

PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 7 October 2024.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr John Coulson (sub Cllr Hugo Stratton), Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr David Reynard and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Sam Dixon, Haleem Ghafoor (Adults, Health and Wellbeing), Keith Matthews (CESC), and Michelle Gunn (CS).

Also in attendance: Emma Zenaj (Stockton Parent Carer Forum)

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Hugo Stratton.

PEO/28/24 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/29/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO/30/24 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/31/24 Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant

The Committee received the results of a survey conducted by the Stockton Parent Carer Forum regarding their members experience of applying for and receiving Disability Facilities Grants. The Forum supported over 2,000 families of children and young people aged 0 – 25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities, The questions in the survey included:

- Have you applied for a grant and was the application successful?
- If successful how was your experience from starting the application to the finished works?
- If you were unsuccessful, were you given advice and information as to other options?
- Are you happy with the work that was completed?
- What could be done to improve the DFG based on your personal experience?

The Co-Chair of the Forum noted that 19 responses had been received, and the key issues from these included:

- People did not feel they were being heard and understood, which was particularly important to meet their needs
- People were not given extra information if they did not receive a DFG
- The work being carried out was not always to a good standard, and there was a suggestion this was due to building costs increasing having an impact on budgets/quality

The survey highlighted that consistency and communication needed to be addressed in the delivery of DFG's.

Aftercare was discussed with members noting how important this was. Members questioned whether the work was checked after completion and informed that a technical officer visits the property to check the works were completed to standard and sign off the work in conjunction with the client.

It was questioned how parents and carers find out about DFG's, and whether the Forum promoted these. Members were informed that families were referred for a DFG by professionals e.g. social workers, but could also find out about the process by word of mouth and the Forum did circulate information on council services on a rota basis. It was further questioned whether receiving support in filling in the grant application would improve the success rate, and informed that officers did assist with applications.

Further information from one respondent regarding their experience was tabled. The respondent had received a DFG five years previously for a new garden fence and was happy with the process as well as the work that was carried out. It enabled the family to have full use of their outdoor space, without fear of injury, and gave them more privacy.

The Chair of the Committee thanked the Co-Chair of Stockton Parent Carer Forum for the survey.

The Committee also noted the services customer survey results from July – September 2024, which 24 people completed. The survey asked respondents to rate the following aspects of service on a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent:

- Standard of information & communication prior to works commencing
- Standard of communication & updates received throughout the works
- Appearance and conduct of staff
- Quality of works on completion
- Service overall

Most respondents rated all aspects as 10, with only one respondent rating slightly lower (8/9) on two aspects: information and communication prior to and throughout the works. All comments received were very positive, praising the professionalism of the workers and quality of their work. Two further comments that were received via other methods were shared with the survey results, and these were also positive noting the impact that these had on their lives.

AGREED that the information be noted.

PEO/32/24 Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough

The Committee considered a progress update including assessments of progress following implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough. This was the fourth time the update had been presented to the Committee, and there was one outstanding recommendation: recommendation 11 (lessons learnt from junior/toddlers play area at Preston Park to be used to inform future play provision designs), which was assessed as fully achieved.

It was noted that the Council would consult with the Stockton Parent Carer Forum on future play parks to ensure their accessibility and inclusivity. In addition, Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment would be carried out in future on any new Council schemes and strategies, which would ensure that consideration of disability inclusiveness was included in these.

Members raised the Scrutiny Review of Outdoor Play Provision that had recently been carried out by the Crime and Disorder Select Committee and asked that this report be given consideration when evaluating new play areas. Members also questioned how best value would be considered in the provision of play parks and were informed that there was a list of providers for equipment and a procurement process was being followed. During this process there would be an assessment on accessibility, and Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) would be consulted.

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

PEO/33/24 Chairs Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2024 - 2025

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next meeting would be held on Monday 4 November 2024.

It was noted that no further evidence was scheduled to be presented at the December meeting and it was suggested to bring the summary of evidence to that meeting and stand down the meeting in early January.

AGREED that the Work Programme be updated to reflect the changes agreed above.