

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 5th January 2026.

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

Officers: Vanessa Housley (Children's Services), Michelle Gunn, and Junita Agyapong (Corporate Services)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno

PEO/43/25 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/44/25 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Paul Weston wished it to be recorded for transparency purposes only that on item 5, Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision, he worked in the sector. However, he was not employed by any post 16 providers in the Borough or neighbouring boroughs.

PEO/45/25 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/46/25 Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision

A background presentation was received for the Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision from the review's link officer, Head of Service for Education and Inclusion, which included:

- Stockton's Post 16 Offer and 2025 Data for Provisional % A*- E and A*-B A level grades. This data was for those students who sat the exam only and did not include those who enrolled but dropped out of the course. It was noted that although the results were below the national average, both Stockton Sixth form and ETC had significant improvements in their students grades in 2025. Members requested that the data for the ETC be separated for Bede College and Stockton Riverside College.
- Post 16 Enrolment Data for 2024/5 and 2025/6. It was stressed that it was imperative that students attended the college/course that best suits their needs and talents, which may be out of Borough. However, in 2024/5 nearly 2,000 students were attending courses outside of the Borough which equated to £7million of funding. Members questioned the reasons for this and were informed that a survey of students had been carried out which would be shared with the Committee. Members requested data on the number of students from outside the Borough attending courses at the Borough five providers.

- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) data. While there was a separate review of NEET taking place, it had an impact on this review insofar as ensuring that the pathways for students were aligned as possible as they could be to their talents and ambitions to attempt to prevent them dropping out and becoming NEET. Members requested further information on socio-economic background of NEET.
- The Post 16 Partnership, which had been established for approximately one year to share best practice and work collectively to drive improvement within the sector. The partnership included head teachers, principals, and senior officers of the Council from careers service, school support, education, and economic development. Members expressed concern that the competitiveness between the providers to attract students would impact the effectiveness of the Partnership. Officers informed that there was evidence of a coherent collaborative approach by the providers. This included sharing strategies and teaching methods to achieve higher grades and working collectively to design and deliver master classes to each other.
- Relevant recommendations from the Appreciative Inquiry in Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment by Children and Young People (CYP) Select Committee. These were related to improving communication, extending the enrichment offer, strengthening understanding of career pathways, and strengthening transition arrangements. Senior officers were leading on each recommendation and were reporting to and being held account by different boards, including CYP Select Committee.

The Committee discussed the marketing of courses and the need to ensure that requirements and expectations were made clear to those enrolling to prevent students dropping out as a course was not right for them. Industry demand was also highlighted, and members requested data on how many students secured employment in their chosen industry after completing courses. Further information on both marketing and industry demand/employment would be shared during the review.

Careers advice given to school leavers was discussed, particularly for those young people who were unsure what path they wished to take. The Committee were informed that a Careers Leaders Network had been established to share effective practice, with leaders not only within the careers service and schools but also the Economic Development Team. The Economic Development Team were able to share with leaders information on needs from the industries and sectors within our Borough to communicate to young people as well as embed it within their curriculum.

Consideration was given to the draft scope and project plan for the review. The aim of the review would be to consider the current position, challenges, and proposed solutions in post 16 provision. The key lines of enquiry focussed on collaboration of stakeholders, careers advice available to school leavers, the promotion of courses and benefits and pastoral support offered by providers.

AGREED that the information be noted and draft scope and project plan of the review be approved.

PEO/47/25 Chairs' Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2025/26

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme.

AGREED the work programme be noted.

Chair: