with early indications that the actions outlined in the September report were starting to impact positively on numbers.

Adults and Health

- Adults and Health was showing a balanced position in terms of finances.
- During October 2018 the Health and Social Care Secretary announced an additional Winter Pressures Grant of £240m nationally in 2018/29 and 2019/20.

Overall Revenue Position / General Fund Balances.

- The sum of unutilised managed surpluses currently exceeded the recommended level by £515k, this was therefore available to support the MTFP, and would be reviewed again in the second MTFT report.
- It was highlighted that nationally, there was a real and significant issue of pressures on the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- In terms of the Funding Position, there were potential changes which could be introduced, particularly relating to the New Homes Bonus. There was also a lack of certainty in funding post 2020 with a number of key issues coming together at that time to make planning extremely difficult in terms of setting the MTFP.
- Members heard there was to be additional funding to support Highways work including that associated with pot holes. Stockton would benefit from £1.1m and plans were in development on how this was to be spent.

Changes to Current Expenditure Plans

- Members attention was drawn to the pressure of legal costs in Children's Services.

- The introduction of the Adults Deprivation of Liberties Safeguards (DOLS) had led to significant financial impact which had extended beyond that originally anticipated.
- The work being undertaken at the Globe Theatre had uncovered problems that were much worse than expected and therefore additional funds were required to complete the project.
- Tees Music Alliance (TMA) required a further revenue allocation of £60,000 per annum with a prospect of future matching revenue funding from Arts Council England.

Income and Resources.

- The Committee were informed that there were some areas of additional income which could be brought into the plan such as Business Rates, New Homes Bonus and Adult and Children's Social Care Grant.

Review of Reserves

- In terms of the Fleet Renewal Fund (£0.9m), Members were informed that there was a reduced requirement to fund that reserve in the short term therefore a total of £0.9m could be freed up to support the MTFP.
- Members' attention was brought to the Summary Position contained within the main report which showed a balanced budget could be achieved in 2019/20. There remained however a pressure of £4.9m in 2020/21, £3.5m in 2021/22 and £3.6m in 2022/23.
- A brief discussion took place around the Capital programme which included New Schemes, Additional Funding and Programme Revisions.
- The Chair asked for examples of the improvement which had been reported in the overspend of Children's Services. It was explained that work around the 'family not just the child', 'early help' and some social work practices were reaping benefits. Benefits had also been seen in the work being carried out by 'Spark of Genius'.

Members raised questions in relation to the impact of Brexit on the MTFP. Officers explained there was various pieces of work being carried out which looked at financial implications / European funding, etc., but at an Officer level the Authority was primarily focusing on operational impact including investigating the possible impact of Brexit on the workforce.

Discussion took place around business rate retentions and the Government initiative which had seen pilots carried out across the country with other Authorities. Stockton had not taken part in either pilot as the first pilot was considered confusing whilst the second tranche of pilots had been aimed at tiered Authorities.

Members queried the additional expenditure in relation to the Globe. It was noted that the most recent approvals for funding had been in relation to capital funding. It was confirmed that the Council had acquired the long-term lease for

the property.

In terms of Tees Music Alliance, Members raised questions in relation to the status of the organisation and requested information be circulated detailing its structure.

AGREED that;

1. the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.
2. the recently announced Winter Pressures Funding for 2018/19 used to support investments in Adult Social Care to support the management and prevention of pressures associated with winter, be noted.
3. Members note in principle the prudential borrowing required to fund additional costs associated with The Globe, with this being formally recommended for approval in the February report.
4. the position on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant be noted
5. the emerging issues for the MTFP be noted.
6. the revised Capital Programme attached at Appendix B be noted.

**ESC
49/18**

Scrutiny Review of Hate Crime

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Select Committee, Councillor David Wilburn, presented the final report of the Scrutiny Review of Hate Crime to Members prior to it being presented to Cabinet at its January 2019 meeting.

The key areas discussed were as follows:

- Hate Crime accounted for less than 2% of all crime across Stockton.
- More victims of hate crime were coming forward.
- The Hate Crime Group which was unique to Stockton was working well and most recently attendance and representation had been encouraged from under-represented groups within the community. The most recent new additions were the Taxi Trade, Trans Community, and Society for the Blind.
- There appeared to be an acceptance of Hate Crime from those who were subjected to it during the night time economy, such as Taxi Drivers etc.
- Show Racism the Red Card was a main contributor in raising Hate Crime awareness, however, the wear red campaign needed to grow in order to increase funding.
- Victims of Hate Crime did not require huge amounts of support, feeling valued and acts of kindness impacted greatly on victims and those that had received support had reported positive outcomes and were impressed with the level of

support received.

- Members highlighted that Mosques and the Taxi Trade had got involved in promoting and raising funds during the 'Hate Crime Awareness Week' which needed to be included in the report.

- Discussion took place around the work which had been carried out in schools however it was highlighted that not all schools were taking up available help / resources and schools should be encouraged to take advantage of the support that was available.

- Councillor Norma Stephenson informed Members that she was the mental health champion for the borough and that planned national Public Health campaigns relating to children's mental health could be picked up by the Public Health Team.

- Social media was recognised as a platform for hate crime and more work was required to tackle this. It was recommended within the report that MP's were written to regarding tackling the issues, however some Members felt that action needed to be taken sooner with the help of other organisations and officers.

During discussion of the Hate Crime Review, Councillor Louise Baldock highlighted that she was helping to organise a holocaust memorial day and asked that consideration be given to is being a civic event as part of the annual calendar similar to armistice day.

The Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Committee congratulated the Crime and Disorder Select Committee for a really good piece of work.

AGREED that the report be noted.

ESC 50/18 People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Digital Optimisation (Final Report for information)

The Vice Chair of the People Select Committee, Councillor Louise Baldock, presented the (Draft) Final Report of the Scrutiny Review of Digital Optimisation to Members.

The review had been suggested by Councillor Chris Clough and Councillor Gillian Corr, who thanked the People Select Committee for accepting the review. The aim of the review was to bring Stockton in line with the Governments strategy of digitalisation, provide the best service possible for customers and residents, and for the Authority to identify where they were and where they needed to be in terms of digitalisation and what needed to be achieved to bridge the gap.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- Stockton offered a gold standard service to its clients and residents via the telephone and through its walk-in contact centres.

- There had been excellent information sharing from other Authorities who had

received awards for the work they had carried out in terms of digitalisation.

- Discussion took place as to whether Stockton could be in a position to offer free Wi-Fi across the Town Centre which could benefit local businesses. Officers explained that Stockton did have good Wi-Fi coverage and work was continuing in terms of improving white spot areas, however as the provision of Wi-Fi was not free, this would require a government initiative to be able to offer this throughout the Town Centre.

- In some areas free Wi-Fi provision had been linked with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Groups of youths had been known to gather outside some well-known fast food chains stopping other customers going in. In some cases the organisation had switched the Wi-Fi off at particular times to disperse the youths.

- Concerns were raised regarding the difficulties faced by some residents who did not find dealing with online forms easy. It was therefore felt that staff would still need to be present in public buildings to help those with the completion of on-line forms.

AGREED that the report be noted.

ESC 51/18 Place Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Bring Sites (Recycling) (Final Report for information)

The Chair of the Place Select Committee, Councillor Derrick Brown, presented the Final Report of the Scrutiny Review Bring Sites (Recycling) to Members for information.

The Chair of the Place Select Committee thanked officers for the hard work they had put into the review.

The Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Committee congratulated the Place Select Committee for a really good piece of work.

AGREED that the report be noted.

ESC 52/18 Statutory Forward Plan

Members considered the Council's Statutory Forward Plan for 1st January 2019 - 30 April 2019.

AGREED that the Statutory Forward Plan be noted.

ESC 53/18 Select Committee Chairs' Updates

Members considered the Select Committee Chairs' Updates.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Updates were noted.

Children and Young People Select Committee

Updates were noted.

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Updates were noted.

People Select Committee

Updates were noted.

Place Select Committee

The Chair of the Place Select Committee, Councillor Derrick Brown, informed the Committee that the Scrutiny Review of Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group had been extended due to the Thirteen Housing Group withdrawing from the Tees Valley-wide Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. A further evidence-gathering session was scheduled to understand this development and consider its impact.

Following a meeting with the Thirteen Housing Group, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, a further five recommendations had been added to the report which would be presented to Cabinet in February 2019.

AGREED the updates be noted.

**ESC
54/18** **Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Chair apologised if there had been a lack of communication in relation to the removal of the item 'Constitution Update' from the Work Programme which was scheduled for the 15th January. It was felt that the item was no longer required to come back to the Executive Scrutiny Committee as Members had received updates via Members' Seminars.

Members were asked to consider scrutiny topics for the following year, post elections.

AGREED the information be noted.

**ESC
55/18** **Evacuation Procedure**

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

**ESC
56/18** **Scrutiny Developments**

There were no updates provided.

