

Date: Thursday 25 January 2024 at 4.30 pm

Venue: Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library, Stockton-on-Tees,
TS18 1TU

Cllr Pauline Beall (Chair)
Cllr Paul Rowling (Vice-Chair)

Cllr John Coulson
Cllr Jason French
Cllr Barbara Inman
Cllr Alan Watson

Cllr Richard Eglington
Cllr Shakeel Hussain
Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

AGENDA

**5 Scrutiny Review of Outdoor Play Provision: Quality
and Distribution, Maintenance, and Physical
Accessibility**

To receive information from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough
Council (SBC) Town Centres Development department in
relation to this scrutiny topic.

(Pages 7 - 18)

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Scrutiny Support Officer Rachel Harrison on email rachel.harrison@stockton.gov.uk

KEY - Declarable interests are:-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

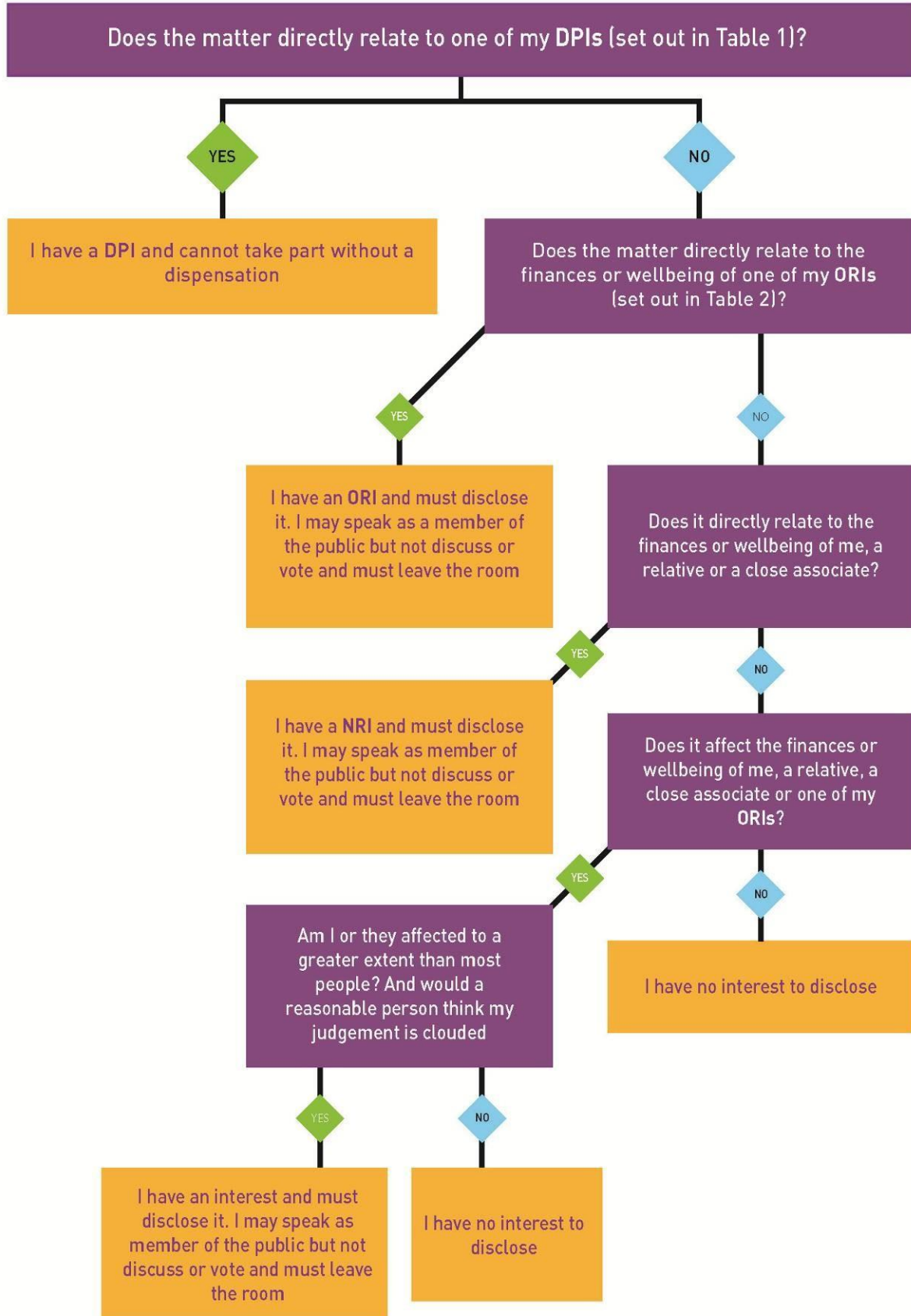


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

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SCRUTINY REVIEW OF OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION: QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION, MAINTENANCE, AND PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Summary

The third evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Outdoor Play Provision: Quality and Distribution, Maintenance, and Physical Accessibility will focus on a contribution from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Town Centres Development service.

Detail

1. As part of the scoping process for this review, the Committee identified the SBC Town Centres Development service as a key contributor. This department has therefore been asked to respond to the following:
 - Town Centres Development department's responsibility for development of new facilities (brief outline including key personnel and their roles).
 - Interdepartmental consultations on new facilities (i.e. how this works / what is the process?).
 - Summary of new and improved play / informal sport provision under the Town Centres programme (inc. new Stockton waterfront plans).
 - Understanding of revenue commitments around large-scale play facilities (historic and future projections).
2. The SBC Assistant Director – Town Centre Development and SBC Programme Delivery Manager are scheduled to attend this meeting. A report has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers.
3. A copy of the agreed scope and plan for this review is included for information.

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Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Outdoor Play Provision: Quality and Distribution, Maintenance, and Physical Accessibility

As part of the scrutiny review process, information has been requested with regards to outdoor play provision. Responses to the specific points raised are set out below.

Town Centres Development Team

The Town Centres Development Team (TCDT) are part of the Regeneration and Inclusive Growth Directorate and have responsibility for the development and delivery of a wide range of interventions across the Borough's six town centres

The team is made up of a broad range of roles with the focus on overseeing and coordinating the development, design and delivery of capital projects, predominantly under the funding umbrella's of Levelling Up Fund, Towns Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Future High Streets Fund as well as town centre business engagement and market management

In regard to the development of proposals for Stockton Waterfront, the core team from within the Town Centres Development Team is

Iain Robinson - Assistant Director Town Centre Development

Mike Smith - Programme Delivery Manager

Faye Dunnill – Senior Capital Projects Officer

Interdepartmental Consultations

The inclusion of formal play space and equipment within the park was established as a fundamental element of the space at concept stage, through the preliminary design process in 2021

In regard to interdepartmental consultations, discussions and exchange of information happen in a number of ways. In regard to play areas and play equipment in the Waterfront Urban Park, the TCDT relied upon the expertise and knowledge of colleagues within Environment Leisure & Green Infrastructure as plans for the urban park were in development particularly in regard to play equipment

Following public consultation in summer 2022, a design brief for the play space was developed by Ryder Architects in October 2022 in collaboration with TCDT and with input from colleagues in Environment Leisure

Officers from both TCDT and Environment Leisure & Green Infrastructure attended design workshops and meetings to refine the design of the park and in particular areas and locations for play equipment.

Officers from both TCDT and Environment Leisure & Green Infrastructure formed part of the appraisal panel for prospective play equipment providers as part of the initial procurement phase for play equipment from a quality, aesthetics, accessibility and sustainability perspective.

The interrelationship between Council teams extended to site visits and individual design meetings as required alongside the architect design team.

As designs have progressed since selection of a preferred supplier, specific pieces of equipment and layouts have been proposed via submissions and meetings for comment from TCDT and Environment Leisure & Green Infrastructure prompting queries and challenge regarding a variety of points of detail including guarantees, spares, play surfacing, play value and safety.

Further refinement to specific elements of equipment and play areas are still to be made with further input from Environment Leisure & Green Infrastructure in regard to aesthetic, quality, accessibility, sustainability and safety over the coming months.

Summary of new and improved play / informal sport provision under the Town Centres programme

The following new and improved play and informal sports provision has been delivered or is under development with TCDT as the lead.

Stockton Waterfront

- Two main play areas along with play features throughout the urban park including a variety of accessible pieces of equipment and features catering for young children through to teens
- Play areas include swings, slides, climbing structures, nets

Romano Park

- Installation of new bespoke play feature and new play equipment.
- Repairs and replacement of some existing equipment and surfacing
- Installation of accessible play equipment and sensory trail,
- Clean and remarking of existing MUGA surface

Victoria Park

- New play equipment and accessible elements throughout the park

Snaiths Field

- Improvements to exiting play space, surfacing and equipment planned. Still in preliminary design stage

Understanding of revenue commitments around large-scale play facilities (historic and future projections)

As part of the assessment process for play equipment providers, the sustainability and quality of materials was a key consideration in regard to minimising maintenance liabilities and the need to replace equipment .

Warranties and guarantees on equipment along with spare parts have also been sought as part of the procurement and design of play equipment and play areas to cover any issues or defects with equipment in the short term. Furthermore, allowance for some maintenance and repair/replacement packages have been included within the initial costing for equipment, minimising revenue commitments maintenance as far as possible in the early years of operation

Beyond warranties, guarantees, spares and maintenance packages detailed above, longer term revenue requirements will be picked up and included as part of future MTFP budget setting process with detailed work undertaken already with colleagues across the Council to assess the revenue impact of the park in its entirety from its completion in early 2026.

Other play facilities detailed earlier in this paper will be maintained within existing revenue budgets for play and open space.

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Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Review of Outdoor Play Provision: Quality and Distribution, Maintenance, and Physical Accessibility
Outline Scope

Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Cllr Pauline Beall	Contact details: pauline.beall@stockton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Gary Woods	Contact details: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk 01642 526187
Departmental Link Officer: Neil Mitchell (SBC Head of Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure)	Contact details: neil.mitchell@stockton.gov.uk
Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?	
<p>The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2023-2026 key objectives (and associated 2023-2024 priorities):</p> <p><i>A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and enhance provision and support for children and young people with additional needs or accessing alternative provision. • Support people to live healthy lives and address health inequalities through a focus on early prevention, long-term conditions, substance misuse, smoking, obesity, physical activity and mental health. • Work with our communities and partners to develop our approach to healthy places, in the context of regeneration plans and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. 	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?	
<p>It is widely accepted that play is an essential part of every child’s life and is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. Play facilities are therefore seen as an essential element to allow people to live healthy lives and help ensure activity is established at an early age, thus reducing long-term health conditions.</p> <p>Previous analysis has indicated that outdoor play provision is uneven across the Borough, with significant variations in the play value, age and accessibility of equipment and sites. Many older play areas are in decline and, as is being felt by Local Authorities up and down the country, there is insufficient budget to maintain all the current sites.</p> <p>In terms of new sites, the majority of these are established through planning obligations and consequently increase provision in areas where new development is taking place. Conversely, there are limited opportunities to establish or improve play areas in existing residential areas. In either case, it should be noted that all sites are subject to challenge relating to accessibility and play value.</p>	

Play areas can be an emotive topic and have elicited a range of comments (both positive and negative) from the public with regards the existing offer. Like so many other Council-related activities, balancing public expectation with the realities of deepening Local Authority funding pressures is becoming an increasing challenge. There is a well-established need to maintain an effective portfolio of high-quality play area assets within the Borough's communities, but this must be sustainable, provide value-for-money, and be accessible to as many people as is feasibly possible.

The main aims for this review will be to:

- Examine the Borough's existing outdoor play offer in terms of play value and distribution, and identify locations where there is currently an imbalance in provision.
- Ascertain who is responsible for individual facilities and what the management / maintenance and sustainability requirements are now, and are likely to be in the future (including revenue costs).
- Consider accessibility / inclusivity factors in relation to play provision so practical and financial implications are understood and factored into decisions around existing and future plans.
- Contribute to future policy around play area provision, giving an appraisal of potential options.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What is meant by the term 'outdoor play provision' – what does this encompass (what does it not)?

How is 'meaningful play' determined – what are its characteristics and how does / should this impact upon play provision?

Are there any legislative requirements around outdoor play provision?

What is the Borough's existing outdoor play offer – where are these sites located, what do they provide, what is their play value, and where are the identified gaps in provision?

How should the provision of major new play facilities planned for Stockton Waterfront influence decisions around the distribution and management of play provision elsewhere in the Borough, and will it have any impact on budgets to maintain existing facilities?

How are existing sites managed / maintained and what is the cost of this to the Council? How has this changed over time and what are the future projections based on the current offer?

What is the process around new play provision created as part of new developments? What are the responsibilities of developers and the Council, how does this change over time, and what are the implications of this?

What are the accessibility / inclusivity requirements around outdoor play sites? Has the Council been challenged regarding this and what is realistically achievable in the context of available space and financial constraints?

What feedback has been received from the public regarding outdoor play provision?

Can we learn anything from other Local Authorities who are likely to be wrestling with similar challenges regarding outdoor play provision?

What are the potential future options around outdoor play provision (including alternative funding possibilities)? How does / might this feed into key corporate policies such as Fairer Stockton-on-Tees / Powering Our Communities?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet, developers, public.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

5 months (report to Cabinet in April 2024)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- SBC review of outdoor play and informal sport provision (2019)
- RoSPA Play Value Assessments (available for specific play area sites in the Borough)
- Resources available from the charity Play England: www.playengland.org.uk

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

- Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure
- Care For Your Area
- Town Centres Development
- Planning / Place Development

- 'Outdoor play' terminology / definitions
- Existing outdoor play provision offer
- Process / implications of new sites
- Maintenance of existing assets
- Plans for play provision in town centres
- Role of these SBC teams around this topic

Association of Play Industries (API)

- Equal play campaign
- Best practice / Local Authority engagement

RoSPA

- Safety and management of play areas
- Previous analysis of the Borough's offer

Play England

- Design / Quality in Play approaches

Stockton Parent Carer Forum

- Resident views on the existing play area offer

Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF)

- Young people views on existing provision

Local Government Association (LGA) / Other Local Authorities

- Experience of this issue

<p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p> <p>Committee meetings, reports, research, site visits (TBC).</p>
<p>How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p> <p>Committee meetings, information submissions.</p>
<p>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.</p>
<p>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</p> <p><u>Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Physical inactivity:</u> recommended levels of physical activity significantly worse than the national average; specific sectors of the community less physically active than the general population; not all residents derive the same level of physical activity opportunities from the Borough's outdoor public spaces due to variations in quality, quantity, accessibility and connectivity (Dec 2018).</p> <p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live well and live longer.</u> We know that socio-economic and environmental factors influence health-related behaviours. Therefore working with partners to shape the infrastructure across the Borough which can impact on whether or not a healthy lifestyle is an easy and accessible choice is key.</p> <p><u>All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities:</u> We know that a range of factors including; good housing, warm homes, access to green space and healthy food, opportunities for physical activity, good transport links, air quality, antisocial behaviour and crime are all linked to physical, mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Planning policies and subsequent decisions can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing through the design of neighbourhoods, buildings and public space in the way they encourage people to be socially integrated, physically active or limit the growth of take-away and alcohol outlets.</p>
<p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear strategic guidance upon the development of new play facilities and priorities and rationalisation of existing play provision.• Budgetary provision for maintenance of play provision is proportionate to the number of play areas that are retained.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	September 2023	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	09.10.23	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	19.10.23	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	SBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure Community Services SBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive Growth and Development (Planning / Place Development) SBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Centres Dev. TBC	09.11.23 21.12.23 25.01.24 22.02.24	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	21.03.24	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	March 2024	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	25.04.24	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	07.05.24	Executive Scrutiny Committee

Report to Cabinet / Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	16.05.24	Cabinet / Approving Body
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