

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday 16th December 2025.

Present: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair), Cllr Kevin Faulks (Vice-Chair), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Stephen Dodds (sub for Cllr Tony Riordan), Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Sufi Mubeen and Cllr Marilyn Surtees

Officers: Majella McCarthy, Clare Harper, Ged Morton, Lisa Williams, Jonathan Nertney, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods, Michelle Gunn and Junita Agyapong

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Tony Riordan and Cllr Hugo Stratton

ESC/34/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

ESC/35/25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sylvia Walmsley wished it to be recorded for transparency purposes only that on item 6, Financial Update and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), she was a member of the Thornaby Town Deal Board.

For transparency purposes, Councillor Jim Beall declared an interest in agenda item 7 as his late mother had been a recipient of the reablement service.

For transparency purposes, Councillor Shakeel Hussain declared an interest in agenda item 8 as he was a Muslim Funeral Director who had taken part in the review of the Muslim and Faith Burial Services.

ESC/36/25 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting on 18th November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ESC/37/25 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Public Report

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Public, which had formally been considered by Cabinet, with a request that the matter be further considered through Executive Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that letters of apology had been sent to the ninety-nine families affected. Of the 99, 98 reviews had in fact taken place with one planned.

The practice of issuing “no change” letters had been discontinued and all families affected had now had a full annual review. Members were advised of the introduction

of a robust process going forward, including the checks that would be involved. It was noted that the total redress of £7,750 had been funded through the special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) budget as the funding came from a ring-fenced grant which included administration costs. This payment was confirmed as a one-off cost and did not affect the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Committee was informed that the service was collaborating with Digital Teams to develop a more digitalised process. Officers advised that staff learning and development arrangements were in place.

AGREED that the report be noted.

ESC/38/25 Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

ESC/39/25 Scrutiny Review of Reablement Service

Members received the Executive Summary from the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's final report following its scrutiny review of the Reablement Service. The review highlighted positive outcomes for people supported by the service and identified opportunities to further strengthen provision, including the use of innovative technologies. Members noted that the Committee's review had taken place during a period of rapid change and coincided with separate reviews of the service via the Council's Powering Our Future (POF) initiative and an external consultant (Peopletoo). Difficulties had been experienced in receiving updates regarding POF-related developments, and issues in the sharing of the final Peopletoo findings led to the agreement and publication of the Committee's final report being delayed.

The Committee's final report had been considered by Cabinet in December 2025, at which time all recommendations were accepted. It was noted that implementation had progressed at pace and that the report had been well received.

Members acknowledged that the reablement service continued to respond effectively to changing needs and was valued for its focus on supporting people in a flexible and adaptable way.

AGREED that the Executive Summary be noted.

ESC/40/25 Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Services

The Committee considered the Executive Summary from the Place Select Committee's final report following its Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Services. Members expressed their thanks for the engagement and representation of the Muslim community throughout the review process. It was acknowledged that the recommended installation of burial rings would give more choice to faith groups.

Members noted that Cabinet had accepted the recommendation to pre-purchase burial rings on a full cost-recovery basis, ensuring there would be no budgetary impact on the local authority.

It was reported that funeral directors had requested an extension to the permitted burial times beyond 2.30 pm, to better support the requirement for same-day burials. Members were advised that the Committee recommended this request be reviewed by officers.

AGREED that the Executive Summary be noted.

ESC/41/25 Crustaceans Death Working Group - Terms of Reference

Members received an update on the Crustaceans Death Working Group.

Stockton-on-Tees had participated in the Working Group since 2022, and the Working Group had concluded their investigation in June 2025.

The Working Group met informally in July 2025 to discuss promotion of the report and the future of the Group. Several representatives expressed their wish to continue the work of the Group and therefore the terms of reference had been revised. The Groups new remit was to monitor the implementation of the recommendations, liaising with key stakeholders and lobbying relevant decision makers, for a period of 12 months.

Executive Scrutiny Committee was asked if they wished to continue to appoint a representative to the Working Group.

AGREED that no appointment be made to the working group at the present time, but updates be requested from Redcar & Cleveland Council.

ESC/42/25 Forward Plan

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

ESC/43/25 Chairs' Updates

ESC/44/25 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme

AGREED that the Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

Chair: