

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 9th September, 2019.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chair) Cllr Mohammed Javed (Vice Chair), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Stefan Houghton, , Cllr Eileen Johnson, , Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE, Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Julie Auffret, Joanne Dolan (R&B), Jane Smith (PH), Peter Mennear, Marianne Sleeman (DCE)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Mick Moore

PEO 9/19 **Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

PEO 10/19 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

PEO 11/19 **Minutes for the Meeting held on 8th July 2019 - for Approval/Signature**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the meetings held on 8th July 2019.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

PEO 12/19 **Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations**

Consideration was given to the assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Mental Health and Wellbeing including Suicide and Self-Harm.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- The Government's response to the Green Paper consultation had been published since the completion of the Committee's review. This highlighted the need for children's mental health and wellbeing to be prioritised, and a target for schools to have a senior lead on this issue.
- Stockton Public Health submitted a bid to fund mental health support teams in schools which was successful, funding would commence this month to be operational in schools by January 2021. Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust had been successful in a bid to the Four Week Waiting initiative.

- Members were informed the majority of the actions identified on the Progress Update had been completed and the outstanding actions were on track.
- Discussion took place around the national lack of funding and staffing levels in schools to support children's mental health and wellbeing.
- Public Health had contacted all schools within the Borough to ascertain what amount of their budget was allocated to mental health and wellbeing; not all schools had responded but would be contacted again. It was noted that schools were not obliged to reply to Public Health.
- Members suggested that School Governors receive guidance on how to seek assurance regarding their school's activity to support mental health and wellbeing of pupils.

AGREED

The Progress Updates on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Mental Health and Wellbeing including Suicide and Self-Harm be agreed.

A further Progress Update be provided on this issue.

Public Health investigate work with Children's Services to ensure Governors are supported to champion mental health and wellbeing in their schools.

**PEO
13/19**

Scrutiny Review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Consideration was given to a presentation setting out elements of the current scheme.

The main issues /services that would be covered by the review included:

- Members were reminded of the statistics and core elements of the Council Tax Support Scheme (LTCSS).
- It was noted the new Council Tax Support Scheme would have to be easy to administer and take into account individual circumstances but also needed to be cost effective with little impact on the collection rates.
- Members were informed there was various levels of support to pay Council Tax and a comparison with other Authorities would be made and brought back to this Committee.
- Discussion took place around Stockton Borough Council's fixed 20% minimum contribution rate and the possibility of exemption from Council Tax for residents were on minimum incomes. Discussion included whether could

consideration be given to Council Tax being deferred like mortgage payments; can the Council work with customers to see if they can make payments that are affordable. It was noted that the Council Tax Team aim to work closely with customers to understand their circumstances.

- Members were informed the form to claim Council Tax Support was lengthy and not every case could be dealt with first time, often the customer needed to be contacted for additional information.
- It was noted a small number of Authorities had started to look at other schemes, Revenue & Benefits would contact partners to gain their views to enable a detailed analysis be carried out.
- Discussion took place around creating a small working group within the service to see what ideas they could come up with. It was noted that the team would be consulted for their views.
- Members were informed the Revenue & Benefits Service would carry out an analysis of what would be achievable (including in respect of the IT system) and draw up a number of options to be brought to this Committee for discussion.

Members requested the following information be provided during the review:

- the total Council Tax benefit paid out by the Council prior to introduction of LTCSS
- the total benefit paid out by the regional comparator councils under their current schemes, and ascertain which of these have changed their minimum contribution figures since LTCSS was introduced
- an analysis of the administration costs associated with the current process
- details of the living allowance calculation
- analysis around collection rates was being carried out currently and would be brought back to Committee.

In addition, a visit to the Revenue & Benefit Service would be arranged for Members to see how the current system operates.

Members would be shown a working example of a Council Tax Support claim which highlights the incentive to work including allowances etc.

AGREED

The presentation be noted.

The information requests be provided

A visit to the Council Tax Team be arranged.

**PEO
14/19** **Select Committee Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the People Select Committee Work Programme.

AGREED

That the People Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

**PEO
15/19** **Chairs Update**

Members were informed the SWIS Task and Finish review on Accommodation would go to Cabinet for approval on 7th October 2019. The final report would be brought to the next Committee meeting.