

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 24 August 2004.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair); Councillors Booth, Cole, Mawston, Robson, Rogers, T Ward and Wilson.

OFFICIALS: J Bennington, P Clark, J Ord, K Robinson, J Turner, P Walker and E Williamson.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dryden and Rooney.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 3 August 2004 were submitted and approved.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – SCRUTINY FINAL REPORTS

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Officer Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered the findings in respect of the following: -

- (a) Pupil Performance: Key Stage 2/3 Transition (Education, Skills and Jobs Scrutiny Panel)
- (b) Service Provision in Gleneagles Resource Centre (Social Care Scrutiny Panel)
- (c) Implementation of Local Government E-Government within Middlesbrough Council (Resources and Audit Scrutiny Panel)
- (d) Council Branding (Overview and Scrutiny Board)
- (e) Clairville Stadium (Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel).

The Executive had considered and supported both the Service Responses and the responses of the Corporate Management Team and had agreed the proposed Action Plans.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE'S FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

As part of the Board's remit in terms of holding the Executive to account a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer was submitted which identified the most recent entries to the Executive's Forward Work Programme since the last report to the Board. It was pointed out that this would not negate Non Executive Member's ability to call-in a decision after it had been made.

NOTED

SCRUTINY REVIEWS – CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

It was confirmed that no requests for scrutiny reviews had been received from the Executive, Executive Members, Non-Executive Members and members of the public.

NOTED

CENTRAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT - FIRST QUARTER 2004/05

As part of the reporting arrangements for the monitoring of the Corporate Performance Plan including performance in the Best Value Performance Indicators the Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report which provided details of the first quarter of 2004/05 against those actions detailed in the Corporate Performance Plan.

Central Services were responsible for 13 commitments of which eight were currently meeting target and five targets were progressing at a slower time-scale than originally envisaged and therefore were not meeting target as demonstrated in Appendix A of the report. It was pointed out that the schemes had changed in respect of FP 2, 3 and 8.

It was noted that there were 13 BVPI's where performance was being met as shown in Appendix B.

Details were provided of PI's where the targets were not being met i.e. 11 of which 4 informed the CPA scorecard as shown in (Appendix C) specifically: -

BV 9	percentage of council tax collected (CPA)
BV 156	percentage of council buildings accessible and suitable for disabled people
BV 11b	percentage of the top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities
BVPI 12	number of working days lost through sickness absence.

Appendix D of the report identified the reasons for six BVPI's not being reported in the first quarter, three of which were survey based BVPI's which were next due for collection in 2006/07.

During the ensuing discussion Members' sought clarification on a number of points in particular the reasons for certain targets not being met which were mainly associated with:

- changed reporting arrangements and data collection;
- changed definitions requiring a realignment of the software systems.

In terms of the Board's report relating to a number of diversity issues it was confirmed such areas would be addressed in a more detailed service response in conjunction with the submission of the People Strategy to the Executive.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Corporate Performance Officer submitted a report outlining the Council's proposed Strategic Risk Register and the Risk Management Strategy to be submitted to the Executive in September, which had been developed in response to recent findings from the Council's auditors and inspectors and risk management in public sector organisations gaining an increasing profile.

The Risk Management Strategy included service and specific operational risk management and crosscutting operational risk management.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board be invited to submit comments on the Risk Management Strategy and should it prove necessary the matter be discussed further and a formal response agreed at the next ordinary business meeting of the Board prior to submission to the Executive.
3. That as part of the monitoring arrangements a progress report be submitted to the Board on a quarterly basis.

HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY - ADDITIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Since the circulation of the agenda a revised report together with a summary was circulated at the meeting which set out the:

- (a) the key principles underlying the proposed changes to current Council policy on rehousing assistance for homeowners in residential property clearance areas and
- (b) proposals, which aimed to ensure the complementary use of statutory and discretionary forms of rehousing assistance available through the Council and its partners, Registered Social Landlords and the Housing Corporation.

It was acknowledged that this was a Borough wide issue and that the scrutiny process would consider specific aspects of implementation.

The Council's Housing Renewal Policy 2003, which enabled assistance to be given to homeowners where housing renewal resulted in residential property clearance, had been reviewed in order to ensure its relevance to current and proposed Housing Market Restructuring activity in Middlesbrough. Such a policy was subject to modification as policy and practice changed.

The report detailed the proposed rehousing assistance policy principles and changes.

Members' sought clarification on a number of areas including: -

- issues raised at a recent meeting with residents which included clarification on the extent of the qualifying period which other than the statutory period for home loss payments would have to be determined following legal examination;
- overall funding criteria from Single Housing Investment Programme (70%) and by means of a partnership bid on behalf of the Tees Valley Housing Authorities £9m of which Middlesbrough received £2.5m;
- the Scheme was not means tested and its main objective was to provide financial assistance and offer elements of choice to as many people as possible;
- in accordance with the MiddRAS scheme an applicant must agree to re-invest all of the market value of the current home and their home loss payment in a new home;
- where the outstanding original mortgage was greater than the open market value of the current home the applicant could apply for assistance, up to a maximum of £20,000 to meet the shortfall;
- if proved necessary, the Council would seek to use compulsory purchase powers;
- an independent valuer would be appointed the costs of which together with legal costs would be paid in accordance with the Scheme;
- the Scheme would be appraised in 12 months time.

ORDERED that the proposals for the revised Housing Renewal Policy be supported.

ANNUAL REPORT 2003/04

The Chair presented the first Annual Report 2003/04 of the Overview and Scrutiny function, which highlighted the progress and achievements to date.

A suggested revised copy of the front cover in line with corporate principles together with a copy of an insert from the Mayor for inclusion in the report was circulated at the meeting.

It was acknowledged that the scrutiny function had become embedded within the political process and that Non-Executive Councillors were provided the opportunity to ensure that local people received high quality services in regard to: -

- reviewing the effectiveness of existing policies and services
- recommending future policies and service improvements
- holding the Executive to account.

ORDERED that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2003/04 the front cover of which to be based on the original font and layout be approved and distributed as outlined.

SCRUTINY LEAFLET AND GUIDANCE

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer the Board was advised of the contents of the revised Scrutiny Leaflet entitled 'What is Scrutiny' (Appendix A) and Guidance Note for Officers (Appendix B) providing evidence to the Scrutiny function.

The leaflet provided an outline of the current Scrutiny arrangements and included a freepost tear off slip to encourage members of the public to put forward their views on possible topics for review.

NOTED AND APPROVED

SCRUTINY REPORTS – PROGRESS REPORTS

A report of the Chair of the Board and of each Scrutiny Panel was submitted outlining progress on current activities.

Specific reference was made to the following: -

Overview and Scrutiny Board

- Members' approval was sought to the following suggested training topics: -
 - report writing, including case studies of successful/unsuccessful reports
 - analysis of video of Panel meetings
 - plain English guide
 - electronic/internet training packages should be investigated for Members who are unable to attend formal training events;
- Members' were encouraged to attend the scrutiny training organised for 31 August, 15 September and 16 September;
- Members acknowledged the importance of consultation by means of the scrutiny process to ensure that each individual Panel had the opportunity to consider proposals for the additional finance arising from the new population calculations;
- in response to a formal request from the Mayor for the Board to undertake a short review of the involvement of non-Executive Members in the Council's decision-making process and inclusion in Council activities, the Chair confirmed the work to be undertaken in this regard which would be reported at the next ordinary business meeting of the Board;
- reference was made to the need to establish an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel to undertake a review of the Community Engagement Framework which could include: -
 - a response to the Executive report on Area Community Consultation Clusters
 - how to progress the proposed review of Community Engagement.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.

2. That the suggested topics for scrutiny training be approved.
3. That the Community Engagement Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be established with a view to meeting prior to the next ordinary business meeting of the Board.

CALL IN REQUESTS

It was confirmed that no requests had been received to call-in a decision.