

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 January 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Layton (Chair), Baker, Beckett, Crudass, Holroyd, Johnson and Mrs Scott

ABSENT – Councillors Mahmud and Pease

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Roche

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Christine Shields (Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Margaret Enstone (Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

HH28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH29 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), requesting that consideration be given to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to consider the MTFP, in particular those services and finances within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 20 January 2025, for consideration.

It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation process. A briefing was delivered to Members on 11 December 2024.

The Assistant Director, Resources informed Members that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26. The key headlines were outlined, with Members noting that whilst the estimated income was circa. 2m better than expected for 2025/26, there still remained a number of pressures and uncertainties.

Members raised concerns regarding their ability to agree the MTFP given the changes following the draft financial settlement; Members were informed that the MTFP would be updated prior to Cabinet on 4 February 2025.

Discussion ensued regarding the impact of National Insurance contribution increases on health service providers, noting that all services providers would be impacted by this increase as there was no specific funding for this going forward. Members were informed that the Council would be reviewing the sustainability of provisions; and following a

suggestion by a Member for more in-house services, Members were informed that the Council regularly reviewed costs of in-house and external providers as part of the tender process. Members also noted the intentions of Housing Services to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation.

Reference was made to the income generated by the proposed increase in car parking tariffs which would support a range of other services. Members suggested that this be publicised more widely to help mitigate negativity surrounding the increase in the tariffs. Members entered into a discussion regarding the savings generated by the back office, in particular staff vacancies.

Clarification was sought regarding the funding for concessionary fares and Tees Valley Combined Authority funding. A number of suggestions were also raised, including the potential for a review of council tax banding, request for additional funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority for sustainable transport and increased residents permit parking charges and locations. Members were informed that a review of residential parking locations was due to be undertaken in the Spring.

RESOLVED – (a) That this Scrutiny Committee support the MTFP 2025/26 based on the information available at this meeting.

(b) That the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Special Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2025.

HH30 CLIMATE CHANGE

The Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Economy submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the revised briefing note for Scrutiny Committees drafted by the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer, in relation to the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

The submitted report stated that, following the Local Government elections in 2023, the Climate Emergency Declaration was re-affirmed, and the Council's carbon neutral target was brought forward to 2040. Further aims to increase engagement with residents and businesses were included with the intention of reducing wider borough emissions; and a further commitment to monitor the Council's supply chain of emissions was also added.

It was reported that a revised briefing note (also previously circulated) had been drafted by the Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer, reminding Members that tackling climate change was a shared responsibility; was deeply connected to other policy issues and local action was necessary for sustainable solutions; and that Scrutiny had a critical role to play in these cross-cutting issues.

It was also reported that climate change as a stand-alone issue sat within the remit of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, however everything that the Council did either had an impact on, or was impacted by, climate change, so it was important that all Scrutiny

Committees ensure that everything that came before them had considered this.

Members suggested that external organisations also be encouraged to include climate considerations in any updates provided to this committee.

RESOLVED – (a) That the advice and guidance provided by Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer in the revised briefing note be noted.

(b) That the questions outlined in the revised briefing note appear as an appendix to our Agenda, and form part of any submitted Quad of Aims, to ensure that these questions remain in the forefront of Members' mind when scrutinising reports.

(c) That all internal reports coming to this Committee have a small section at the end of each report entitled 'Climate Considerations', with a brief note about any considerations which have been given, where appropriate (This can come with the qualification that the staff within the department are not qualified in climate action).