

People Select Committee

Overview Meeting 2018

Monday 26th February 2018

Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services

Context

Members are well aware that as a Council we have had to adapt to funding reductions of £68 million over the last seven years and that we are still confronted with having to find further savings.

Whilst we acknowledge that we have a strong track record of sound financial management and we have been dealing with these problems successfully for many years, it will not be easy to address the additional loss of government funding of over £6 million by 2019/20. Moving forward, expectations will need to be realistic as many more difficult decisions will need to be made.

The challenge for all Members is to ensure that decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered are within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as reduced budget allocation, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction. Members are reminded of the four policy principles that support our decision-making:

- **Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention**, particularly those people in our communities who are subject to, or at risk of harm, people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and those who are financially excluded or whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- **Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention**, specifically in relation to tackling health inequalities, meeting the skills gap and improving access to job opportunities, tackling fuel poverty, improving education and training opportunities, access to affordable housing and financial and digital inclusion.
- **Developing strong and healthy communities** through the provision of mainstream and preventive services that are available to all those who choose to access them.
- **Creating economic prosperity** across the Borough

It is within this context that the Select Committee is invited to undertake their overview duties.

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan has been reported on a six-monthly basis. This was reported to Executive Scrutiny Committee in September 2017 and January 2018, and then forwarded to members of each Select Committee with key issues highlighted by the Chair at their next meeting.

Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services – Assistant Director – Margaret Waggott

Relevant services include:

- Administration
- Democratic Services
- Electoral Services

Council Plan 2017-18

The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

The 2017-18 objectives for the Stronger Communities theme are attached at **Appendix 1**.

Emerging Issues

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Emerging challenges and opportunities across Democratic, Administration and Electoral Services are summarised as follows:

Administration

- With ongoing service reviews across the Authority areas of administration support will be identified. The ability for the Corporate Administration Service to respond effectively to requests for support will require innovative and proactive ways of working which ensures we have a multi-skilled service which understands the customers' administration needs.
- The Corporate Administration Service continues to review service agility and resilience through the provision of improved multi-skilled teams.
- The Corporate Administration Service must continue to develop in line with the Authorities digital agenda and reinforce the professionalism of Administration Services, lifting the burden and not detracting from the specialist frontline, this also includes ensuring full use of e-channels within the Authority and in particular the services which we support.

Democratic Services

- A combination of both scheduled and ad hoc meetings of Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny, Quasi-Judicial, Police & Crime, Health & Wellbeing, SLSCB and Consultative fora will continue to meet to respond to the **decisions required to be made by the Council**. In readiness for the new Council term 2019-23, a new 4 year Democracy Diary will also be produced reflecting the required frequency of meeting of each of the aforementioned bodies.
- The principles of smarter ways of working are to be applied to make the publication of **officer delegated decisions** and **declarations of interests and gifts & hospitality** paperless, making the process more immediate and transparent for all through use of the Council's E-Genda system. This is likely to also reduce considerably the amount of resource spent on their publication and maintenance currently.
- **Member Support** will continue to be provided to equip members with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to fulfil their role. The Member Learning & Development Programme in 2017/18; in addition to mandatory training regards Planning, Licensing and Employee Appeals procedures, has included Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting, Equality & Diversity, Audit and Assistant Cabinet Member Development. Support has also been provided to newly elected members and members developing their skills through the LGA Leadership Programme; and consideration will be given during 18/19 to the Members Induction Programme post elections 2019.
- The Mayor has been supported throughout the year in delivering the aims of his **Mayoral Strategy** which has seen his attendance at over 300 engagements by the year end, at which he has promoted the Borough, supported local and national charities and community groups, hosted regional and international visitors, and encouraged civic pride within our community. The Civic Programme has included hosting the Annual Council Meeting, Mayor's Sunday, Armed Forces Week, Edward Cooper V.C. Ceremony, Mayoress at Home, Mayor's Casino Night, Remembrance Service, Xmas Carol Services and Mayor's Ball. A review of the strategy will be undertaken with the new Mayor for 18/19 with a similar programme of support envisaged, including a Freedom Parade in honour of the Yorkshire Regiment.
- A review has been undertaken of the Council's support for its **Armed Forces Covenant** with stronger links forged within both the Tees Valley and North East to support our Armed Forces. Internal stakeholders within the Council have been identified across all service areas to ensure our Action Plan for future support is robust and all-embracing in order to deliver the best possible support for past, present and future Armed Forces Personnel.

Scrutiny

- **Scrutiny Work Programme** – Another busy year in 2017/18 and the process is underway for the setting of the 2018/19 work programme. Next year's work programme will need to be fully completed ahead of the purdah period for the 2019 Local Elections
- **CLG Select Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees** –Review and consider response
- **Health Scrutiny** – The past year and year ahead will continue to see the Council's Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee and local statutory Joint Health Committees

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involved in a busy programme of consultations on health service changes and reconfigurations

- **Performance Monitoring and Overview** – Continue to review mechanisms for rigorous review and challenge
- **Promotion and Engagement** – Utilising our communications and working proactively with the media to positively promote the scrutiny process and engage with the public

Electoral Services

- **Registration** - Revised Register was published on 1 December 2017 – Maintained 92% of adult population registered. Slight decrease in attainers from 30% to 27% - Challenge to continue to improve registration levels and registration of under-registered groups through data mining and democratic engagement work
- **Elections** - Relentless programme of elections and by-elections over the last 12 months successfully delivered. Learning to be incorporated into planning for 2019 District and Parish Elections and work will commence on planning for these polls during 2018. The scale and volume of work should not be under-estimated with each of the Council and Parish Wards administered as a separate poll
- **Polling Districts, Places and Stations Review** – Preliminary work has commenced on this review. The statutory process will, however, commence on 1 October including public consultation and it is the intention that the review will conclude prior to publication of Revised Register in 2018 so that any changes are implemented in time for the 2019 District and Parish Elections
- **ID in Polling Stations** – Pilot Councils are agreeing the ID with the Cabinet Office – during the pilots, the ID is not being prescribed and a range of ID from barcoded poll cards to photo ID are being piloted. It is the intention for ID in polling stations to be in statute and implemented in time for the next scheduled General Election. The introduction of ID in polling stations will have a significant impact of the planning and resourcing of future election events and is completely uncharted territory
- **Boundary Review** – The second stage consultation has now concluded and the Boundary Commission are reviewing the responses and working on a final set of recommendations planned to be submitted to Parliament in September 2018

Potential Areas for In-Depth Review

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2018-19. Using the information provided as part of the performance updates and this Overview meeting, the Committee is invited to identify potential topics for review within this theme.

Potential topics will be considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 27 March.

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Appendix 1

Council Plan 2017-18 – Stronger Communities

Our vision is for communities that are diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant.

Key objectives and activities

Objective: **Deliver effective local democracy**