

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019.

Present: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Chairman), Cllr Chris Clough(Vice-Chair), Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mohammed Javed (Sub Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell), Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Matthew Vickers

Officers: Peter Mennear, Margaret Waggott, Sarah Whaley(MD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Laura Tunney

1 **Evacuation Procedure**

The Evacuation was noted.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3 **Draft Minutes from the meetings which were held on the 23rd and 29th July 2019**

Consideration was given to the Executive Scrutiny Committee minutes from the meetings which were held on the 23rd and 29th July 2019.

AGREED the minutes be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

4 **Task and Finish - Review of Smarter Working in Stockton - Accommodation and Buildings - People Select Committee**

The Vice Chair of the People Select Committee, Councillor Mohammed Javed, presented the Final Report of the Task and Finish Scrutiny Review of Smarter Working in Stockton - Accommodation and Buildings.

The Scrutiny Officer gave Members a brief overview of the aim of the review which was to determine whether there was a need to rationalise council buildings due to budgetary pressures, declining workforce numbers and changes in working practices due to advances in technology which had introduced alternative ways of working, particularly around mobile and home working.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- The review was to look specifically at the main offices used by council workers.
- Current office space was no longer suitable, was inflexible and there was a requirement for extensive maintenance with associated costs to bring current office space into the 21st century.

- Ten buildings were outlined within the report, and it was felt that the Authority should look to develop one single office building in the future (finance and location depending), as they were now outdated and not fit for purpose.
- The Vice-Chair of the People Select Committee informed Members that he had visited a number of other authorities and organisations, in particular, North Tyneside who had reduced their own council offices from twenty two to only one.
- Members attention was drawn to the recommendations within the main report.
- Questions were raised in relation to how accurate the report was as staff had already started to decant from the councils Municipal Buildings on Church Road, however it was confirmed that some staff had moved out of Municipal Buildings to make way for the conversion of a number of offices into meeting rooms to complement the Jim Cooke Suite, and refresh existing offices.
- Clarity was sought as to whether Stockton Town Hall had / should have been included in the review as it was a building which would never be demolished. It was confirmed that the Town Hall was not included in the review as it was not a building that council officers ordinarily worked from with the main use of the Town Hall being full Council meetings and ceremonial events.
- A brief discussion took place in terms of the inclusion of depots, however they had not been included in the review at this stage, although some Members felt that the whole estate should be looked at during the review.
- Discussion took place around the possible closure and relocation of council offices within Stockton's town centres and the impact this could have on footfall within those centres, in particular the risk to local businesses in terms of revenue loss. It was expressed that this factor should be taken into account and included in any decision making going forward.
- Some Members felt that to do nothing was not an option and that improvements for office staff were needed as soon as possible to give the workforce a better working environment.
- It was requested that to have costings against each option would be considered as part of future work to develop options appraisals, should these initial recommendations be agreed at Cabinet in November.
- The Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Committee complimented Members and Officers involved in the Task and Finish Review for a comprehensive, informative report.

AGREED that the report be noted.

Members were asked to consider and agree minor changes to the Executive Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-2020 as detailed below;

1) that the scrutiny review of fly-grazed horses was conducted and brought forward by Crime and Disorder Select Committee as its next review following an incident in late August where an elderly couple sustained serious injuries after being hurt in a road traffic accident resulting from a collision with two loose horses. The crash also resulted in the death of the horses. Whilst the Council dealt with incidents for which it was responsible in a responsive and effective manner, there was currently no formal policy in place.

2) proposed that the scrutiny of the Council's Land Contamination Strategy on the approved work programme for the Place Select Committee be conducted by officers as a 'reporting-in review' . The current strategy was due for refresh in 2019 and officers had already made considerable progress in preparing for the review.

AGREED that;

1) the issue of fly-grazed horses be examined by the Crime and Disorder Select Committee as their second review topic.

2) the Place Select Committee consider Contaminated Land as a "Reporting-In Review" .

6 Statutory Forward Plan 1st October 2019 - 31st January 2020

The Statutory Forward Plan was noted.

7 Select Committee Chair's Updates

Members considered the Select Committee Chairs' Updates.

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

The Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee, gave members a brief update highlighting the following;

- Impact in terms of Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation Trust's (TEWV) aim to increase the provision of Tees Valley Mental Health Rehabilitation Service within the community and the future impact this may have on Stockton Services, particularly the possibility of not enough beds.

- Tees Valley Joint Health Committee was busy and Hartlepool Borough Council was chairing and supporting the committee.

-Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation Trust, recent closure of West Lane Hospital. Although there were no patients from Stockton at West Lane, patients that were there had been found alternative places, however some were quite a distance away.

- In terms of the Tees Respite Short Break Review, the Committee were concerned to see an estate review was taking place and the Committee were continuing to watch and monitor the situation.

- Brief discussion took place around the change in accessing repeat prescriptions as paper prescriptions were no longer to be issued. Although the CCG had reported that the change in accessing repeat prescriptions was going well, despite this assurance it was an issue of concern to the Committee that there was potential problems for patients who were not computer literate or couldn't get out. The Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee informed Members this was to be discussed further with the CCG.

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

The Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Select Committee provided a brief overview as follows:

- Scrutiny Review – Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home, was well underway with focus on the over 85's.

- In terms of the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) – Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School, there was a meeting scheduled for 24th October and the Committee were working well.

Children and Young People Select Committee

The Chairman of the Children and Young People Select Committee provided a brief overview as follows:

- Scrutiny Review – Careers Provision, various schools were being visited.

- Task and Finish Scrutiny Review – Domestic Abuse. Evidence had been received from Harbour, Children's Services and Public Health. There was also to be an update on operation compass.

- It was suggested that if any Members hadn't yet visited Harbour then it was really worthwhile taking a look and seeing what services were available, and the work they did with children.

People Select Committee

The Chairman of the People Select Committee provided a brief overview as follows:

- Scrutiny Review – Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Stockton District Advice Information Service were providing information on how poverty was effecting people who could not pay their Council Tax.

Place Select Committee

The Chairman of the Place Select Committee provided a brief overview as follows:

- Scrutiny Review – Area Transport Strategy. The Place Select Committee meeting scheduled for September had been postponed to allow for additional evidence which would be presented at the October meeting. Options were to be discussed at 25th November meeting, whilst also discussing options on the safer parking review.

Updates were noted as detailed within the reports.

AGREED the updates were noted.

8 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-2020

Members were informed that the Corporate Peer Review, was to be presented at Cabinet 17th October.

The report was extremely positive about the Council's overview and scrutiny functions which were highly regarded stating "The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is highly regarded both internally and externally and focusses on issues of significance and importance".

The Chair thanked everyone on every committee for all their input and also thanked the scrutiny team and Democratic Services for their support.

The Chairman of Executive Scrutiny informed the Committee, that Scrutiny Officer, Peter Mennear was leaving the Scrutiny Team to commence a role with Public Health. It was confirmed that Michael Henderson would be replacing Peter as Scrutiny Officer. Councillor Sylvia Walmsley, thanked Peter on behalf of the Committee for all of the hard work he had contributed over the years, and that he would be a sad loss to the team.

AGREED the information be noted.

9 Scrutiny Developments

There were no Scrutiny Developments reported.