

PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 4 September 2023.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Tony Riordan (sub for Cllr David Reynard), Cllr Andrew Sherris (sub for Cllr John Gardner), Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (sub for Cllr Ian Dalgarno) and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Haleem Ghafoor (AH&W) and Rebecca Saunders-Thompson (CS).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr John Gardner and Cllr David Reynard.

PEO/6/23 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/7/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO/8/23 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/9/23 Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response

Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response

Consideration was given to the Scope and Project Plan of the Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response.

The overall aim of the review was to consider the Council's cost of living response to ensure it effectively supports the current and emerging needs of its residents, whilst also evaluating its current approach to inform/provide a steer for ongoing and future activity. The key lines of enquiry were:

- How has Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) responded to the ongoing cost of living crisis both internally and by working with external partners and agencies?
- How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff? Can this be improved?
- How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?
- What are the main 'cost of living' issues facing residents? How have these changed over time?
- How do 'cost of living' issues vary across the Borough?
- In what ways has the cost of living crisis impacted on staff retention and recruitment?
- How have SBC staff been supported if they are struggling financially and mentally as a result of the cost of living crisis?

- What can the Council learn from the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector?
- How will the 'Powering our Future' programme support the delivery of the Council's cost of living response?

Key contributors would be Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers, Representatives from another Council, Representatives from Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) - For example Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network, Thrive Teesside, local faith leaders) and Citizens Advice Bureau and Tees Credit Union.

The Select Committee received a background presentation from the review's link officer, the Strategic Lead for A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees.

The presentation covered:

- Key statistics
- What is Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council doing already?
- The Cost of Living situation
- Cost of Living response
- Cost of Living Hub
- Community Spaces
- Food Aid Fund
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Child Poverty
- Employee support and awareness
- Other Cost of Living projects
- Catalyst
- Cost of Living –next steps
- Introducing The Bread and Butter Thing

The Committee requested the following further information as part of the review and key issues discussed included:

- It was agreed that a video on the Borough's Community Spaces would be circulated to Members.
- Members questioned if the Tees Active discounted scheme for soft play and swimming activities could be extended. Officers agreed to contact the Managing Director of Tees Active.
- It was confirmed that The Bread and Butter Thing scheme would be accessible to all residents who needed to access the hubs. The hub locations were selected based on evidence of where there was the greatest requirement for the service.
- A discussion was held on transport issues for residents who lived in the Clarences. Officers confirmed that a Community Transport project was ongoing, and information would be fed back to the Committee as part of the review.
- Members suggested that Groundwork Northeast should be invited to be part of the Corporate Social Responsibility work and that more local businesses should be encouraged to attend events. Officers explained that work was ongoing to engage with businesses but would explore this further as part of the review.
- A discussion on upskilling and job availability in the region was held. Officers reassured Members that Council Officers from Learning and Skills and Economic Development teams would be attending future evidence sessions as part of this review.
- Members questioned if the Cost of Living newsletter was shared with social housing providers. Officers confirmed that the quarterly newsletter was shared to all staff, and

through partnerships and networks, but would ensure that housing providers received updates.

AGREED that:

- 1) the draft scope and project plan of the review be approved.
- 2) the further information be provided as requested.

PEO/10/23 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2023-2024

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next meeting would be held on Monday 2 October 2023.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.