Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday 22nd September 2026.

Present: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr John Coulson (sub for Cllr Lynn Hall), Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Hugo Stratton (sub for Cllr Tony Riordan) and Cllr Marilyn Surtees

Officers: Clare Harper, Neil Bramma, Ged Morton, Jonathan Nertney, Gemma Jackson, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods and Michelle Gunn

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall and Cllr Tony Riordan

ESC/26/26 Livestreaming

The Chair announced to those present that the meeting would be live streamed.

ESC/27/26 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

ESC/28/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

ESC/29/26 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting on 21 July 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ESC/30/26 Financial Update and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The Committee received a report summarising the Council's financial performance and projected position at the end of the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

The Council continued to face expanding and emerging cost increases and demand pressures, leading to greater costs and financial challenges. The Quarter 1 budgetary control position identified significant budget pressures across Council services, driven by a combination of increasing costs and continued demand for services. Based on activity to date and current intelligence, the most significant forecast pressures related to Children's Social Care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services, and Community Services.

A forecast overspend of £5.8m against the approved revenue budget for the current financial year was reported. It was noted that the projected overspend represented a

significant financial challenge which would need to be actively managed throughout the remainder of the year. Members were advised that work was underway across services to identify mitigating actions and opportunities to reduce the forecast overspend and improve financial performance. It was further noted that, should the forecast overspend materialise by the end of the financial year, it would result in a further call on earmarked reserves, reducing the resources available to support existing commitments and placing additional pressure on the Council's financial sustainability and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Committee was advised that the Council had developed a programme of transformation and savings through Phase 2 of the Powering Our Futures Programme (PoF) to help address the underlying budget gap and support long-term financial sustainability. It was reported that the budget report to Council in February had identified a budget gap of £6.7m for the current financial year and that savings of £5.3m had been identified to date, with work continuing across the Powering Our Futures Programme to identify the remaining savings.

It was highlighted that growing demand for Council services and increases in service delivery costs were continuing to place pressure on the budget for the current financial year and were likely to place additional strain on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, increasing the budget gap and the level of savings and efficiencies required in future years. Whilst it was acknowledged that these pressures were not unique to the Council and reflected challenges being experienced across the local government sector, it was noted that both local and national factors presented significant financial challenges. Maintaining financial sustainability would require continued focus on robust financial management, delivery of transformation plans and timely corrective action.

Key issues discussed were as follows:

- With regard to addressing the savings gap of £1.4m in 2026/27, Members were advised that outcome based PoF reviews were anticipated to generate further savings. This included the Environment, Leisure and Green Space review but there were other reviews in progress and further details would be provided after the meeting
- Members raised concerns about the income shortfall on recycling and extra collection costs. Officers highlighted that the Council was six months into the roll out and the data was being carefully examined to establish resident engagement and take up to forecast likely future demand for collection and establish the most efficient level of service. Consultants had been commissioned to help with that work. At this stage it was difficult for officers to be firm on timescales but further details of the work going on in the background would be provided to the Committee
- Regarding the overspend in SEND, Members asked what contingencies were in place if the expected grant funding was not received. Officers advised that the Government announcement was still awaited but budgets were currently assuming a 10% uplift which was in line with similar assumptions being made by other Councils. If the Government took a different approach, this would then be addressed as a risk in the MTFP. The Council had submitted its Local Area Reform Plan, and it was hoped that an announcement would be made in the next month or so. There was an override that still existed until March 2028, which meant that the Council would not have to account for it until the 1 April 2028
- Members queried the higher concessionary fare costs resulting from increased scheme charges set by the TVCA. Officers advised that the increase was a result

of the Council being notified of the charges after setting the budget. The Council had approached the TVCA to seek to align this in future years. Further details would be provided to the Committee of the percentage that each Local Authority funded
- The Committee noted that pressures arising from social care had been predicted over many years and hoped that the Government tackle the problem and establish a fairer funding system
- The Committee thanked officers for all their work in pulling together the report

AGREED that the report be noted and responses be provided to the queries set out above.

ESC/31/26 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Complaints Report 2025/26

The Committee received a report setting out the details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) annual review letter for 2025/26.

It was reported that 69 enquiries had been submitted to the Ombudsman during 2025/26 and that the Ombudsman had responded to 51 complaints, representing an increase from 30 complaints in the previous year.

Members were advised that seven complaints had met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman, which was a similar number to the eight investigations undertaken in 2024/25.

It was noted that all seven investigations had been upheld.

The Committee was informed that all recommendations made by the Ombudsman following the investigations had been accepted and implemented by the Council.

It was further reported that the Ombudsman had been satisfied that the Council had remedied three of the seven complaints prior to the Ombudsman's investigation.

Key issues discussed by Members were as follow:

- Members asked if there were recurring themes from upheld complaints and who was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations. Officers advised that an action plan was developed with the service area. Information Governance had oversight, but the actions are owned by the management team within the service area and all actions were monitored. Internal audit could also be involved if there was something of significant concern. Themes were considered throughout the complaints process and brought to the attention of the services
- The Committee highlighted that considering complaints was part of a healthy learning organisation and asked for assurances that lessons learned were being fed back into future performance and practice. Officers confirmed that once complaints were dealt with, time was taken to reflect on the lessons learned to ensure improvements were made

AGREED that the report be noted.

ESC/32/26 Forward Plan

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

ESC/33/26 Chairs' Updates

Members were provided with updates from the Chairs of each Select Committee.

AGREED that the Chairs' Updates be noted.

ESC/34/26 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

Chair: .....