

County Council – 17 March 2016

Outcomes of Overview and Scrutiny Work October – December 2015

Recommendation

- a) That County Council reflects on the outcomes and impact of overview and scrutiny over the three months from October to December 2015 and identifies areas of good practice, learning and opportunities for development that will continue to enhance the work and impact of scrutiny going forward.

Report of the Chairman of Corporate Review Committee

Background

1. This report provides an overview of scrutiny work that has been undertaken since October 2015, highlighting how the Select Committees have added value to the democratic process and addressed the priorities of the County Council and its partners. This period clearly illustrates how early involvement with Members improves outcomes and promotes good working relationships with external partners. Recent examples have included the work of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Working Group involving the Highways Agency and the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee Inquiry Day on Hearing Aids that involved numerous external organisations and a high level of public engagement.

Working Groups and Inquiry Days

2. In addition to full Select Committee work programmes, over the three month period between October and December 2015, focused, in-depth scrutiny took place on areas of high public interest in the form of working groups and inquiry days. These give the chance for Members to scrutinise a topic in high-detail, meet with County Council officers and external partners, such as the Police and local organisations, and take feedback directly from the public.
3. The cross-committee Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services Working Group continued its work into scrutinising the implementation of the Achieving Excellence for Mental Health, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Final Draft Strategy for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of Children and Young People. The October meetings of the Working Group focussed on communication with service users, how information is accessed and the range of access points and how these are promoted. These Working Group meetings allowed Members the opportunity to scrutinise this area in more depth and gain more detailed information with greater direct input from officers. The final report of the Working Group has been presented at the February meeting of the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. The report will be sent to the relevant Cabinet Members for an Executive Response before being taken to the Prosperous Staffordshire and Safe and Strong Communities Select Committees to inform a wider group of Members.

4. In October and November, the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee's Working Group held two inquiry sessions to consider the impact of heavy goods/commercial vehicles on roads in Staffordshire. These inquiry sessions were scheduled following the submission of two petitions to full Council in May 2015 demanding a weight restriction of 7.5 tonnes on the A515 and auxiliary roads between Stubby Lane, Draycott, through Yoxall and Kings Bromley to Wood End Lane. Local Parish Councils, schools and the Police and Fire and Rescue services gave their views and shared their experiences with the Working Group at the first Inquiry Day. Although the sessions focused on a localised issue, all Members submitted views about HGVs/HCVs in their areas to the Working Group in advance of the meeting to ensure a Staffordshire wide perspective. The second inquiry day then provided the opportunity for further evidence to be considered and for the Working Group to consider the potential options going forward and engaged County Council officers and external organisations such as Highways England and the Road Haulage Association. Both sessions attracted a high volume of public interest and were well attended by parish councils and local action group representatives. The inquiry days were also webcast and have attracted over 200 views. These inquiry days are an example of best practise and involved direct public engagement to have an impact on an issue raised by residents.
5. At a previous meeting, the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee considered the proposed hearing aid policy and consultation for the South Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and agreed that a public Working Group would be set up to consider a variety of views and to enable the Committee to make comment back to the South CCGs on the proposals. As this Working Group was being held, the CCGs decided to pause their consultation until this consideration took place. On 25 November, the Working Group held a Special Public Inquiry Day to scrutinise the proposals and views of the South Staffordshire Clinical Groups for the provision of Hearing Aids. To ensure a wide perspective to inform recommendations, representations were made by Action on Hearing Loss, ENT Consultants, National Community Hearing Association, British Society of Audiology, DEAFvibe and members of the public. This Inquiry Day attracted a large public attendance and the findings of this working group were considered at the January meeting of the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. This is another example of Members carrying out scrutiny on areas that the public feel strongly about and ensuring that members of the public are given the opportunity to feed into the work carried out on these areas. The CCG has now responded to the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee and are not now consulting on the proposed policy for hearing aids and will be undertaking a review of their prioritisation scheme.
6. The Corporate Review Committee's Working Group continued their consideration of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2016-2021. They interviewed a number of Cabinet Members and officers with budget responsibility in areas which it was felt had potentially the highest impact on the deliverability of the MTFS. The identified areas included the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS Trust, the Better Care Fund, Public Health and our engagement with Entrust. The final report of the Group was submitted to the Corporate Review Committee for approval and presented for consideration at the

Cabinet budget meeting in February. The work that this Working Group undertakes helps to make the annual budget and medium term financial planning processes open and transparent to the public. All County Councillors have a duty to look after the interests of local tax payers in the management of the Council's resources and this Working Group provides the opportunity for intensive investigation.

Corporate Review

7. The Committee met in October and received an update on progress to recommission the current contract for support for volunteering and the voluntary and social enterprise sector. Members expressed concern in offering one contract to one single strategic partner, as the voluntary sector landscape is diverse across the districts. Members also offered their views on the length of the contract and the need to ensure that the focus of the contract was clear. The Deputy Leader agreed to take on board the views of the Committee when developing the service specification. Members requested that they be further consulted with during the process and it was agreed that the draft service specification be brought back for further scrutiny prior to the contract being advertised for tender. Officers agreed to share examples of similar contracts that had been developed in other parts of the country, to provide context for Members. The Committee also received the Quarterly Performance Report. Members requested further scrutiny of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills to ascertain how the Council could influence higher standards and also reduce the skills gap for highly skilled jobs. The Chair of the Safe and Strong Select Committee and the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel agreed to meet to discuss how Members could be involved in future scrutiny of anti-social behaviour and burglaries. Further analysis of the data identified that there was no need for further work scrutiny in this area.
8. In November, the Committee were presented with the Quarter 2 Performance Report, which provides a way of scrutinising the Council's performance against the outcomes set by Cabinet. Following discussion around Members' concerns about the accessibility and connectivity for jobs, the Deputy Leader agreed to raise the potential of the Council acting as facilitators between companies and unemployed people with skills. The Committee felt that this was a key area and that further scrutiny of training and employment issues was needed with the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee has also considered this in their October meeting. Members queried the inclusion of schools in sickness absence data and it was agreed that the data would be reported with and without the inclusion of schools going forward. The Corporate Review Committee also considered a report on the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategic Capacity considering support to the voluntary sector and the Council's relationship with its commissioned services.

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee

9. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee have had frequent involvement in two of the Council's most high profile transformation projects to ensure that the Cabinet Members are held to account for the changes made to services and that the public are engaged in the processes. Members scrutinised and provided feedback on the Countryside Estate Review at various stages of the process. Members had previously considered all proposed options and had informed officers which options the Committee preferred. At the October meeting, Members were presented with the considered options after the results of the initial engagement process and a benchmarking exercise had been analysed, resulting in a number of options being discounted. After discussion with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport, the Committee felt they could not support all of the remaining options. Members recommended that greater clarity be provided on these finalised options to enable effective consultation with the public. The Cabinet Member took this recommendation on board and agreed to include an illustration of how each option could work in practice before formal consultation with the public commenced. It was agreed that the Committee would be consulted with further and were presented with the results of this consultation in January, before the Cabinet decision was taken.
10. The Libraries in a Connected Staffordshire project has been presented to Members on numerous occasions and is a clear example of positive pre-decision scrutiny. Select Committee Members had been consulted with before the proposals went out for formal public consultation and were pleased to see that public views from the consultation had been taken on board and proposals had been amended as a result. The Committee agreed to continue scrutiny on this topic and will be holding the Cabinet Member to account on how the changes have impacted on service users.
11. In December, the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee scrutinised the 'Sportshire Strategy and Major Events Evaluation'. Members were keen to see the effect of large national events such as Ironman on the county as a whole. The Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport assured the Committee that every effort would be made to ensure maximum benefits for small and medium sized businesses during these events; it was suggested that this could be in the form of sponsorship packages. Members stressed the importance of ensuring that figures used to highlight the success of events are robust. Members recommended that, for future events, a cost benefit analysis would provide transparency over the benefits gained for the County. The Committee championed resident's concerns and highlighted the difficulties the Ironman event had placed on communities close to the routes used, and suggested that the negative impact on local communities of Sportshire events should be acknowledged, and everything possible done to mitigate any negative impact for future events. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee will continue to scrutinise the Sportshire events and requested that evaluation reports be presented to the Committee following their conclusion.

12. The December meeting saw the close of the work the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee had completed around the Council's Infrastructure+ contract. A Working Group had been set up to consider the governance and report arrangements for the contract and made recommendations based on in-depth scrutiny and met to gain input from senior officers three times. The Working Group's recommendations ranged from asking officers to review the technical language used in customer feedback reports with a view to making it easier for customers to understand to asking officers to share more up-to-date information with Members. Members will continue to be involved in the on-going scrutiny of the contract and a scrutiny Member, who is not a member of the Committee, has been invited to sit on the Infrastructure+ Customer Satisfaction Outcome Group. Councillor John Francis has agreed to undertake this role. Members also scrutinised the progress and impact of the SEND reforms and made a number of suggestions relating to the importance of governor roles in supporting SEND in schools and the percentage of plans with a placement in a maintained mainstream school. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills agreed that there was an opportunity for further scrutiny of this and other similar reforms and the Committee asked for an assessment of progress made to be presented to Members in twelve month's time. Members were presented with the Pupil Premium Plus Policy and made a number of suggestions involving communication of this policy and the need to reinforce the role of the SEN governor in schools.

Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee

13. The Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee continued its in-depth scrutiny on the multi-agency work to address Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Members queried how the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Child Sexual Abuse Forum would be monitored and held to account. The intended monitoring process was outlined but it was agreed that the Committee would receive the current action plan. Members discussed the impact of missing children on CSE; they were informed that all children that had gone missing were accounted for and, subsequently, more information on the length of time children have been missing for would be provided. The Committee has initiated considerable progress in reforms to licensing practice in Staffordshire. However, the Committee has raised concerns about the low level of enforcement relating to CSE and taxi licensing. Each local authority has a different approach to this issue, officers agreed that concerns regarding the level of enforcement had not been raised before and the Committee's feedback would be fed into the Stoke and Staffordshire Responsible Bodies Group. To aid further in-depth scrutiny Members requested the CSE risk matrix and the outcomes of consultation reviewing CSE Panels. The Committee also received a presentation on 'Commissioning for better outcomes for children, young people and families' and discussed the case for change. Members welcomed suggestions regarding greater working together and it was agreed that further scrutiny would take place in six month's time.

14. In November, the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee received 2014-15 Customer Feedback and Complaints Annual Reports for both Adult Social Care and Children's Social Services. Members made a series of

recommendations and requested more detail in the reports for the number of complaints partially upheld and queried why there were a higher proportion of complaints in the Newcastle and Stafford areas. Members agreed to carry out more in depth scrutiny on the use of Care Director by Adult Services and requested that the Committee receive regular updates regarding complaints. It was agreed that the relevant Head of Service would be invited to attend a Committee meeting to aid this scrutiny and to discuss work undertaken to address any issues identified from complaints and the learning taken forward. This has been included on the Select Committee's work programme for further consideration. The Committee raised concerns regarding the number of people not receiving an official response letter within the required time frame, and asked that this be taken forward with the appropriate officers. Members undertook scrutiny on the 'Impact of re-commissioning drug and alcohol services on children's services'; they welcomed the progress that had been made in streamlining drug and alcohol services into one service and asked to see further information on the impact this had on performance. It was agreed that the 'whole family' approach would be considered by the Low Level Neglect Working Group. The Committee received the 'Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) Annual Report 2014/2015'. Members requested further information regarding the changes to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and asked for written examples of case studies together with the "Risk Matrix" applied to determine levels of risk, for further scrutiny.

15. The Committee was presented with the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) Annual Report 2014/15 at their December meeting. Committee Members expressed a concern regarding the lack of registered children's domiciliary care providers and requested that the Commissioner for Safety, Children and Families discuss this with colleagues and feed back to the Committee for further scrutiny. The Committee asked for further information to be made available including a breakdown of child death figures over the last five years and the adoption process when Foster Carers wish to adopt the children that they are caring for. The Committee agreed to scrutinise this again in twelve month's time. The December meeting also provided the opportunity for the Safe and Strong Select Committee to scrutinise front-line topics such as the Quality of Care in Adult Residential Care Homes and Domestic Homicides. Members raised suggestions around the impact changes were having on services and requested information that evidences if any progress is being made against action plans.

Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee

16. The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee continued its in-depth scrutiny of the local NHS and partnership trusts and held four accountability sessions during this period. These sessions give Members of the Committee, District and Borough Members and the public the opportunity to question senior managers and ensure that detailed information of the Trusts' progress is publically available through self-assessment reports and the views expressed by the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch Staffordshire, CCGs and the commissioners of services.

17. In October, the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust was held to account at a Joint Health Scrutiny session. Members asked questions in relation to areas such as following up on the root cause of falls, staffing levels and the provision of Child and Adult Mental Health Services. The Committee made specific recommendations asking that the Trust categorise complaints reporting and also provide a response to issues highlighted by Healthwatch. The Trust also agreed to keep the Committee updated in relation to the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit programme. In November, an accountability session took place to scrutinise the West Midlands Ambulance Services NHS Foundation Trust. Members of the public were active at this meeting and Members and the public were informed that, overall and from a national perspective, the West Midlands Ambulance Service was the top performing service and that all national emergency access targets had been met.
18. An accountability session was held in November for the Burton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust with scrutiny taking place on areas such as the Trust's relationship with Virgin Care, staff sickness and the Trust's strategic plan take to address their financial deficit and the impact that being placed under Special Measures had had overall. The Committee made a series of recommendations on the back of the debates held and suggested that the Trust provide a detailed response to the points raised by the CQC, categorise complaints in future reports to include the specific areas concerned and provide information on the current car parking situation and a revised SHIMI (in full) activity chart to Members. The December accountability session was held to scrutinise the South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Questions from Members and members of the public queried the impact that returning military personnel to Whittington Barracks would have on services and the support given to the personnel. The Committee also questioned the financial position that had been reported and asked the Trust to explain what steps they had taken that had improved the situation.
19. The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee met in November and considered the 'Living My Life My Way' - Strategy for Disabled People, which updated the All-Age Disability Strategy for 2016 to 2020. It was agreed that the Committee would be fully engaged in the refresh so that their views and those of the residents of Staffordshire would be incorporated in the new strategy, which will be brought back to the Committee before implementation. The Committee also received an update from Healthwatch Staffordshire. Members questioned contract management and whether the Council received value for money and raised the issue of the lack of information in the public domain.
20. Members of the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee continued their scrutiny of the Independent Futures programme, one of the Council's key priorities. Members questioned the Cabinet Member on a range of aspects of the Strategy including Community First, the direct payment scheme, care in the community, sickness levels, finance, complaints and transition arrangements. The Committee resolved to continue to monitor and challenge the All Age Disability Strategy, including Independent Futures.

Looking Ahead

21. It is clear that each of the Select Committees have continued a full work programme of activity with positive, effective outcomes, aided by the ongoing engagement with the Cabinet Members on service reviews and developments.
22. Committee Work Programmes focus on the Council's Commissioning Plans and there are opportunities to support the Council to achieve these plans through robust and proactive pre-decision scrutiny. As the Council reaffirms its key priorities for the year ahead Corporate Review and the other Select Committees will need to consider the extent to which these priorities are reflected in select committee work programmes.
23. To be effective Select Committees need to continue to be:
 - Rigorous in identifying issues in a timely way for which it has a genuine opportunity to feed in new insight into the development of services for the communities of Staffordshire and for which it has the time and capacity to have an impact. Members are reminded of the existence of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions as a useful tool in identifying forthcoming decisions for which the Select Committees may have an interest in investigating further.
 - Consider wide ranging evidence, where appropriate, not solely relying on information presented by Directors but also evidence from the wider engagement of frontline staff, service users and the public to help inform the evidence base of scrutiny investigations. The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee continues to seek the views of commissioners, the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch Staffordshire in advance of Joint Health Accountability Sessions. This ensures that Members and the public are well equipped to scrutinise the performance of services with the supporting evidence to challenge the Trusts.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Select Committee work programmes have produced recommendations that have directly contributed to the Council's strategic priorities.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

This is a summary of the work programmes of all of the Select Committees from October to December 2015.

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