

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 27th July, 2021.

Present: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley(Chairman), Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Paul Weston (Cllr Chris Barlow), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Jacky Bright, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Julie Danks, Michael Henderson, Judy Trainer (MD), Garry Cummings (DoF,D&BS), Martin Gray (DoCS)

Also in attendance: Press

Apologies: Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Laura Tunney

ESC 1/21 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Evaline Cunningham declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in item 6, Scrutiny Review of Hospital Discharge (Phase 2), as she was a Director of Eastern Ravens Trust.

Cllr Barry Woodhouse declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in item 4, MTFP, and in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants, which was mentioned in the report.

ESC 2/21 **Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2021**

The minutes of the meeting, held on 18 May 2021, be confirmed as a correct record.

ESC 3/21 **Medium Term Financial Plan Update**

Members considered a report, previously presented to the Council's Cabinet, that provided an update on the Council's draft financial performance and position, as at 31 March 2021.

Members noted that the 2020/21 financial position had been significantly affected by the Covid pandemic. The report outlined significant additional costs and pressures in the financial year and outlined the funding received from Government to support the Council in managing the financial situation.

Despite the Council incurring significant costs, there was an overall improvement in the draft outturn 2020/21 financial position compared to that projected at December of around £5.5m. This report set out the breakdown but the key reasons were:

- Additional grant and income being received.
- Some projected pressures were actually lower than anticipated and additional savings were achieved.
- Additional funding was received to support Outbreak Management late in the year and this was utilised to support the costs of staff working on this area, where previously it was anticipated there would be a call on core budget.

The Capital Programme had been updated to incorporate new schemes and reflect those schemes completed, as at the financial year end.

There was a continued national pressure in respect of Dedicated Schools Grant, specifically in relation to Special Education Needs and Disabilities. For Stockton this would result in a cumulative pressure of £6.05m. National guidance was clear that this should be held separately and not funded from the General Fund, and the Council was working on a plan to resolve this position over the medium term and would continue to lobby for additional funding.

AGREED that the report be noted.

**ESC
4/21**

Council Plan Annual Report 2020/21

Members considered a report, previously presented to Cabinet that focused on the implementation of the Council Plan 2020/21. However, given the exceptional circumstances in which activity to deliver the priorities had been undertaken, the report also summarised some of the key additional activities undertaken over the past 12 months, in response to COVID-19.

Key additional roles and responsibilities included: -

- Safe working practices and COVID-Secure status for the organisation, ongoing democratic involvement through the delivery of virtual meetings and COVID-secure elections in May for the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayor, Police and Crime Commissioner and Council and Parish by-elections.
- Home working for most office-based staff through adoption of Microsoft Teams, and roll out of laptops and tablets
- Mobilised volunteers to deliver 3,397 food parcels, 3,024 prescriptions and undertake 936 shopping trips and many other kinds of help to the vulnerable during lockdown.
- Continued to carry out assessments for adults who have a need and support services are commissioned including home care and reablement.
- Adapted ways of working at Rosedale rehabilitation centre to keep people safe, healthy and provide a high quality of life.
- Intensified our work with schools, creating a single point of contact for queries, and the development of a vulnerable children matrix so we can ensure support is being provided to the most vulnerable children, co-ordinated the preparation and delivery of on average 1,300 packed lunches each day.
- Led the local public health response; developed outbreak management plans and responses, including the provision of advice, guidance, support and risk assessment support to workspaces, schools and other settings, 7 days a week.
- Played a leading role in the provision of PPE, delivering over 3 million pieces of equipment.

- Set up testing sites and helped others to set up theirs – in schools, workplaces and in the community.
- Recruited and trained a dedicated team of COVID Marshals to help keep residents and businesses safe across Stockton-on-Tees.
- Created a logistics hub at the back of Splash by installing a marquee and converting the sports activity hall. • Distributed over £33m of business grants to a range of businesses across the Borough.
- Introduced innovative ways of delivering some of our services in COVID-19 conditions such as at Halcyon Centre, Funky Feet, Rosedale rehabilitation centre, on-line libraries, on-line events, Tees Valley Music Service, short breaks for children and families and many more.
- Introduced new services such as working in partnership with Catalyst to establish the Community Support Team and the Shielding Hub

It was explained that despite the challenges of COVID-19, the Council had continued to make considerable progress on the implementation of the actions in the Council Plan in 2020/21. Very few priorities were on hold, though some were being refocused to reflect the experience and impact of COVID-19 and had therefore been reprofiled for completion in 2021/22.

Members highlighted the fact that the Council had rolled out laptops to staff and members, ahead of the pandemic and this had allowed the Council to be flexible and in a better position than some other authorities. Working from home had helped the Council make savings, including service delivery, reduced energy usage etc. In addition, staff were not facing costs associated with travelling to and from offices and this was also likely to have a positive effect on the Council's carbon footprint. It was agreed that there may be some teething problems with working from home, including contact with the public, but it was felt this had improved and would continue to, going forward. It was recognised that there were many benefits to staff working in an office, in terms of social interaction and building team working. The Council had a very strong and positive culture, and it would be important that this was maintained in any future model of working.

Members were updated on a pilot, of flexible working, that would commence in September.

AGREED that the report and discussion be noted.

**ESC
5/21**

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Hospital Discharge (Phase 2) (Executive Summary for information)

Members were presented with the Executive Summary of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's Scrutiny Review of Hospital Discharge (Phase 2).

It was explained that the findings and recommendations had previously been presented to, and approved by, Cabinet.

Members supported the outcomes of the report and highlighted some of the good work undertaken by North Tees and Hartlepool Foundation Trust and Five Lamps, around discharge and post discharge assistance.

Reference was made to a recent CQC inspection of a Council care home, which had provided a 'requires improvement' rating. There was a brief discussion on members' potential involvement in the scrutiny of this

AGREED that the summary be noted.

**ESC
6/21 Children and Young People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Care Leavers EET (Executive Summary for information)**

Members were presented with the Executive Summary of the Children and Young People Committee's Scrutiny Review of Care Leavers EET.

It was explained that the findings and recommendations had previously been presented to, and approved by, Cabinet.

AGREED that the summary be noted.

**ESC
7/21 People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Carbon Monoxide Awareness (Executive Summary for information)**

Members were presented with the Executive Summary of the People Select Committee's Scrutiny Review of Carbon Monoxide Awareness

It was explained that the findings and recommendations had previously been presented to, and approved by, Cabinet.

The Committee was keen to see Private Landlords served with notices, if carbon monoxide alarms were not fitted, in their properties, or unfit appliances were not replaced, within specific timeframes. This issue could be considered as part of monitoring.

Members highlighted that all the reports presented to the Committee, at this meeting, had already been agreed by Cabinet. Members asked what the Committee's role was, in considering the reports, given Cabinet's prior involvement. It was suggested that a report be presented to the Committee's next meeting clarifying this.

Members asked that the full report relating to this review be circulated to the Committee.

AGREED that

1. the summary be noted.
2. a report, on the role of the Executive Scrutiny Committee be provided at the next meeting. Chairs would provide feedback of any discussion to each Select Committee.
3. the full report be circulated to members of the Committee.

**ESC
8/21** **Chairs' Updates**

Members were provided with updates from the Chair of each Select Committee.

It was suggested that the provision of play equipment for children with disabilities could be looked at as part of the review of Disability Inclusive Borough.

**ESC
9/21** **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Forward Plan was noted.

**ESC
10/21** **Select Committee Work Programme and Chair's Update**

The Work Programme was noted.

The Chair asked that participants at meetings of the Committee be encouraged to use the mics provided, via the Evacuation and Housekeeping note provided at each Committee meeting.