

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 18th January, 2022.

Present: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley(Chairman), Cllr Maurice Perry(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Jacky Bright, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Barry Woodhouse, V Vacancy

Officers: Julie Danks, Margaret Waggott, Judy Trainer, Nigel Hart, John Devine (MD), Tony Montague, Claire Harper, Ian Coxon.

Also in attendance:

Apologies:

ESC **Evacuation Procedure**
26/22

ESC **Declarations of Interest**
27/22

There were no declarations of interest.

ESC **Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2021**
28/22

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the chair.

ESC **Financial Update & Medium Term Financial Plan**
29/22

Members were presented with a report which reviewed the financial position in the current year (2021/22) and presented outline plans for the 2022/23 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) based on information provided in the recent Budget and Spending Review 2021.

The financial position for subsequent years remained extremely uncertain. And it was currently unclear whether there would be a one year or multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement. As previously outlined to Members, it was also unclear whether the Fair Funding Review would conclude and whether there would be proposed changes around Business Rates Retention and Re-set.

The main topics discussed were as follows:

- The projected costs and start date regarding the Tees Valley Waste project, were likely to remain as projected due to increases in gate fees;
- There was provision set aside within Children's Services to explore alternative models of care and consider further development of the Spark of Genius Joint Venture to reduce costs of residential placements;
- The recent increase in employers National Insurance contributions of 1.25% would apply from April 2022 and whilst this would be funded from the new grant announced for local government, the projected cost to the Council was £1,050,000 per annum and would remain shown as part of the base budget

going forward;

- Advice of NEPO had been sought to ensure our energy costs were as economical as possible; and the projected budget would be amended accordingly should the national Pay Award be agreed and be over the current rate of inflation;
- The funding set aside for the successful Apprenticeship Programme was sufficient to allow the programme to continue at its current level;
- The ongoing impact of the Pandemic was recognised in the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22, with the allocation of a Covid Support Grant of £5.623m, together with an extension of the Sales, Fees and Charges Income Compensation Scheme for a further quarter (to June 2021). It was highlighted to Members that further grants were not expected at this stage.

AGREED that: -

1. The updated financial position for 2021/22 be noted.
2. The revised Capital Programme at Appendix A be noted.
3. The emerging issues for the MTFP be noted.

**ESC
30/22 Council Plan 21 - 24 Update**

Members were presented with an update on the implementation of the Council Plan and the priority actions for 2021/22.

In addition to continuing to focus on delivering the key agreed priorities, the Council would continue to respond to the ongoing challenges from Covid 19 with the key ongoing actions being as follows;

- a. Ongoing delivery of testing provision;
- b. Management of outbreaks;
- c. Advice and information to residents, businesses and organisations;
- d. Supporting the vaccination programme, including a focus on inequalities in take up;
- e. Collation and analysis of data and intelligence to support targeting of actions and mitigation of impacts, with a particular focus on those already with poorer health and/ or economic outcomes (at population level) including those living in deprivation; people with a disability / learning disability; people from BAME communities; people who have existing poor health / are at risk of poor health e.g. existing chronic conditions, overweight / obese, those who use substances or tobacco
- f. Working in partnership with Catalyst on the Community Support Team and the Shielding Hub.
- g. COVID-19 Marshalls
- h. Enforcement role;

- i. Supporting staff to return to the office;
- j. Responding to the challenge of Long COVID

The report also informed members that the longer term recovery was a key part of the Council Plan with a number of actions targeted at supporting the long term recovery as follows;

- a. The early years strategy focused on tackling development day in speech, language and communication;
- b. The ongoing support to care homes in managing long term implications;
- c. The Fairer Stockton on Tees Framework;
- d. The emphasis on the employment skills hub;
- e. Supporting business recovery and the emphasis on town centres;
- f. Restoring the events programme;
- g. Managing the Council's finances through the MTFP

Additional priority focus in 21/22 Included: -

- a. Community Safety including the additional £410K to allow for the recruitment of additional community enforcement officers to support post COVID-19 economic recovery across the Borough.
- b. Road and pavement maintenance and repairs including the additional £250K funding approved for targeted grounds maintenance and pavement and kerbside maintenance.
- c. Support services for elderly people building on the Adult Social Care Strategy recently agreed.
- d. Family hubs, whereas noted in the September report a major restricting of family support functions is currently being undertaken, including a commissioning exercise for a strategic partner to support aspects of delivery.

Officers then took questions on the various items laid out as priorities in the report.

Members asked if plans to have “face to face” programmes were being adapted or shelved with the ongoing new Covid 19 variant. Officers confirmed that any programmes that had been planned to have face to face components were being looked at and adapted to fit current government guidelines.

Members discussed hospital discharges and the work undertaken by 5 Lamps and questioned whether this would be allowed to continue. Officers advised that the Council were continuing to work with multiple agencies to help facilitate hospital to home discharges. Where the opportunity allowed, lessons had been shared throughout the region of good practice across the service area.

It was noted that the Council continued work in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade in supporting the Arson Reduction Strategy given a concerning increase in the number of incidents in the borough.

Members referred to the work in partnership with Tees Valley local authorities, Durham and Newcastle to procure new waste management arrangements, and asked for a progress update. including if there had been a location identified for

the proposed new facility. Officers advised that although the procurement/tender process was complex, the project remained on track and the envisaged site for the facility would be the former SSI works.

AGREED that the report be noted.

**ESC
31/22** **Final Report of the People Select Committee - Disability Inclusive Borough**

The Committee received a report which presented the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough.

Members welcomed the proposed recommendations as making a positive contribution towards achieving a more disability inclusive borough.

The report was due to be presented to Cabinet in January 2022.

AGREED that the report be noted.

**ESC
32/22** **Final Report of the Crime and Disorder Select Committee - Police Communications in Stockton-on-Tees (Task and Finish)**

The Committee received a report which presented the outcomes of the Task & Finish Scrutiny Review of Police Communications in Stockton on Tees.

Members were supportive of a member survey conducted during the review and suggested it should be an annual survey in order to measure progress. Members also commended the recommendations outlined in the report.

The report was due to be presented to Cabinet in January 2022.

AGREED that the report be noted.

**ESC
33/22** **Select Committee Chairs' Updates**

Members were provided with updates from the Chairs of each Select Committee. Updates and discussion included:

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee: -

The Chair of Adult Social Care and Health Committee gave an update to a question around vaccines for Care Home staff raised at the previous meeting. Care Homes in the local area had informed the Council that twenty-five members of staff had been required to leave as they chose not to get

vaccinated. They had not been adversely affected by these losses as they have utilised existing staff and taken on new staff members.

The Chair advised also that following concerns raised by the CQC regarding Butterwick Hospice, she had invited representatives to attend the February meeting of the Committee.

Children and Young People Select Committee: -

The Committee noted the progress of the review of Child Poverty. The last meeting had focused on barriers to learning and digital exclusion. The Select Committee had also received an update on the School Uniform review with all actions now having been achieved. The Committee had welcomed the introduction of legislation putting the DfE best practice on school uniform on a statutory footing.

Crime and Disorder Select Committee: -

Reference was made to the concerns raised by the Select Committee in relation to Thirteen Housing Group's response to one particular recommendation from the previously completed Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home review.

People Select Committee: -

The review of Local Government Pension Scheme was drawing to a close and would be reported to Cabinet in March.

Place Select Committee: -

Members noted that the Residents Parking Zones review was underway. Members expressed an interest in seeing a breakdown of enforcement information for all wards.

AGREED that the Updates be noted

**ESC
34/22** **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

AGREED that the Forward Plan was noted.

**ESC
35/22** **Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme 2021-22**

The Chair reminded the Committee that Members had been asked for topic suggestions for consideration by the Scrutiny Select Committees for the Municipal Year 2022 / 2023. Those received would initially be considered by the Scrutiny Liaison Forum on the 8th March 2022.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.