

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Wednesday, 20th November, 2019.

Present: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Chair), Cllr Chris Clough(Vice-Chair), Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Eileen Johnson (Sub Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell), Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Tony Riordan (Sub Cllr Matthew Vickers),

Officers: Ian Coxon, Garry Cummings(F&B), Jamie McCann (CS), Judith Trainer, Gary Woods, Sarah Whaley(MD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Matthew Vickers,

ESC 32/19 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

ESC 33/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

ESC 34/19 Minutes from the Executive Scrutiny Committee from the meeting which was held on 22nd October 2019

Consideration was given to the Executive Scrutiny Committee minutes from the meetings which were held on the 22nd October 2019.

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

ESC 35/19 Council Plan Mid-Year Update Report

Members were asked to consider and note the Council Plan - Mid Year Update Report 2019 / 20. The Council Plan summarised the Council's strategic position over the next three years and described the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. The Council Plan, whilst covering all of the Council's services, did not include any policy changes and there was therefore no community impact implications as a direct result of this report.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- Members requested that the name of Durham Tees Valley Airport be amended within the report to its recently changed new name of 'Teesside International Airport'.

- A brief discussion was had around the MORI residents' survey which was last undertaken in 2015. Officers explained the survey was undertaken every few years therefore trend data couldn't be presented year on year. Results of next MORI survey would be picked up in future reports.

- Members highlighted the 'Do it online' campaign under the heading of ' Deliver effective communication'. Discussion was had around the fact not all residents had access to online facilities and that additional information should be included explaining other methods of how residents' could contact / communicate, with the Council other than digitally. Members requested that the Council Plan be amended to reflect that traditional methods of communication were still available to residents'. The Director of Finance and Business explained that the 'Do it online' campaign was only part of a wider communication campaign. The Council were not suggesting all customers access services online. The communication strategy had been agreed by Cabinet and the 'Do it online' campaign was only one aspect of this with the aim being to improve the Councils online services. There were various ways residents' were able to access the services they required such as telephone and customer contact points.

- Members complimented Officers on the graphics used under the title 'Our Place' highlighting achievements in Stockton-on-Tees over the last year, however it was felt that more detail should be included. Members questioned what the information was behind the visitor satisfaction survey to Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF)? It was also suggested that the six towns within the Borough, and events held there, could be included within the 'Our Place' page of the Council Plan. Officers explained that the report detailed a snap shot that was Council wide. SIRF was the only one included on the 'Our Place' page which was area specific, the rest were generic. Officers agreed to take Members comments on board.

AGREED the report be noted and Members comments be factored into the considerations around future Council Plan updates

**ESC
36/19**

Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan (2019/20 Quarter 1)

Members were asked to consider the Council's financial performance and position at the end of the first quarter of the 2019/20 financial year which updated the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) accordingly.

Projected financial pressures amounting to £1,268,000 were evident based on information for the first three months of the financial year. Many of the pressures related to Children's Services and the report also included an update on the issues facing Children's Services and the activities underway. The position would continue to be closely monitored and managed throughout the remainder of the financial year.

The report also presented an update on the Capital Programme. No significant programme revisions were reported in the first Quarter 2019/20.

Members briefly discussed the underspend in Adult Services. Officers informed the Committee all Directors were looking at where pressures could be mitigated and savings made.

AGREED the report be noted

**ESC
37/19**

Statutory Scrutiny Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny

Members were presented with a report that outlined the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Combined Authorities, provided an assessment on how Stockton's scrutiny arrangements met the Guidance and provided some prompts for discussion.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

Culture

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) had recognised that the culture of the Council was supportive of scrutiny and the scrutiny function was valued.

The Scrutiny Team Leader informed the Committee that opportunities were taken to raise awareness of scrutiny with officers. In addition local press reporting was helping to raise the public profile.

Questions were asked as to whether anything else could be done to further strengthen the scrutiny function within the Council.

A request was made to look at how to retrieve reports from outside bodies going forward as a system was not currently in place.

The Scrutiny Team Leader agreed to look into this further including Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) reports.

Since the CfPS desktop evaluation of the Council's scrutiny function took place a year ago, Members queried if there was value in repeating this exercise in light of changes to Committee membership following this year's local elections. Officers stated that another evaluation would be considered before the end of the current four-year Council term (ending 2023).

Resourcing

In terms of resources, the Scrutiny Team consisted of one part-time and two full time Officers, and the Assistant Director for Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services was the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

Members were asked if they were happy with the level of support received from Scrutiny Officers.

Members expressed that they fully appreciated all the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Team, however acknowledged that a replacement was urgently required for one of the recently vacated full-time Officer posts in order to fulfil the current Select Committee workload.

It was also stated that the role of Scrutiny Officers was specialised and it would require the right person with the right skill set to be effective at scrutiny meetings.

The Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Committee echoed Members thanks and dedication that the Scrutiny Team had given to Members

The Scrutiny Team Leader asked Members to contact the Scrutiny Team with

any other training needs Members felt they would benefit from.

Selecting Committee Members

Members suggested that political group leaders needed to point out that Members selected to sit on Scrutiny Committees have, where possible, some relevant experience.

It was highlighted that the training ethos on offer to Members at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council was fantastic and that members were amazed that some other Authorities didn't offer any training.

A brief discussion was had around Co-opted Members who attended to address specific issues such as educational matters.

Power to Access Information

Members didn't feel this was an issue. Children and Young People in particular felt they received very detailed performance reports.

Planning Work

It was noted that everyone was familiar with how scrutiny work was planned. Mechanisms were in place in terms of dialogue with Cabinet Members and keeping them updated.

It was explained that the Chair and the Vice Chair of Executive Scrutiny went through the PICK system with Officers. Ultimately Executive Scrutiny Committee approved work Programme.

Officers informed the Committee that the PICK system was not binding and any changes to the Work Programme would come back to Executive Scrutiny where they would have the final say.

Evidence

The scrutiny process was re-affirmed, gathering evidence, the inclusion of tripartite meetings etc.

Discussion was had around the impact of the recommendations and whilst this was addressed through monitoring, Members considered whether this could be further strengthened, such as, going back to the individual who had submitted the original topic suggestion to establish if they thought things had changed for the better.

Brief discussion was also had around ensuring the impact of Scrutiny Reviews was included in the annual scrutiny reports.

If any Member wanted to come back with any ongoing support requirements they could contact the Scrutiny Team and / or Democratic Services.

Some Members felt that Policy and Diversity training needed to be mandatory.

Some Members felt improvements could be made to IT training in terms of mobile phones and other devices as there had been some recent disruption due to phones not working. A better helpline was also suggested.

The Chair of Crime and Disorder, informed the Committee that she was attending an LGA course during January 2020 and this could be useful for other new Chairs of Scrutiny Committees.

The Scrutiny Team Leader agreed to get back to other Members with details to enable them to decide if the courses were of any interest.

There was also a scrutiny network in the North East, details would be sent to all Scrutiny Chairs.

The Scrutiny Team Leader thanked Members for all their comments.

AGREED the report be noted and Members comments be taken on board, and that further information be provided as detailed above.

**ESC
38/19**

Statutory Forward Plan 1st November 2019 - 28th February 2020

The Statutory Forward Plan was noted.

AGREED the report be noted

**ESC
39/19**

Select Committee Chairs' Updates

Members considered the Select Committee Chairs' Updates.

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

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

- The CQC ratings for Care Homes were now improving and recommendations would be set at the next meeting of the Adults Social Care and Health Select Committee.
- The Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) meeting had been cancelled due to the up and coming General Election, this was also the case for the Tees Valley Committee meeting which was scheduled for the 13th December.
- A meeting had been held with the North Tees and Hartlepool Hospitals Foundation Trust where it was explained that there was a big focus on winter preparations as hospitals were already seeing an increase in hospital admissions from vulnerable and older people. Additional porters were being employed to cope with the numbers.
- The trust was involved in a pilot to monitor Accident and Emergency times differently.
- The Flu Vaccine for staff in hospitals was in place.

- The North Tees Hospital Energy Centre was complete which meant the hospital would be more sustainable.
- The cost of the disposal of clinical waste was high. Options were being looked at to address this.
- There had been excellent feedback from the staff survey.
- Mortality rates had decreased.
- Members highlighted that the new energy generator was causing problems for local residents in terms of noise and lack of privacy as some people were peering into resident's gardens.
- There were still issues around people smoking directly outside hospital entrances, however some Members felt this had been exacerbated due to the removal of the smoking shelter. James Cook Hospital had a designated smoking shelter with ashtrays which was helping alleviate the issue there.

Children and Young People Select Committee

- The Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that the progress update for the Inclusion Review would be recirculated.

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

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

- In terms of the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) - Obstructive and illegal parking around Whitehouse Primary School, Members expressed their disappointment in terms of comments made by some parents on social media, stating they would continue to park around the school for pick up and drop off regardless of the impact on local residents. It was felt that if enforcement was deployed to tackle the current parking issues the situation would improve, however enforcement resources were very limited.

The People Select Committee update was noted.

Place Select Committee

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

- In terms of the Scrutiny Review - Area Transport Strategy, the Committee were to consider a summary of the evidence received at the next Place Select Committee meeting to be held on 25th November 2019. The Committee were looking forward to discussing options for the Area Transport Strategy.
- In terms of the Disabled Parking (Task and Finish), concerns were raised regarding the difficulty people were facing when using some disabled parking bays in the Borough. Some bays were positioned in such a way that it was quite dangerous getting wheelchairs out of the boot of a car whilst traffic was moving past. Members who had had first-hand experience of this felt some of the

disabled parking bays were not wide or deep enough.

- The Scrutiny Team Leader explained to Members that further updates would be provided at 25th Novembers Place Select Committee meeting. Following Mondays meeting the report would be circulated to everyone.

- It was suggested that Stockton could lead the way by making disabled parking spaces fit for purpose. There were organisations who would survey a town and produce a report in terms of disabled access and parking.

Updates were noted as detailed within the reports.

AGREED the updates were noted.

**ESC
40/19**

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

The Careers Provision -Final Report of Children and Young People Select Committee had been put back by one month, however all other reviews were on track.

There was still a post to be filled within the Scrutiny team, however due to the work put in prior to the previous Scrutiny Officer moving on, everything in terms of Adult Social Care and Health was still on track. The Scrutiny Team Leader would be picking up Children's and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

AGREED the information be noted.