

## PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 8 July 2024.

**Present:** Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Eileen Johnson and Cllr David Reynard.

**Officers:** Sam Dixon (AHW), Michelle Gunn (CS).

**Also in attendance:** Rachel Russell (Foundations).

**Apologies:** Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Hugo Stratton and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

### **PEO/18/24 Evacuation Procedure**

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

### **PEO/19/24 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **PEO/20/24 Minutes**

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **PEO/21/24 Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant**

The Committee received a presentation from the Senior Regional Advisor for Foundations, the national body that supports the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Improvement Agencies in England. The presentation covered:

- DFG Guidance Published in 2022
- Delta Data for age groups and tenure – comparison of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) with the region and England
- Timescales in the legislation
- The 5 stages of DFG
- Delta Data for delivery times – comparison of SBC with the region and England
- Delivery model – maturity of DFG delivery
- National trends also impacting on delivery in SBC
- Positives of SBC's delivery and DFG process
- Areas of Development for SBC

Key issues discussed included:

- It was noted that the Guidance published in 2022 not only outlined the statutory duties required by Local Authorities but also best practice in delivering DFGs.
- The Delta Data for 2022/23 was discussed, it was noted that 95% of Local Authorities returned their data and that these were self-assessments. The following comparisons were highlighted:
  - When compared against the regional and England averages, SBC

delivered significantly more DFG's for 0-17 year old age group. In addition, SBC delivered fewer DFG's to the 66+ age group than the regional and national average. It was noted that, due to their circumstances, those in younger age groups may have had more of an urgent need for adaptations in their home, however the needs of older people waiting for adaptations may change and subsequently require more social care interventions.

- There was an unusual trend for SBC with regards to tenure in that we had a higher than average Private Landlord uptake. There was no significant difference both regionally and nationally for other tenures i.e. owner occupiers and registered providers. It was stated that private rented landlords may be reluctant to apply for adaptations to their properties due to negative perceptions however SBC were bucking this trend.
- While the Delta Data on delivery times showed SBC was average nationally, SBC took longer both regionally and nationally at stage 2, compiling the application, and stage 4 carrying out the works. Members questioned the reasons for this, and informed that they had been several DFG's for extensions which took longer to complete. Stock and procurement processes were discussed, and it was noted that SBC had recently gone through a procurement process for suppliers of adaptations.
- Members were informed that there were no statutory timescale requirement for the person contacting the LA for adaptations receiving an assessment from an occupational therapist and/or the Home Improvement Agency helping with an application. There were, however, best practice guidance on timescales for each stage from first contact.
- Areas for development were discussed as follows:
  - The information on SBC website was considered to be basic, and it was noted that Foundations were due to roll out a standard template later in the year which could be duplicated. It was suggested that the link to Foundation toolkit for applying for a DFG could be placed on the website, while Plymouth and Coventry LA's were highlighted as best practice for their websites.
  - Further examination of stage 2 and stage 4 was required, however, Foundation suggested examples that could improve timescales included the use of electronic forms and frameworks for adaptations such as wet rooms.
  - Foundations suggested that SBC's Home Improvement Agency could be developed further to assist with moving, repairs, major adaptations, assistant technology and equipment.
  - Middlesbrough were highlighted as an example of best practice for the use of the Better Care Fund
- Foundations noted that the 2021 Adult Social Care Reform White Paper had indicated three public consultations were needed in regards to DFG's, on the means test, the upper limit and the allocation formula.
- Members questioned whether a person applying for a DFG had to use SBC services or could use their own contractor to speed up the timescales at stage 4. Officers informed that the applicant could organise for their own contractor to carry out the work but had to provide two quotes with the application and work could not start until the DFG had been approved.

The DFG 2023/24 End of Term report was noted and the overspend raised. Officers

explained that due to some DFG's being implemented over two years, funding that was allocated to that applicant is held back. Members also requested further detail on how many of the adaptations were carried out inhouse/by contractors and how long each took to carry out.

AGREED that:

- 1) the information be noted.
- 2) the further information be provided as requested.

**PEO/22/24 Chair's Update and Select Committee work Programme 2024-2025**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The next meeting would be held on Monday 2 September 2024.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.