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Secure Sub-committee

Monday, 10 July 2023

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, D Cox, J Johnsson, J Kirwin,
J Mudzingwa, R O'Keefe, O Scargill and J Walker

In attendance: Councillors J Harrison and M Thirlaway

Apologies: Councillors J Cruddas and M Wilson

S1 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

S2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

S3 Introduction to Scrutiny and Work Programme Report

The sub-committee received a report which set out a proposed approach to its work planning for the Secure Sub-committee 2023-24, together with an initial information base which the sub-committee could utilise in considering and deciding on its outline work programme for 2023-24.

Members were informed that the Authority's scrutiny arrangements had recently been evaluated and restructured, following an external review undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). The CfGS report was considered by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 21 March 2023.

Following considering of the report the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee proposed that the number and remit of scrutiny committees in North Tyneside should be restricted. A new structure was agreed by Annual Council on 18 May 2023. This was therefore the first meeting of the newly created Secure Sub-committee.

In its review the CfGS made several 'good practice' suggestions around scrutiny work planning. These included A clearer focus on democratic accountability of the Executive; Involvement of all Committee members in work planning; Sufficient flexibility; Senior Officer support; and 'Less' is more.

The Chair of the Secure Sub-committee had sought the views of the lead senior Leadership Team Director and Cabinet members about potential policy areas. Taking these ideas forward the sub-committee was presented with its terms of reference, details of the link Cabinet member and senior officer identified to provide ongoing and regular officer support, and a list of suggestions on policy topics which the sub-committee may wish to consider when planning its programme of work for 2023-24.

Members of the sub-committee were invited to suggest further topics for inclusion in the work programme by contacting the Chair and Democratic Services Officer.

In relation to the menu of work plan topics, the Chair invited the Interim Head of Housing to come along to the first meeting to present to Members a suite of information on North Tyneside's Homeless Service, which could be part of the consideration in the list of policy topics in Appendix C to the report.

The presentation covered the Authority's statutory services delivered by the Housing Team, Homeless Presentations (the main reasons for them) and comparative statistics between 2020/21 and 2023/24, homeless demographics between 2020/21 and 2022/24, customer feedback, key achievements, challenges, looking ahead, and useful contacts for housing advice (Freephone, Email and Customer First Centres).

Members of the sub-committee asked questions about the services delivered and priorities to prevent homelessness, where safe to do so, and sustain accommodation, where possible. Members also asked questions in relation to homeless demographics between 2020/21 and 2023/24 covering Rough Sleepers; Domestic Abuse; Young People (18-25); Families; Families in Temporary Accommodation, which were responded to appropriately by officers.

Members were informed that in looking ahead, officers were working to deliver the Authority's vision for 'Housing Need' and key priorities under the Our North

Tyneside Plan from the Homelessness Strategy 2023–2028. Also, a new tenancy related support package for care leavers and a specialist service for pre-release clients to find suitable, safe accommodation and to expand the offer with specialist roles, including financial inclusion. Officers were also looking to review and improve the Authority's temporary accommodation offer, contribute to the review of the Lettings Policy, and improve customer insight, with increased engagement.

In terms of challenges, these included Housing market & area of high demand; Customer dynamics (increased presentations, complexities and expectations); Cost of Living; and National policy (e.g., reform of private rented sector).

It was **agreed** that (1) the information presented regarding scrutiny work planning, including good practice guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny be noted;

(2) the identification of a link Cabinet member and senior officer to actively support the work of the sub-committee be noted;

(3) the list of suggested topics for 2023–24 be noted; and

(4) this information be used to decide an outline work programme for the year ahead and work programming be included as a standard agenda item at each future meeting.

S4 Date and Time of next meeting

6.00pm on 25 September 2023.

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