

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 28th September, 2020.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees(Chair), Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Vice-Chair), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: James Burrell, David Crosby, Margie Stewart-Piercy (HR, L&C), David Grundy (FD&B), Rebecca Saunders-Thompson (MD).

Also in attendance: Gareth Aungiers (Xentrall), Vicki Nixon, Heather Thrussell (North Tyneside Council), Lynsey Clark, Sonya Dixon, Fiona Doran (Bluegrass Market Research).

Apologies: None.

PEO 7/20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO 8/20 **Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the meeting held on 27 July 2020.

AGREED that the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO 9/20 **Review of Public Consultation**

AGREED that:

- 1) the information be noted.

PEO 10/20 **Chair's Update**

This was the third, and final, evidence gathering session for the scrutiny review of public consultation.

Members received information from a representative of North Tyneside Council on the Council's approach to consultation. The main issues were as follows:

- The Council continuously engaged with residents. Examples of engagement initiatives were the Resident Survey, the Community Conversation, and the State of the Area events.
- The impact of Covid-19 on residents and experiences of the pandemic has featured heavily in the engagement programme in 2020.
- Methods of engagement mentioned included focus groups, visits to voluntary sector organisations, and 'out and about' conversations with residents. In 2020, engagement has also occurred over the phone due to the pandemic.
- Resident issues and priorities were fed into the Council's Action Plan.
- A Young Mayor and a Young Cabinet were elected each year. There were also forums for young people including those for children in care and children with learning needs and disabilities.
- There were over 200 members of the Council's Residents' Panel. If a policy was reviewed or new services were introduced the panel were

encouraged to get involved by submitting their views.

- Residents were involved in the scrutiny panels for housing.
- The Council have tried to ensure that all engagement activities were directed through the central Engagement Team.
- Anyone who was interested in carrying out public consultation was advised to contact the Engagement Team for advice and support with surveys.
- An online 'Consultation Hub' contained links to the Residents' Panel and allowed anyone in the Borough to interact with consultation.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Online engagement increased in importance because of the coronavirus pandemic. However, this did not stop other forms of engagement from occurring and the Engagement Team have still communicated with residents by telephone and post.
- Online engagement has allowed those who would not normally interact with consultations as often to get involved. This included young people and those with families/children.
- Elections for the Young Mayor and Young Cabinet were conducted through schools. Youth Council volunteers were given positions in the Young Cabinet. The Young Mayor had a yearly pledge. Youth representatives were able to take part in Council meetings.
- During the ongoing pandemic, the Youth Mayor and the Youth MP had promoted help and support for young people.

Members received a presentation from representatives from Bluegrass Research. The key topics of the presentation were as follows:

- The Research Objectives
- Our Approach
- Our Experience
- How We Ensure Quality
- The Deliverables
- Calculating Economic Impact

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Random sampling was conducted at events to gain an accurate representation of that event's attendees. Some events would have attracted attendees from different age categories and genders. Other events might have largely attracted attendees from the same age category and gender. This depended on the type of event.
- When calculating economic impact, outliers from the sample would have been removed from the final analysis. An example of an outlier would be a person who visited Stockton from another area to attend an event and spent a vast amount of money on accommodation, food and beverages etc.

Members received a presentation from officers from the Media and Planning Services Teams. The key topics of the presentation were as follows:

- Social Media - Publicity
- Social Media – Engagement
- Planning Portal Application Summary
- Planning Portal – Application Comments

- Planning Portal – Planning Application Documents

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Members thanked the Media Team for their Covid-19 bulletins.
- The Media Team have always corrected factual inaccuracies in public comments on social media posts.
- Although there have been very few abusive comments, the Media Team have always hidden any comments which have fallen into this category. For example, comments which have contained bad language. This protocol is replicated by other public bodies.
- Members commended the Media Team on their assistance with members of the public who have commented on social media posts with an unrelated query. The Media Team commended the work of the Customer Services Team in this area.

The Chair had nothing to update.

**PEO
11/20** **Work Programme 2020-2021**

Consideration was given to Work Programme.

The next meeting of the People Select Committee will be an informal meeting on 26 October 2020. The focus of this meeting would be the summary of evidence of the Scrutiny Review of Public Consultation.

Members were informed that a Tri-Partite meeting for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme Review would take place on 2 October 2020.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.