

Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

Wednesday, 10 July 2024

Present: Councillors C Gray, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Cruddas, D Drummond, T Hallway, M Murphy, A Newman, P Oliver, B Pickard, W Samuel, J Shaw, M Thirlaway and J O'Shea

Apologies: Councillors J Montague and B Burdis

OV53/24 Appointment of Substitute Members

Councillor O'Shea was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Burdis.

OV54/24 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Liam Bones declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6, they have a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Julie Cruddas declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6, they have a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Martin Murphy declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6, they have a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council.

Councillor Pat Oliver declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6, they have a family member who receives adult social care.

Councillor Jane Shaw declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6, they have a family member who works for Monkseaton High School.

Councillor Matthew Thirlaway declared a Non-Registerable Personal in Item 6, they have a family member who is employed by North Tyneside Council, and a Registerable personal interest as they are employed by a company which has contracts with North Tyneside Council to provide adult social care.

OV55/24 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2024 be agreed.

OV56/24 Welcome / Introduction

In the absence of Councillor Montague, the Chair announced that Item 5 would be brought back to the September Committee.

OV57/24 2024/25 Performance & Financial Management Report to 31 March 2024

The Committee received a report that had been considered by Cabinet at its 24 June 2024 meeting.

This report provided a full overview of both the service delivery performance and budget position across the Authority as of 31 March 2024.

In terms of performance, service delivery remained strong whilst there continued to be high levels of demand and financial implications in EHCP Needs Assessments, children in need residential placements, children in care, home care costs and nursing care placements. These were identified to be similar pressures to other councils across the country.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Research reported that due to some national accounting matters the 22/23 Statement of Accounts audit had been delayed. This would mean that outturn figures within the report would remain provisional until the audit's completion.

A member queried the use of uncommitted S106 money, and officers agreed to provide more information on its utilisation in the next Performance and Financial management report.

A question was asked about the use of reserves detailed in the report, and the

timing and use of these reserves. Officers responded that some of the reserves that had been used had been initially earmarked for a specific expected financial pressure. As those specific costs were built into the base budget, officers felt it prudent to release that same allocated reserve to alleviate that year end pressure.

A member enquired as to the reasons for the disparity between school's level of debt. Officers discussed the different reasons for this, including schools not historically being at capacity and the efficiency of utilities and how discussions with these schools had, and were still, taking place with both the Council and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Academisation, and specifically a case where schools academise when debts when we have a reduced reserve level, was mentioned and this risk was stated as being observed and managed – including the holding of a ringfenced reserve for assisting a school in deficit.

It was Agreed that the 2024/25 Performance and Financial Management Report to 31 March 2024 be noted.

OV58/24 Highways / Transport Task and Finish work

The members agreed to accept the draft Terms of Reference provided, and that a Task and Finish Group of 6 members would be established, on a politically balanced basis. It was hoped that the meetings could begin late July and for the Committee to hear the report at the October 9 2024 meeting.

A member queried the status of the work done by the EV Charging group, and whether this work could be picked up as part of this T&F Group. The Head of Highways and Transportation explained the EV work still live / ongoing and would therefore not need to form part of the Highways T&F work.

Members were asked to express an interest via email to Democratic Services.

OV59/24 Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee 2024-25 Work Programme Report

Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

The Head of Governance set out the proposed approach to work planning for the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee for 2024/25. The Committee were reminded of the North Tyneside Plan's key themes, the Committee's revised remit and the current work programme timetable for the Committee.

When asked for suggestions, members came up with:

- A look into what the Community Protection team can do, and how it currently responds and communicates with residents via broad policy terms.
- Follow up feedback to the Committee of previous T&F Recommendations e.g. Storm Arwen and Emergency Care recommendations
- A re-timetabling of when the P&FM report comes to OSCFC to explore in a timelier manner rather than a backwards look.
- Enhancing and encouraging the take up for benefits.
- A look into the Homelessness offer.
- Bringing the full Scrutiny Work programmes to OSCFC to have oversight and ensure no overlap.

A member also asked that the Mayor's Annual report be timetabled at OSCFC.

OV60/24 Update - CfGS Review (2023)

As requested by the Chair, the Head of Governance reported to the Committee the findings from, and good practice recommendations made by, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).

The Committee were also provided an update on the strong progress made in implementing these good practice recommendations and suggestions for future areas of development.

Members agreed that Cabinet member input into the Committee was vital in order to achieve timely scrutinization of policies.

The Committee noted the reports findings.