

Date: Monday 19 February 2024 at 4.00 pm

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

Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair)
Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Ian Dalgarno
Cllr Niall Innes
Cllr David Reynard
Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Cllr John Gardner
Cllr Eileen Johnson
Cllr Hugo Stratton

AGENDA

- 1 Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 8)
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Minutes**
To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 4 December 2023. (Pages 9 - 12)
- 5 Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response**
To receive the draft final report (to follow)
- 6 Chair's Update and Work Programme 2023-2024** (Pages 13 - 14)

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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Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library **Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping**

If the fire or bomb alarm should sound please exit by the nearest emergency exit. The Fire alarm is a continuous ring and the Bomb alarm is the same as the fire alarm however it is an intermittent ring.

If the Fire Alarm rings exit through the nearest available emergency exit and form up in Municipal Buildings Car Park.

The assembly point for everyone if the Bomb alarm is sounded is the car park at the rear of Splash on Church Road.

The emergency exits are located via the doors between the 2 projector screens. The key coded emergency exit door will automatically disengage when the alarm sounds.

The Toilets are located on the Ground floor corridor of Municipal Buildings next to the emergency exit. Both the ladies and gents toilets are located on the right hand side.

Microphones

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when directed to speak by the Chair, to ensure you are heard by the Committee.

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PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

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

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr John Coulson (sub for Cllr Niall Innes), Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Susan Scott (sub for Cllr John Gardner), Cllr Hugo Stratton and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Haleem Ghafoor, Margie Stewart-Piercy (AH&W), Jill Douglas, Rebecca Saunders-Thompson (CS) and Lorraine Dixon (CS, E&C).

Also in attendance: Sharon Bailey (Unite the Union), Ian Bartlett and Rhys Stephens (Stockton and District Information & Advice Service)

Apologies: Cllr John Gardner and Cllr Niall Innes.

PEO/21/23 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/22/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO/23/23 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/24/23 Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough

The Select Committee considered a progress update including assessments of progress following implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough. The aim of the review was to explore how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council could contribute to a more disability inclusive Borough. This was the second time the update had been presented to the Committee. There were five outstanding recommendations.

AGREED that the Progress Update be noted and the assessments of progress be confirmed.

PEO/25/23 Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response

The Select Committee received a report on the Cost of Living work of the Council's Customer Services and Digital teams from the Assistant Director of Customer Services and Digital which included responses to the following key lines of enquiries:

- 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?

- What are the main 'cost of living' issues facing residents? How have these changed over time?
- 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?

The main issues highlighted from the report and discussed were as follows:

- There had been a 30% turnover in Customer Services staff over the past year.
- The Committee commended the valuable work of the Customer Services team and recognised the importance of training and supporting staff sufficiently.
- The Committee was pleased to learn that Customer Services staff were entitled to additional breaks at present when dealing with increasing pressures.
- It was confirmed that a stress risk assessment had been undertaken for the Customer Services team.

The Select Committee received a presentation on the Council's employee benefits and support, from the Assistant Director for HR which included responses to the following key lines of enquiries:

- 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?
- 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?

The main issues highlighted from the presentation and discussed were as follows:

- The Committee congratulated Council staff on their recent LGC Award achievement and thanked staff for their work on the Vivup benefit scheme.
- It was noted that several staff members had sought additional help following the Community Services health and wellbeing sessions. These sessions were held over a year with 7 compulsory sessions that were built into the working day.
- Members raised concerns about cases of agency staff struggling to obtain permanent contracts. Officers responded that agency workers were eligible to apply for internal vacancies and permanent contracts were offered to agency staff where possible.

The Select Committee received evidence from the Regional Officer, Unite the Union which included:

- It was noted that there had been an increase in signposting to mental health services.
- There had also been an increase in enquiries regarding loans over the past few years.
- It had been reported that lower paid workers, especially cleaners, had been undertaking more than one job. There were also reports that those with more than one job still needed to use foodbanks and pantries.
- SBC, as an organisation, provided a 'good level of support' compared to other organisations.
- At one of its offices, the union provided help with CV writing, interview techniques and suits and makeup were available for those in need to use for interviews.
- Upcoming projects included a workers uniform exchange and a baby equipment bank.

- Unite Community was highlighted as a community initiative to campaign for a more equal society.

The main issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- The Committee requested if there was anything further that the Council could do to support those affected by the Cost of Living. The Committee was informed that SBC was providing the most support to its residents and staff compared with other Councils across the North East region.

The Select Committee received a presentation from representatives from the Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) which included:

- How has SBC responded to Cost of Living by working with external partners and agencies?
- How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff?
- How does SBC approach compare with other Local Authorities?
- National Picture
- Local Picture
- How do Cost of Living issues vary across groups?
- Local Picture
- Local Picture – Top 5 Enquiry Areas
- Debt Advised on Stockton-on-Tees
- Cost of Living: sample enquiries National v Local Increase over 3 years – Q2
- How do Cost of Living issues vary across Borough: Cost of Living – sample enquiries (44) – Increase over 3 years – Q2
- How have SBC staff been supported through Cost of Living crisis?
- What can SBC learn from VCSE (benefits of joint SBC/VCSE working)?
- Other Issues

The main issues highlighted from the presentation and discussed were as follows:

- The Committee thanked SDAIS for their work in assisting residents and providing an invaluable service.
- SBC staff were commended for referring members of the public to a specific contact at SDAIS and other services for help and ensuring that they received direct support.

AGREED that the information be noted.

PEO/26/23 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2023 - 2024

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next Committee meeting would be held on Monday 8 January 2024. This would be an informal summary of evidence session held via Teams.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

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People Select Committee – Work Programme 2023- 2024

Date (<u>4pm unless stated</u>)	Topic	Attendance
Monday 31 July 2023	Overview Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services, Environment and Culture • Corporate Services • Finance, Development and Regeneration 	Cllr Bob Cook/ Cllr Steve Nelson/ Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE/ Garry Cummings/ Reuben Kench/Julie Butcher/ Lorraine Dixon
Monday 4 September 2023	Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Draft) Scope and Project Plan • Background Presentation 	Haleem Ghafoor/Margie Stewart-Piercy
Monday 2 October 2023	Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering 	Haleem Ghafoor/Margie Stewart-Piercy/ Sophie Haste/ Neil Mitchell/ Tracey Herrington
Monday 6 November 2023	Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering 	Haleem Ghafoor/ Clare Branson/ Jon Carling/Michelle Connolly/ Fallon Dunleavy/Vanessa Housley/ Julie Marsden/ Craig Taylor
Tuesday 21 November 2023 (12pm-2pm Remote Session via Microsoft Teams)	Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Association (LGA) and Tees Credit Union (Moneywise) Evidence Session 	Haleem Ghafoor/Margie Stewart-Piercy/ Rose Doran/ Lee Williams
Monday 4 December 2023	Monitoring: Further Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering 	Margie Stewart-Piercy Haleem Ghafoor/ Fiona Attewill/ Lorraine Dixon/ Ian Bartlett/ Rhys Stephens/ Sharon Bailey
Monday 8 January 2024	Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response	Haleem Ghafoor/Margie Stewart-Piercy/ Jane Edmends

People Select Committee – Work Programme 2023- 2024

Date (4pm unless stated)	Topic	Attendance
(Informal via Teams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Evidence / Draft Recommendations 	
Monday 19 February 2024	Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Draft) Final Report 	Bob Cook/ Carolyn Nice/ Haleem Ghafoor/Margie Stewart-Piercy/ Jane Edmends
Monday 4 March 2024		
Monday 8 April 2024	Monitoring: Initial Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Home Energy Efficiency and Green Jobs for the Future	Neil Mitchell/ Chris Renahan