

AGENDA ITEM

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

13 OCTOBER 2020

**REPORT OF THE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,
ADMINISTRATION,
DEMOCRATIC AND
ELECTORAL SERVICES**

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE 2020/21

SUMMARY

This report presents the Scrutiny Annual Report (infographic) for 2019/20, feedback from the North East Regional Scrutiny Officers Network Meeting and proposed changes to the work programme for People Select Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report be noted and the proposed changes to the work programme for the People Select Committee set out from paragraph 11 be endorsed.

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

1. The Scrutiny Annual Report Infographic summarising work in 2019/20 is attached at Appendix 1. Despite the work programme being paused in March, seven reviews were completed during the year.
2. The infographic will form an appendix to the more comprehensive four-year end of term report which will include outcomes for the reviews completed over the term. Some initial outcomes from last year's reviews are also highlighted in the Appendix.

**UPDATE FROM NORTH EAST SCRUTINY OFFICER NETWORK MEETING
– 24 OCTOBER 2020**

3. Scrutiny Officers attended a remote meeting of the North East Regional Scrutiny Officer Network on 24 September. The focus of this meeting was the impact of Covid-19 on member Councils.
4. Scrutiny Officers discussed the various pressures which Covid-19 has placed on the scrutiny function and the subsequent implementation of remote meetings. The positive and negative aspects of remote meetings were also discussed. Positive examples included easier participation for Councillors through remote meeting technology although IT issues had also been experienced.
5. Methods of alleviating problems arising from remote meetings were discussed. The creation of our 'Support Hub' for Committee Chairs in Stockton-on-Tees meetings was shared as one such solution.
6. Appendix 2 outlines the collated responses from North East Regional Scrutiny Officer Network member Councils to the impact of Covid-19 on scrutiny work programmes and democratic processes. All Councils are at different stages of re-starting meetings under new working practices. Many have focused on Covid-19 issues.
7. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council have held 15 scrutiny meetings since the beginning of the pandemic period and one Task and Finish Group meeting which compares well with other North East Councils. The overall work programme was reviewed by Executive Scrutiny Committee in June, and scopes and project plans were revised to take account of new timescales, new ways of working and Covid-19 implications. In addition to utilising remote meeting technology, written submissions and on-line surveys have been utilised and evidence

has been collected, for example, using photographic evidence. These new approaches are helping us to deliver the same programme albeit in different ways. It is also important to recognise that key partners are dealing with additional priorities at the current time and the different ways of working are helping them to continue to provide input.

8. It was acknowledged at the network meeting that Covid-19 and its impact will be a component of ongoing reviews for the remaining year and likely to feature in future reviews over the next few years.
9. During this meeting, it was reported that the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) will be changing its name to the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.
10. The Member network meeting is scheduled for 15 October 2020 and will include further discussion of the impact of Covid-19 on scrutiny work programmes and a Centre for Public Scrutiny update.

WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE – PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

11. The People Select Committee have been carrying out a review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. As the review has been progressing it has become clear that there are many variables which affect the forecasting of costs of a revised scheme with Covid-19 introducing an extra layer of complexity. Time is needed to understand the impact on customers, their ability to pay a minimum contribution, the rise in caseload and any wider welfare reforms that may come through as part of the government's response to Covid19.
12. It is therefore proposed that draft scheme proposals are developed once there is a greater understanding of the impact of Covid-19 on the increasing demand for support and the consequential increase in cost and affordability of scheme changes.
13. The Select Committee will be receiving a report at their October meeting around the detailed implications and setting out some interim measures.
14. As a result of pausing the above review, the People Select Committee need to commence a new piece of work. The next agreed review was Tees Credit Union. However, as the Tees Credit Union are still recruiting a new Chief Executive, it is proposed that the Select Committee commence their review of Carbon Monoxide Awareness next with the review of Tees Credit Union taking place afterwards.
15. Appendix 3 sets out all topic suggestions that were received earlier in the year (by Select Committee) and their corresponding SLF priority scores. The topics highlighted are those that were prioritised by Executive Scrutiny Committee in June to be completed during the current municipal year.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. None directly arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

17. The scrutiny function meets legislative requirements and is an important internal mechanism to ensure the safety and quality of key services.

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<u>Background Papers:</u>	None
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward Specific
<u>Property Implications:</u>	None

Scrutiny Annual Report (infographic) 2019/20

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Scrutiny Challenge for a better Borough 2019-20

What is overview and scrutiny?

Scrutiny helps to ensure that local people receive high quality services through the Council's Scrutiny Committees checking that the services and policies meet the needs of local people. It involves Councillors working with local people, the community, Council services and other organisations.

Checks and Balances

The Council's Cabinet make decisions and decide on priorities, and the Scrutiny Committees ensure that they are held to account for delivering them and that any public concerns are represented.

5 Select Committees



Adult Social Care and Health



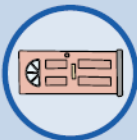
Children and Young People



Crime and Disorder



People



Place



We have **56** Councillors **7** are on Cabinet and the remaining **49** can take part in overview and scrutiny

Executive Scrutiny Committee

- Co-ordinates the overall scrutiny work programme
- Oversight of Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- Considered a 'call-in' regarding the ongoing Globe restoration in July 2019

Focus on Health

- Performance and quality of local hospital Trusts
- Regional health service changes and reconfiguration of acute services
- Monitoring of CQC care home ratings
- Overview of Adult and Public Health Services

Focus on Police and Crime

- We support the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel:
- Scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Review the Police precept
- Comment on the Police and Crime Plan
- Carry out investigations

What they do

- Service Reviews
 - Performance Reviews
 - Frontline Service Visits
 - Emerging Trends and Issues
 - Scrutinise External Organisations
- ### 7 Service Reviews
- **Smarter Working in Stockton – Accommodation & Buildings** – assessed the suitability of office accommodation within the existing ten Council buildings, as well as options for future workspace provision.
 - **Domestic Abuse and its Impact on Children** – examined the impact of domestic abuse on children and the effectiveness of interventions to inform the Domestic Abuse Strategy and future commissioning decisions.
 - **Area Transport Strategy** – explored the existing ATS scheme to establish if it was fit for purpose, inclusive, and allowed the public to have the appropriate level of influence, while being an efficient and effective process.
 - **Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home** – looked at local community infrastructure to determine whether more support was needed to help promote the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable residents (with a particular focus on those aged 80 or over).
 - **Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School** – investigated a Councillor Call for Action submitted in relation to long-standing problem parking within the vicinity of the school.
 - **Care Homes for Older People** – examined why the Borough's Care Homes were not achieving the same level of CQC ratings as the Tees and national average, and identified what activities could be undertaken by the Care Homes, the Local Authority and wider stakeholders to improve quality in our Homes.
 - **Careers Provision** – looked at the importance of having a meaningful and positive careers programme in order to increase self-esteem, attainment and reduce drop-out rates from education, which also helps children and young people to make informed choices and understand the opportunities that are open to them.
 - In addition, the Place Select Committee considered the draft **Contaminated Land** Inspection Strategy as part of an Officer-led reporting-in review in January 2020.
 - A number of other reviews began during 2019-20 and will be completed in 2020-21. These involve **Hospital Discharge, School Uniforms, Fly-Grazed Horses, Local Council Tax Support Scheme, Public Consultation, Business Support and Engagement and Planters in Residential Streets.**



Scrutiny Annual Report Infographic 2019/20

Although progress updates in respect of many of the reviews from 2019/20 are yet to be submitted to Select Committees, some initial actions and outcomes arising from the reviews are set out below:

Smarter Working in Stockton – Accommodation & Buildings

- Cabinet approved the recommendation for the development of new office accommodation for the Council and two new buildings; one main building in Stockton and a smaller presence in Billingham. Work has commenced on the final scheme proposals
- A focus group of over 80 staff made up of all directorates across the organisation is in place and project leads communicate with this group regularly

Domestic Abuse and its Impact on Children

- The Link Worker is now trained in the Alter programme
- Domestic Abuse Awareness Sessions for all Councillors undertaken
- Personal Development Networks in place to support Middle Leadership implementation of RSHE. Termly Persona Development Briefing are in place to support SLT with strategic implementation of RSHE. Termly bespoke school visits offered and delivered as needed
- CPD designed and delivered to governors, school leaders
- Social care link worker review completed March 2019: further review will be undertaken
- Newly appointed Link Worker in post within Early Help Team from January 2020
- Mapping exercise of domestic abuse training underway across Stockton on Tees to identify gaps
- OPCC are coordinating some work to examine what benefits there may be from greater collaboration across Tees authorities and with Cleveland Police on tackling domestic abuse

Area Transport Strategy

- Funding is to be allocated from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) to a new budget called the Ward Transport Budget (WTB) from 2020/21
- A guidance document outlining the process for the WTB has been prepared
- A letter is to be sent Town/Parish Councils and resident/community groups to advise them of the changes to the ATS and the implementation of the WTB
- An electronic portal is being investigated to which issues can be raised with updates of the investigations
- First progress update will be considered by the Place Select Committee in July 2021 (approx.)

Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home

- Completion of draft Action Plan delayed due to Covid-19 – now scheduled for consideration by the Crime and Disorder Select Committee in October 2020

Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School

- Completion of draft Action Plan delayed due to Covid-19 – now scheduled for consideration by the Crime and Disorder Select Committee in November 2020.

Care Homes for Older People

- Six providers expressed interest/engaged with looking at the dementia-friendly guide
- First progress update will be considered by the Adult Social Care & Health Select Committee in July 2021

Careers Provision

- Head Teachers meeting attended and presented with the benefits of impartial careers advice and guidance, available from a range of providers including but not exclusively SBC
- Schools and colleges contacted by SBC and required to inform us of their lead from SMT and Governors
- Presentation at School Governors meeting and follow up briefing for leads
- Schools and colleges are encouraged to take part in Careers Network meetings and activities, and activities and CPD delivered through the Careers Hub
- Continuation of support to school leavers through RONI and individual support in Y11 and when needed in post-16 Learning

North East Regional Scrutiny Officer Network Summary of responses to impact of Covid-19 on scrutiny and democratic processes

North East Regional Scrutiny Officer Network Meeting - 24 September 2020

Summary of responses to impact of COVID-19 on scrutiny and democratic processes

	Meetings restarted	Full Council meeting held?	Council diary reset?	Scrutiny meetings restarted	No. of scrutiny meetings held	Work programmes
Darlington	25 June 2020	July 2020 and Sept 2020	Full cycle of scrutiny meetings held	25 June 2020	13 meetings	Initial meetings focused on response to COVID-19, WP back on track. Task & Finish groups expected to start up
Durham	11 June 2020	No	Committee diary reset originally for June and July. Reset in August for Oct - Dec. No timetable for post Xmas	16 June 2020	6 meetings (30 scheduled)	WP reprioritised; agendas slimmed down. Briefings emailed to members rather than reports where possible
Gateshead	6 May 2020	16 July 2020	Agreed in July subject to amendment	7 Sept 2020	4 meetings	Slimmed down agendas - COVID-19 focus. Currently reviewing WP
Hartlepool	June 2020	10 June 2020	Programme of meetings agreed in June.	10 Sept 2020	1 meeting	WP to be considered 1 Oct 2020
Newcastle	17 April 2020	Twice	Committee diary has not been reset	11 June 2020	3 meetings	WP reprioritised to focus on impact of COVID-19
North of Tyne CA	2 June 2020				0	
North Tyneside	26 May 2020	24 Sept 2020	Not reset. Proceeding/cancelling meeting by meeting basis	14 July 2020	4 plus informal meetings	Finance monitoring continuing. WP reset in context of recovery plan.
Redcar and Cleveland	June 2020	Twice AGM 24 Sept	Limited first cycle. Planned schedule now in place	8 June 2020	12 plus 2 Task and Finish groups	Agendas slightly slimmed down. Full cycle of scheduled meetings. Task & Finish work delayed.
South Tyneside	26 May 2020	No	No meetings agreed beyond October	1 Sept 2020	3 meetings plus more scheduled in Oct	WP reset to reflect new challenges. Slimmed down agendas
Stockton	18 June 2020	24 June 2020	All scrutiny meetings reinstated	23 June 2020	15 meetings plus one Task & Finish group	Completion of ongoing reviews prioritised.
Sunderland	6 May 2020	Yes	Full council diary in operation	25 June 2020	All committees have met at least once	Full WPs agreed. Business as usual

All Topic Suggestions by Select Committee

Topics agreed by Executive Scrutiny Committee to be carried out during the current year are highlighted

Select Committee	Potential Topics (In order of start date)	SLF Priority Score	Comments
Adult Services and Health	Hospital Discharge (Phases 1 and 2) Care at Home Learning Disability Services Services for Younger Adults Podiatry Community Engagement One Call	- 15 15 12 12 10 10	Phase 1 of review (care homes) in progress TBC @ Adults and Health Partnership
Children and Young People	School Uniform Care Leavers EET Early Years' Support In House Residential Care Play Equipment	- 15 15 15 13	Review in progress
Crime and Disorder	Fly Grazed Horses Action Fraud (carry forward) Civil Enforcement and PCSO Powers Roadside Advertising Information Sharing Obstructive Parking Animal Licencing	- 14 14 12 11 11 11	Review in progress

Select Committee	Potential Topics (In order of start date)	SLF Priority Score	Comments
People	Public Consultation Tees Credit Union (carry forward) Carbon Monoxide Awareness Events on Private Land Disabled Facilities Grants Process School Meal Provision/ School Catering Joint Working between Children's and Adults Services (or CYP) Engagement with Town and Parish Councils Locality Forums	- 14 14 12 12 11 10 9 7	Review in progress Suggestion to defer TBC@ Member Briefing Review recently concluded
Place	Business Support and Engagement Planters in Residential Streets (carry over) Contaminated Land Burial Provision Potholes / Highways Asset Management Climate Change and Net Zero Carbon Residents' Parking Schemes Refuse Collection and Recycling Planning Enforcement Discretionary Parking Bays	- - - 16 15 13 12 11 11 10	Review in progress Task and Finish Review in progress Reporting In Review in progress TBC @ Member Briefing