

EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday 5 March 2024.

Present: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair), Cllr Ross Patterson (Vice-Chair), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Tony Riordan and Cllr Marilyn Surtees.

Officers: Garry Cummings (FD&R), Geraldine Brown, Jonathan Nertney, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods and Rachel Harrison (CS).

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: None

ESC/32/23 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

ESC/33/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

ESC/34/23 Minutes

Following requests for information at the last meeting, responses had been circulated to Members. Further updates were also provided as follows:

- Golden Eagle, Thornaby - Negotiations with the leaseholder had been positive and were progressing well. The intention was to bring a report to Cabinet in Quarter Two 2024/25 with further detail on any decision that was required for progressing redevelopment
- Number of admissions onto virtual frailty wards - the reason for the increased demand was related to winter pressures. More people came into the hospital and therefore more people go on to the virtual ward. In addition, they were quite new in the Borough and would be building capacity over time. NHS colleagues indicated that it was working well

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ESC/35/23 Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25 - Selection of In Depth Scrutiny Reviews

4 Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25 – Selection of In Depth Topic Reviews

The Select Committee received a report presenting proposals for the scrutiny work programme for 2024/25 for consideration and approval by Executive Scrutiny Committee.

In previous years, it had been the practice for the Chair of Executive Scrutiny Committee to write to all Members in January each year to invite suggestions for in-depth scrutiny review topics. The suggestions received were prioritised by the Scrutiny Team using the PICK scoring system. The topic suggestions were reported to Scrutiny Liaison Forum (comprising Cabinet Members, Select Committee Chairs and CMT). Finally, Executive Scrutiny Committee as the decision-making body, set the priorities and programme for the year ahead, allocating in-depth reviews to individual Select Committees.

Over the years, efforts were made to ensure that topics selected aligned with the priorities of the Council and this was reflected in the prioritisation of the topics by Members. In 2009, cross-party support had been secured to devoting the entire scrutiny work programme to support a three-year programme of EIT (Efficiency, Improvement & Transformation) reviews. The programme included Member-led scrutiny reviews alongside officer-led work. The programme delivered significant savings and transformation and ensured that all Members were able to input into reviews and influence decision making.

A similar approach was now proposed in relation to the Council's Powering our Futures Programme (including transformation reviews). The Chair of the Committee had communicated this proposal to all Members and at the same time invited Members to advise of any urgent matter, or any issue already listed on the programme, that they felt should still be reviewed in 2024/25.

Work on the new topics would commence at the conclusion of reviews that were already underway. Other reviews on the current scrutiny work programme would be deferred until the following year and the merits of completing that work revisited at that time.

Members queried how the topics related to the Powering our Futures Programme and were advised that that the topics proposed were discrete elements which would benefit from a deeper dive within the wider areas of work. Engagement with communities would be central to work on each review and linked to the Communities Powering our Futures work.

AGREED That the following areas are approved for review as part of the 2024/25 Scrutiny Work Programme:

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

- Reablement Service

Children and Young People Select Committee

- HAF
- Corporate Parenting

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

- Welcoming Town Centres/ Feeling Safe

People Select Committee

- Disabled Facilities Grants

Place Select Committee

- Affordable Housing

ESC/36/23 Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste (Executive Summary for Information)

Councillor Richard Eglington presented the Executive Summary of the Place Select Committee's review of Domestic Waste Collections, the recommendations of which had been considered and approved by Cabinet.

The data presented throughout the review had highlighted the urgent need to carefully examine the Council's current waste management system and consider the necessary changes proposed to maintain a financially viable service whilst also recognising environmental factors. The introduction of several pieces of government legislation over the next few years, such as mandatory weekly food waste collections, had assisted the Committee in determining which of the four options presented was the most appropriate for the Borough.

The site visit to J&B Recycling had been valuable for understanding the different recycling processes and the key messages about recycling which should be included in the communications plan following the review. It was apparent throughout that effectively communicating changes to residents as early as possible was vital in improving the Borough's recycling rates.

AGREED That the Executive Summary be noted.

ESC/37/23 Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response (Executive Summary for Information)

Councillor Marilyn Surtees presented the Executive Summary of the People Select Committee's review of the Cost of Living Response which would report to Cabinet in April.

The review had provided a comprehensive overview of the Council's response to the ongoing Cost of Living situation and its effective partnership working. The Committee was reassured that residents and Council employees had been sufficiently supported and the Council's response had gained regional and national recognition.

The review highlighted the continuing issue of expensive school uniform costs, which had been addressed in a previous review by the Children and Young People Select Committee. The Committee agreed that further engagement with schools and governors on this needed to be taken and a separate action plan would be presented to the Committee for approval.

Finally, the site visits to The Bread and Butter Thing Hubs provided Members with an opportunity to view first hand one of the ways that residents were being supported with food provision and the ongoing need for this service.

AGREED That the Executive Summary be noted.

ESC/38/23 Forward Plan of Key Decisions

AGREED That the Forward Plan be noted.

ESC/39/23 Select Committee Chairs' Updates

Members were provided with updates from the Chairs of each Select Committee. Updates and discussion included:

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Members noted the update from the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee.

Children and Young People Select Committee

Members commented that parental engagement would be invaluable for the Committee's current review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment and asked which two schools had been identified as the new DfE attendance hubs.

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Regarding the Select Committee's previous review of Tree Asset Management Members commented it was important to empower communities to be able to take action by removing red tape and that support for the vulnerable should be provided.

Members commented that changing the name of the Select Committee to Community Safety Select Committee would better reflect the remit of the Committee. The Head of Democratic Services advised that this change could be made by the monitoring officer if there was support for the change and undertook to progress this.

People Select Committee

Members noted the update from the People Select Committee.

Place Select Committee

Councillor Richard Eglington advised that the Crustacean Deaths Working Group had agreed to resume evidence gathering for this joint scrutiny following the May elections. In the meantime, a holding statement would be drafted summarising findings and recommendations to date.

AGREED That the Chairs' updates be noted.

ESC/40/23 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24

The Chair asked Members of the Committee if they would consider moving the timing of future Executive Scrutiny Committees to the afternoon in order to facilitate attendance of senior officers when required.

AGREED that the work programme be noted and the timing of Executive Scrutiny Committee Meeting be changed to 3pm.

Chair