

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 8th December, 2020.

Present: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Chairman), Cllr Maurice Perry(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Laura Tunney,

Officers: Nigel Hart, Rebecca Saunders-Thompson, Judy Trainer, Sarah Whaley,GaryWoods(MD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Tony Hampton

ESC 13/20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

ESC 14/20 **Minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee meetings which were held on the 13th October and 10th November 2020**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Executive Scrutiny Committee meetings which were held on 13th October and 10th November 2020.

The Committee acknowledged that since the Executive Select Committee meeting held on 13th October 20, additional information had been circulated to Members of the Committee in terms of the number of scrutiny reviews completed by neighbouring authorities and additional information from Children's Services in relation to the review of Domestic Abuse.

AGREED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

ESC 15/20 **Scrutiny Review of the Cost of School Uniform - Executive Summary for Information**

The Chair of the Children and Young Peoples Select Committee presented the Committee with the Executive Summary of the Scrutiny Review of the Cost of School Uniform.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- All schools within the Borough had their own school uniform, however the cost of uniform varied. Some items of school uniform could only be sourced from specialist suppliers which were quite expensive and some garments required pupils' initials making it difficult to pass on, even within the same family.
- The Committee's aim was to encourage schools to try and reduce the number of items which could only be purchased from specialist suppliers to try and reduce the cost to parents and offering greater choice.
- It was highlighted that although a wide range of support to help families with

uniform costs was provided by Stockton schools, this information was rarely publicised on the school websites. The Committee recommended that support with uniform costs was clearly published on school websites.

- That the findings from the scrutiny review and the best practice from the school survey be shared with all Stockton Schools.

- Discussion took place around the provision of uniform in some Academies. It was suggested that all schools should award contracts to the most cost-effective suppliers.

- Discussion also took place around seeking support from Local MP's to urge the Government to pass legislation to put DfE best practice guidance on a statutory footing.

- It was highlighted that there was no legal requirement for a school to have a uniform policy, however some pupils in Stockton had been excluded due for wearing incorrect uniform.

- Officers informed the Committee that desktop research had been undertaken where uniform policies across primary and secondary schools had been looked at as well as the difference in cost between branded versus supermarket uniform. Officers agreed to circulate the information to Members.

- Desktop research was presented in an anonymised way, which helped the Committee focus on the issues rather than individual school data. There had been a great response from schools to the school survey. The results of the local research mirrored national research.

- Brief discussion was had around the promotion of support offered by Trade Unions, with some having welfare funds that could be utilised if the correct criteria was met.

- Members questioned if school websites included information on the approximate cost of a full school uniform. It was suggested that this information might be provided at open events. Officers explained that none of the data on school websites outlined the approximate cost of a full school uniform and Officers had to calculate approximate costs when conducting the desktop research.

- Members also commented that schools should advise of the cost of uniforms on their website.

- It was felt that the cost of a uniform should not influence or discourage the choice of school, parents shouldn't be put off due to cost of uniform. Officers highlighted recommendations 2 & 3 to the Committee which emphasised cost and improvements to school websites.

The Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Committee thanked the Children and Young Peoples Select Committee and Scrutiny Officers for a very far reaching report.

AGREED the report be noted.

ESC 16/20 People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Public Consultation (Executive summary for information)

The Chair of the People Select Committee presented the Committee with the Executive Summary of the People Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Public Consultation.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- The final tri-partite meeting was held 19th November 20 and the final report would be presented to Cabinet at its December meeting.
- A brief discussion was had around recommendation 3 which highlighted that engagement with young people would be increased using engagement activities with Bright Minds Big Futures.

AGREED the report be noted.

ESC 17/20 Place Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Business Support and Engagement (Executive Summary for information)

The Chair of the Place Select Committee presented the Committee with the Executive Summary of the Place Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Business Support and Engagement.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- The final report would be presented to Cabinet at its December meeting.
- The review had come at an important time due to structure change within the department.
- In terms of the report itself, the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on how the review was undertaken. Businesses could not be visited, however the Committee benefited from the knowledge of some of its Members as they ran their own businesses and were able to provide important information.

The Chair of the Place Select Committee thanked all those that had worked on the review.

AGREED the report be noted.

ESC 18/20 Chairs' Updates

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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 Tees Valley Committee had met on the 20th November and provided TEWV updates in relation to Teesside Rehabilitation Services development, Roseberry Park and West Lane Hospital. In addition, the Committee were informed that the court case relating to Roseberry Park had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children and Young People Select Committee;

The Chair of the Children and Young People Select Committee, gave members a brief update highlighting the following;

The Committee had approved the scope and project plan for the Scrutiny Review - Care Leavers EET and this would be worked on over the coming months.

A Healthwatch report was due to be presented at the December meeting of the Children and Young People's Select Committee, detailing the impact of COVID-19 on young people.

Crime and Disorder Select Committee;

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Select Committee, gave members a brief update highlighting the following;

In terms of the Scrutiny Review - Action Fraud / Fraud Awareness the Committee had had their first meeting where it was agreed the review would focus on raising awareness of personal fraud as Action Fraud was a national initiative (which Local Authorities had very limited influence over) and the Committee felt it would be more beneficial to look at personal fraud relating to residents of the borough.

The Scrutiny Review - Fly Grazed Horses would be presented to Cabinet at its January meeting.

In terms of progress on the outstanding recommendations from the previously completed School Parking review, there had been some positive developments in terms of artwork and video messages provided from a variety of local schools. A school parking video was hoped to be shared with the Committee in January 21.

People Select Committee;

The Chair of the People Select Committee, gave members a brief update highlighting the following;

In terms of monitoring there was to be progress reports due on the following:

- Under representation of BME Communities in Council Workforce.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing including, suicide & self-harm
- SwiS: Accommodation and Buildings (Task & Finish)

The Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Committee suggested that the SwiS: Accommodation and Buildings (Task & Finish) may need revisiting due to the impact COVID-19 may have had in terms of the changes to how the workforce were now working, such as the majority of SBC staff working from home.

Place Select Committee;

The Chair of the Place Select Committee, gave members a brief update highlighting the following;

The Planters in Residential Streets (Task & Finish) had been completed and the final report would be presented to the Executive Scrutiny Committee at its January meeting.

Regarding the Scrutiny Review - Burial Provision, the scope and project plan had been approved with the first evidence session taking place at the Place Select Committees December meeting.

The updates were noted.

AGREED that the reports be noted.

**ESC
19/20** **Statutory Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan was noted.

**ESC
20/20** **Executive Scrutiny Work Programme and Chair's Update**

The Work Programme was noted.