

Date: Monday 4 November 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 7 October 2024 | (Pages 9 - 12) |
| 5 | Progress Update on Previously Agreed Recommendations - Review of Cost of Living Response | (Pages 13 - 28) |
| 6 | Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant | (Pages 29 - 36) |
| 7 | Chairs Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2024 - 205 | (Pages 37 - 38) |

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 Officer Michelle Gunn on email michelle.gunn@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

This page is intentionally left blank

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 at the front of the Library where a security code will be required to access them. Please ask a Member of Library staff for the security code.

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.

This page is intentionally left blank

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, Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Sam Dixon, Haleem Ghafoor (AHW), Keith Matthews (CSEC) 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 Disability 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 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.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 6

People Select Committee

4 November 2024

PROGRESS UPDATE ON PREVIOUSLY AGREED RECOMMENDATIONS – REVIEW OF COST OF LIVING RESPONSE

Summary

Members are asked to consider the evidence and assessments of progress contained within the attached Progress Update on the implementation of previously agreed recommendations in relation to the review Cost of Living Response (the Committee's final report can be accessed via the following link:

<https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/documents/s7128/Final%20Report%20-%20Scrutiny%20Review%20of%20Cost%20of%20Living%20Response.pdf>

Detail

1. Following the Cabinet consideration of scrutiny reports, accepted recommendations are then subject to a monitoring process to track their implementation.
2. Two main types of report are used. Initially this is by means of Action Plans detailing how services will be taking forward agreed recommendations. This is then followed by a Progress Update report approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan (unless requested earlier). Evidence is submitted by the relevant department together with an assessment of progress against all recommendations. Should members of the Select Committee agree, those recommendations which have reached an assessment of '1' are then signed-off as having been completed.
3. If any recommendations remain incomplete, or if the Select Committee does not agree with the view on progress, the Select Committee may ask for a further update.
4. The assessment of progress for each recommendation should be categorised as follows:

1	Achieved (Fully)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has been fully implemented within the timescale specified.
2	On Track (but not yet due for completion)	The evidence provided shows that implementation of the recommendation is on track but the timescale specified has not expired.
3	Slipped	The evidence shows that progress on implementation has slipped. An anticipated date by which the recommendation is expected to become achieved should be advised and the reasons for the delay.
4	Not Achieved	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has not been fully achieved. An explanation for non achievement of the recommendation would be provided.

5. To further strengthen the monitoring process, from August 2020, the Progress Update report will also include references on the evidence of impact for each recommendation.
6. For Progress Update reports following the completion of a review, the relevant Link Officer(s) will be in attendance.
7. **Appendix 1** (Review of Cost of Living Response) sets out the outstanding recommendations for this Committee. Members are asked to review the update and indicate whether they agree with the assessments of progress.

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn
Post Title: Scrutiny Officer
Telephone No: 01642 524987
Email Address: michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Cost of Living Response
Link Officer/s:	Haleem Ghafoor
Action Plan Agreed:	May 2024

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 1:	That findings from this review will inform the development of the Council’s Anti-Poverty Action Plan/Strategy as part of the ‘Powering Our Futures’ programme. This will be coordinated with partners and will advocate the importance of lived experience.
Responsibility:	A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) Team/ Anti-Poverty Project Group
Date:	April 2024
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from this review shared with Anti-Poverty Project Group and included in Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. This work forms part of the ‘Powering Our Futures Programme’ under the ‘Communities’ Mission strand. (April 2024) • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan to be presented to Lived Experience Group for comment and consultation. (April 2024) • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan to be presented to Cabinet for approval in September 2024. (September 2024) • Implementation of Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and continuing dialogue with Anti-Poverty Project Group and Lived Experience Group. (Ongoing)
Agreed Success Measure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Poverty Project Group received findings from scrutiny review and findings included in Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan approved by Lived Experience Group. • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan approved by Cabinet. • Ongoing conversations with Anti-Poverty Project Group and Lived Experience Group to ensure Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan is fulfilling aims.


APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

<p>Evidence of Progress (November 2024):</p>	<p>The findings from this review have been presented to both the Anti-Poverty Strategy Project Group and Lived Experience Group (now titled the 'Positive Living Forum') and incorporated into the Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>The project group and Positive Living Forum received draft versions of the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and provided feedback.</p> <p>The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan were approved by Cabinet in July 2024 and are a key component of the Council's Powering Our Futures Communities Mission.</p> <p>The Strategy 2024 to 2027 can be accessed here: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/15890/Foreword</p> <p>The Action Plan can be accessed here: https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/documents/s8168/Action%20Plan.pdf</p> <p>A two-page 'easy read' version of the strategy has also been developed.</p> <div data-bbox="608 920 1254 1368" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> </div>
<p>Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>2 – On-Track</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact (November 2024):</p>	<p>Following Cabinet approval, an Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group has been created and the findings from this review have been included in action plan discussions. Smaller project groups have been devised to focus on specific areas of the action plan.</p> <p>The Strategy and Action Plan have also influenced and been incorporated into the Council Plan 2024-2028.</p> <p>The Positive Living Forum (co-ordinated by the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Team) continue to meet regularly and provide feedback on the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan. Most recently, the Forum visited the new Health and Wellbeing Hub in Wellington Square,</p>

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

	<p>Stockton Town Centre, for a tour and discussed the future direction of the Forum. The Council and the Positive Living Forum have recently won a Resolve Poverty for 'Lived experience engagement' in recognition that the Forum has 'directly shaped your (our) anti-poverty strategy'.</p>
	

Recommendation 2:	That the Council continues to work with schools and governors to address the issues around the affordability of school uniform and provide options to expand the provision of pre-loved uniforms are explored, through devising an action plan clearly outlining the steps to be taken to address these issues. The action plan will be shared with the Committee and progress reported as part of the wider recommendations. In addition, the Council will meet with Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones
Responsibility:	Haleem Ghafoor/ Rebecca Saunders-Thompson/ Vanessa Housley
Date:	April/May 2024 – May 2025
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Officers to develop action plan. (April/May 2024) • Action plan to be approved by People Select Committee. (May 2024) • Action plan to be carried out and progress reported to People Select Committee until completion. (May 2025)
Agreed Measure:	<p style="text-align: center;">Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan created. • Action plan approved. • Updates on progress and completion of action plan.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	A School Uniform Action Plan was agreed by the People Select Committee in May 2024.

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Please see below for progress on specific school uniform actions.

Recommendation 3:	That the income maximisation service is widely promoted through Stockton News and social media channels as a means of assisting residents with debt management and financial difficulties.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team/ Communications Team/ Revenues, Benefits and Welfare team/ SDAIS and Moneywise (delivery)
Date:	December 2024 – May 2025
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This area of work is covered by the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. (May 2025/Ongoing) Pension Credit advice and support drop-in sessions to be held in Community Spaces across the Borough.(December 2024) Continued partnership working on debt management and financial support advice services with Stockton District Information and Advice Service (SDAIS) and Moneywise (Tees Credit Union). (Ongoing)
Agreed Success Measure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Action Plan will be delivered as above (recommendation 1). Increase in residents accessing pension credit advice and support with applying for pension credits. Residents continue to be supported and access debt management and financial support services.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>Five Pension Credit Awareness Sessions have taken place in June 2024. The selected venues were: Stillington Village Hall, Thornaby Warm Welcome, West End Bowling Club, Ingleby Barwick Friendship Café, and Challoner House. There was greater engagement with the sessions at some venues, such as West End Bowling Club, who stated they would welcome another session. Other venues, such as Stillington Town Hall, stated that the single session was sufficient for their group/residents. Over 50 residents engaged with these sessions.</p> <p>Further Pension Credit drop-in sessions are to be held in November 2024 (venues to be confirmed).</p> <p>Officers from the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) Team attend Infinity Partnership meetings and work with external partners to ensure residents receive accurate and relevant advice and</p>



APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

	<p>support. For example, FSOT officers have committed to work with Stockton District Information and Advice Service and Northumbrian Water to assist residents with water arrears and make them aware of support available to reduce water bills.</p> <p>An article on the latest 'Here to Help' booklet will feature in the November 2024 edition of Stockton News and plans is currently underway for an income maximisation scheme, known as Money Angels', to be developed across the Borough. Further details will be provided in future updates.</p>
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	<p>Positive feedback from the Pension Credit sessions included the following example:</p> <p><i>“Just wanted to say a huge thank you for organising for Janet to attend our cafe yesterday. She was so lovely and I know a number of people talked with her. She fitted in beautifully. I would appreciate it if you would pass on our thanks and appreciation to her. She enjoyed the session herself so you are always all very welcome to come and join in with us. God bless you all.”</i></p>
Recommendation 4:	That, building on the success of previous staff drop-in sessions around Cost of Living this targeted approach continues where there is a need.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team
Date:	May 2024 / May 2025
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSOT Team stall at the Employee Engagement Day on 15th May 2024. (May 2024) • Staff drop-in sessions to be arranged across a range of services/workplaces. (May 2025/Ongoing)
Agreed Success Measure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff provided with Cost of Living advice and support. • Staff provided with targeted support and advice on Cost of Living issues
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	The FSOT took part in the Employee Engagement Day on 15 th May 2024 and provided a range of staff with cost of living support and advice. There was also an option for staff to submit feedback on our current cost of living support offer or request further advice following the event. The FSOT stall also included a school uniform donation point so staff could donate any unwanted uniform which was distributed at the Going for Gold Summer event.

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

	 <p>In addition, the FSOT team have been attending Community Services annual Employee Engagement days to provide information and advice on the cost of living. Events are being held at Billingham Forum and service areas which will be supported are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways and Street Lighting (24th September 2024) • HVE (8th & 15th October 2024) • Refuse and Recycling (4th & 11th November 2024) • Street Cleansing (19th November 2024) • Grounds Maintenance (26th November 2024) 
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	The Fairer Stockton-on-Tees staff have engaged with staff from across the Council and provided advice and support on areas such as payroll saving schemes and debt support services. Council staff have also been provided with Cost of Living 'Here to Help' booklets and up-to-date foodbanks, pantries and The Bread and Butter Thing leaflets.
Recommendation 5:	That, building on the existing success of the work undertaken, to continue to build on best practice from across the country working alongside the LGA.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to attend LGA Cost of Living Network. Consultation with LGA and other Council representatives, when developing projects and strategies, as appropriate. Consultation of evidence-based research when developing projects and strategies, as appropriate. For example from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Children North East Poverty Proofing <p><i>(For information – Manchester City Council have already been consulted during the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.)</i></p>
Agreed Measure:	Success Future strategies and projects will be enhanced by continued engagement with the wider public sector.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>The FSOT team continue to attend a range of events, webinars and training relating to poverty and the cost of living.</p> <p>The FSOT Team continue to work with other Local Authorities and relevant external partners on projects. Most recently, there has been ongoing consultation with other Local Authorities, Policy in Practice and the North East Child Poverty Commission throughout the Free School Meals Auto-enrolment project.</p>
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Discussions with neighbouring Local Authorities have directly influenced the delivery of the Free School Meals Auto-Enrolment project. For example, the key information to include in letters to parents/carers to inform them that their child/children may be eligible for free school meals.

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
---	----------------------------	----------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

APPENDIX 1
PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

School Uniform Action Plan Progress

Agreed Action:	Conduct research on school uniform policies to compare with previous research undertaken in 2020.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson
Date:	August/ September 2024
Agreed Measure:	Success Research will provide information on changes in school uniform policies across the Borough. This will inform a targeted approach to promote best practice schools and support schools to make uniform policies more affordable.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	Research on school uniform policies has been completed.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	1 – Fully Achieved
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	The findings from this research has been presented to Stockton’s Child Poverty Network in October 2024. This research will assist with the promotion of best practice and the targeted correspondence with schools to encourage a wider affordability of school uniform.

Agreed Action:	Building on existing research (conducted by Clare Branson, Catalyst), undertake mapping exercise of pre-loved uniform availability across the Borough.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson/ Emma Chudley/John Paul Stabler
Date:	August/September 2024
Agreed Measure:	Success Information on pre-loved school uniform to be updated on Council website to provide more support
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	At present, current information on pre-loved school uniform has been updated on the Council website. More information will be added following a redesign of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees ‘Here to Help’ and Community Engagement webpages on the Council’s website. This is currently in the planning stages and uniform support has been included in this project.

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

	FSOT officers are also working with officers from Citizens Advice Stockton to map the current provision of pre-loved uniform.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Current up to date information on a range of school uniform support is accessible via the following page of the Council website: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/school-uniform-support

Agreed Action:	Explore alternative projects to be delivered across the Borough to support families to access school uniform provision.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson
Date:	May 2025
Agreed Measure: Success	Potential increase in families accessing support with school uniform costs.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	This issue has been raised at the Child Poverty Network which was launched in July 2024 and brings together Council officers and key partners in the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector. It has been agreed that this will be one of the Network's key priorities.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	FSOT officers are currently working with members of the Child Poverty Network to explore options to provide pre-loved school uniform outside of school settings. Further information will be provided in a future update.

Agreed Action:	Correspondence sent to Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads and Boards of Governors for all schools to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson/ Vanessa Housley
Date:	July/September 2024
Agreed Measure: Success	Support and feedback which details positive action received. Schools increase availability of pre-loved uniform and access to more affordable school uniform.

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

	Schools increase co-location of pre-loved school uniforms across different venues to increase accessibility for parents/carers.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	Correspondence will be sent in November 2024 due to the need to incorporate feedback from a Child Poverty Network workshop (24 th October) and feedback from a school uniform survey conducted by Stockton Citizen's Advice Service (expected early-mid November). The uniform survey is of particular importance because it has been completed by parents/carers and schools, so it will provide the most up to date indicator of the key issues surrounding school uniform costs.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	3 – Slipped (see above for explanation and revised deadline)
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	N/A

Action Agreed:	Attend Closing the Gap, Personal Development Network and other relevant meetings to provide an update on scrutiny review and gather feedback.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team
Date:	December 2024
Agreed Measure: Success	<p>Senior school staff provided with recommendations from the review and encouraged to re-evaluate school uniform policies to increase affordability.</p> <p>Council Officers to receive feedback from schools on policies and procedures for children/families experiencing financial difficulties.</p> <p>Feedback will also assist with mapping exercise for pre-loved uniform promotion.</p>
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	FSOT Officers have attended Primary and Secondary Personal Development Network meetings in the Summer term of 2024 and are due to attend a Closing the Gap meeting on 30 th January 2025.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Pastoral leads have received information on the school uniform action plan and have been encouraged to engage with pre-

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review


	loved uniform collections and promotion as part of the Going for Gold event planning.
--	---

Agreed Action:	Continued promotion of pre-loved school uniform including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School and academy websites - Newsletters (eg Cost of Living Newsletter) - Keeping You in Touch (KYIT) - SBC staff drop-in sessions - Stockton News - Via Community Spaces network - Via The Bread and Butter Hubs - Child Poverty Project Group events - Via Stockton Food Power Network (food pantries and foodbanks) - Family Hubs - Relevant events Social media channels
Responsibility:	FSOT Team (coordination and delivery) Emma Chudley/John Paul Stabler (delivery)
Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Measure: Success	Increased awareness and uptake of pre-loved school uniform.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	The FSOT team continue to work with the Communications team to promote and support pre-loved school uniform projects as outlined in the agreed actions section above. For example, as part of the Going for Gold event, a communications plan was created to request donations of pre-loved uniform and promote the 'eco shop' where pre-love uniform could be obtained at the event. This included social media posts, KYIT articles, articles in relevant newsletters and promotion at other events.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Support from the Council's Communication team has been significantly valuable in promoting the availability of pre-loved uniform to the Borough's residents and to support and increased uptake.

Agreed Action:	Free pre-loved school uniform shop at the Summer Here to Help event, July 2024
Responsibility:	FSOT Team


APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

Date:	July 2024
Agreed Measure:	Success Residents provided with free school uniform
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>The preloved school uniform 'Eco Shop' was very popular and gave parents the opportunity to stock up on uniform basics and branded items in preparation for the new school year in September. Uniforms were provided by Council staff and residents from across the Borough at collection points in SBC buildings, Tees Active, Family Hubs and libraries. A donation of £250 worth of new uniforms from Core Highways was also received and parents were so pleased to be able to take a new set of shirts or a new pair of trousers.</p> 
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	1 – Fully Achieved
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	<p>Around 300 items of preloved uniforms were given out to parents and around 150 brand new items from the Core Highways donations and other donations of new uniform from the public.</p> <p>People praised the recycling element, branding it as an Eco Shop and promoting the recycling element seemed to reduce the stigma around preloved clothing.</p> <p>Feedback included: <i>"It is great to be able to come out on hot day and we managed to get uniform for all of my kids from the Eco shop."</i> <i>"I can't believe you have these fleeces from my son's school. These fleeces cost over £25 to buy! I have never been able to afford one for my son, it was a luxury item. Thank you so much for allowing us to take one, now my son can fit in with the rest of the kids at school. He is over the moon, just look at his face he's buzzing! What a fantastic idea, this is really needed."</i></p>

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

Agreed Action:	Free pre-loved school uniform stall at relevant staff and community events
Responsibility:	FSOT Team
Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Success Measure:	Residents provided with free school uniform
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>A family orientated event was held on 9th August 2024, to celebrate the refurbishment of Victoria Hall and Victoria Park and to provide fun physical, social and enrichment activities during the school holidays. As part of this event, the FSOT/Community Engagement stall provided free preloved school uniform.</p> 
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	<p>Over 100 families attended the Victoria Park event on 9th August and had access to free pre-loved uniform.</p> <p>Surplus uniform from July's Going for Gold event was collected by Thirteen and Family Action to distribute in communities. This also helped to promote the recycling of clothing and reduce the number of items sent to landfill.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

Summary

The fifth (and final) evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Disabled Facilities Grant will consider the feedback and suggestions from Foundations following their visit to the DFG service in September 2024. Officers will also feedback from the conversations held with Thirteen regarding adaptations in their properties.

Detail

1. As previously raised at Committee meetings, discussions were being held in September between the Assistant Director of Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees, Service Lead for Housing Investment & Migration Support, and Thirteen regarding the installation of adaptations for their tenants. The Committee had requested the Assistant Director to attend the meeting, and therefore she will be in attendance to feedback from the conversation.
2. In September 2024, Foundations, the national body that supports the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Improvement Agencies in England, visited SBC's DFG team to assess the delivery of DFG's against their best practice guidance. Their feedback from this visit is attached for consideration at the meeting.
3. In addition, details of customer satisfaction feedback from April – September 2024 are attached.
4. A copy of the agreed scope and plan for this review is also included for information.

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn

Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

Telephone No: 01642 524987

Email Address: michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

People Select Committee DFG Customer Feedback

4th November 2024

The information below is from feedback from customers who have had an adaptation installed between April to Sept 2024. 52 Completed, 19 did not return the survey.

Month	Standard of information & communication prior to works commencing	Standard of communication & updates received throughout the works	Appearance and conduct of staff	Standard of workmanship	Quality of works on completion	Service overall	Did staff present identification	Comments
Apr-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Outstanding workmanship, awesome work man, first rate.
Apr-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Apr-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Apr-24	8	7	8	8	9	8	Yes	All good.
Apr-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	
Apr-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Apr-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Apr-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	All the boys were great, and my finished bathroom is fantastic. Thank you.xx
Apr-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Apr-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Work was done by a great crew, very polite and friendly. Well done to your men. Also cleaned and very respectful.
May-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	
May-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	If I could recommend them then I would. Can't praise them enough. Excellent work and I'm extremely happy.
May-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
May-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Very friendly and very clean! Cleaned up every day. Accommodating of adjustment we wanted to make. Amazing guys!
May-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
May-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
May-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Very pleased with work.
May-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
May-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Every workman that came to my house were friendly and professional. The one lad who worked through the whole job (Mark), was fantastic, very helpful and kept me up to date on everything.
May-24	9	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	
Jun-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	They are good squad of men. Am over the moon with all done and so friendly.
Jun-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	All were 100%
Jun-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Would like to say thank ou to everyone who help put my new bathroom in. Really friendly and helpful.
Jun-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Excellent lads, really. Pleasure to have them.
Jun-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned

Cont...

Month	Standard of information & communication prior to works commencing	Standard of communication & updates received throughout the works	Appearance and conduct of staff	Standard of workmanship	Quality of works on completion	Service overall	Did staff present identification	Comments
Jun-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Also received telephone call from customer to say a huge thank you to the whole team of all of our efforts and to let us know what a difference this has made to her life. She felt at ease during the works as the lads made her feel part of the process, kept her informed, were polite, friendly and approachable. She is delighted with the look of her new bathroom.
Jul-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Very professional, very approachable. Couldn't ask for a better service. Thank you so much for improving my family's quality of life!
Jul-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Staff worked well and easy to talk to. They've done a great job.
Jul-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	There have done a great job. I am over the moon about it.
Jul-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Workmen were excellent, respectful, kind, always cleaned up after themselves too. Lovely bunch of workmen you would want to do work in your home anytime.
Jul-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	The lads were absolutely excellent in every aspect.
Jul-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Jul-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Jul-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Jul-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Jul-24	8	9	10	10	10	10	Yes	
Jul-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	
Aug-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Aug-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned but feedback during handover was 'they were brilliant' (email from G Hawkins 16/08/2024)
Aug-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	I found the two employees you sent here were very professional, well mannered and a great asset to your company. Many thanks.
Aug-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	
Aug-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Aug-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Fantastic people, brilliant workmen. Thank you so very much.
Aug-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Liam explained what he was going to do each day, all the lads were brilliant, nothing was too much trouble for them, asking if there was anything else.
Sep-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Polite, respectful, tidy.
Sep-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Sep-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	
Sep-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	survey not returned
Sep-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Excellent workmanship, very polite and job done to excellent standard.
Sep-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	The bathroom looks gorgeous. The lads were very professional, lovely to speak to, listened to what you wanted. An excellent job by all involved.
Sep-24								Not yet returned.
Sep-24	10	10	10	10	10	10	Yes	Excellent service

People Select Committee

Foundations Review Feedback

4th November 2024

Foundations Recommendations

The following recommendations from Foundations are based on the information gathered during the workshop session with the Housing Investment team:

- **Improved information from occupational therapists:** Review current referral forms used by the occupational therapy team to ensure it captures all relevant information to be able to make a decision on eligible works.
- **Improved Information for Applicants:** There is a need to ensure that potential applicants receive comprehensive information, particularly regarding the test of resources and the overall process, to support informed decision-making.
- **Tracking and Communication During Waiting Period:** A system to keep applicants informed of their position on the waiting list and check if their circumstances have changed during the wait should be introduced, helping to manage expectations and mitigate delays.
- **Consideration of occupational therapy Review Necessity:** Review with the occupational therapy team whether all cases need to be signed off by an occupational therapist could help streamline the process, particularly for straightforward adaptations that are unlikely to be changed.
- **Better Use of Technical Officer Time:** Tasks such as financial assessments and asbestos checks could be re-evaluated to ensure the technical officer's time is used more effectively, given their significant workload.
- **Increase Technical Officer Capacity:** Currently, there is only one technical officer, which limits the volume of work that can be processed. Increasing capacity would improve service efficiency and reduce delays.
- **Streamline Contractor Quote Process:** The requirement for three quotes rather than two could be reconsidered to reduce delays, which currently add up to a month to the process.
- During the workshop, the team explored ways to improve the customer experience throughout the DFG process. Several key recommendations were proposed, focusing on improving communication, support, and the overall customer journey. These suggestions aim to make the process more accessible and user-friendly while reducing delays and enhancing transparency.

First Contact

- **Review and improve the council's website:** The information available online should be updated and expanded to give residents a clearer understanding of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and the process involved. This would help set expectations and provide essential details upfront.
- **Widen promotion of the service**:** Consider increasing outreach efforts to make more residents aware of the DFG. For example, promoting the service in GP surgeries or other community spaces could help engage those who may benefit from adaptations but are currently unaware of the available support.

Assessment

- **Provide clear and honest information:** At the assessment stage, consistent information regarding necessary and appropriate adaptations and realistic waiting times should be provided. Transparency about these factors will help manage customer expectations and reduce confusion or frustration later in the process.

Compile the Application

- **Enhanced support for applicants:** It was suggested that an enhanced offer be provided to support residents with the application process. This could include more hands-on guidance and assistance to ensure that applications are completed accurately and efficiently.
- **Allow electronic document uploads:** To streamline the process, applicants should be allowed to upload required documents electronically. This would help reduce paperwork delays and allow for quicker processing.
- **Remove means test for smaller adaptations:** To speed up the process, it was suggested that the means test for adaptations below £5,000 be removed. This would simplify the approval process for smaller projects and ensure quicker delivery of adaptations.

Approval

- **Inform applicants about potential wait times:** After the grant approval, there could still be a wait before the installation of adaptations begins. Applicants should be informed of this upfront to avoid any misunderstandings.
- **Provide a courtesy call after approval:** A follow-up call should be made to explain the next steps in the process, ensuring that the applicant is fully informed and comfortable with the timeline and expectations.

Carry Out Work

- **Client liaison officer role:** Consider introducing a client liaison officer who can keep applicants informed about the start dates of their works and any changes to the schedule. This role would help maintain clear communication throughout the installation process.
- **Extend choice of materials:** When carrying out adaptations, particularly bathroom installations, applicants should be offered a wider choice of materials, such as colours for tiles and fixtures, to allow for more personalised adaptations.
- **Conduct a post-completion visit:** After the works are completed, a visit should be arranged to go through the handover pack with the applicant, ensuring they understand how to use any new equipment and addressing any final questions or concerns.

Conclusion

The Stockton-On-Tees Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) workshop highlighted the Adaptations Team's commitment to supporting residents in Stockton-On-Tees-On-Tees-on-Tees. The team has faced challenges due to recruitment issues and staff sickness. However, the recent recruitment of an experienced DFG Manager brings valuable expertise that will support the team during a period of increasing demand.

The workshop demonstrated the team's strengths, including strong collaboration with social care, an effective fast-track process for stairlifts and ramps, and a focus on customer satisfaction. Opportunities for improvement were identified, such as enhancing communication with applicants during the waiting period and ensuring detailed information is provided for complex cases. Reviewing

staffing levels and streamlining processes, such as reducing the number of required quotes, could also improve efficiency.

Overall, the team's dedication to delivering high-quality service is evident. Implementing the workshop's recommendations will further improve efficiency, enhance communication, and ensure a smoother experience for residents receiving DFG support.



This page is intentionally left blank

People Select Committee – Work Programme 2024- 2025

Date (<u>4pm unless stated</u>)	Topic	Attendance
Monday 8 April 2024	<p>Monitoring: Initial Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Home Energy Efficiency and Green Jobs for the Future</p> <p>Monitoring: Progress Update – Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough</p>	<p>Neil Mitchell/Julie Marsden</p> <p>Jane Webb / Margie Stewart-Piercy</p>
Monday 13 May 2024	<p>Monitoring: Action Plan Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response</p> <p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Draft) Scope and Project Plan • Background Presentation 	<p>Haleem Ghafoor/Margie Stewart-Piercy</p> <p>Sam Dixon</p>
Monday 3 June 2024	<p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering – SBC Policy and Government guidance for Local Authorities 	Sam Dixon
Monday 8 July 2024	<p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering – regional and national comparisons 	Sam Dixon / Rachel Russell, Foundations
Monday 2 September 2024	<p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering – SBC Occupational Therapy and Buildings Services Processes 	Sam Dixon / Kris Saltikov / Chris Donnison
Monday 7 October 2024	<p>Monitoring: Progress Update – Scrutiny Review of Disability Inclusive Borough</p> <p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering – Customer Feedback 	<p>Haleem Ghafoor</p> <p>Sam Dixon / Parent & Carer Forum</p>

People Select Committee – Work Programme 2024- 2025

Date (4pm unless stated)	Topic	Attendance
Monday 4 November 2024	Monitoring: Progress Update – Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence Gathering – update from Foundations visit & Thirteen Conversations 	Haleem Ghafoor Sam Dixon / Jane Edmends
Tuesday 2 December 2024 (Informal)	Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Evidence / Draft Recommendations 	Sam Dixon
Monday 3 February 2025	Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Draft) Final Report 	Pauline Beall/ Nigel Cooke/ Carolyn Nice/ Sam Dixon/ Jane Edmends
Monday 3 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	