

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 11 January 2005.

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

OFFICIALS: T Abraham, J Bennington, G Brown, M Coleclough, G Brown, P Clark, B J Glover, L Jackson, J Ord, T White and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Coppinger (Executive Member Community Safety and Leisure), Councillor Lowes (Executive Member Transport) and Councillor Bloundele (Vice Chair of the Council).

**** PRESENT AS OBSERVERS:** Councillors McTigue and Williams.

**** AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor Wilson.

**** 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 14 December 2004 were submitted and approved.

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Assistant Chief Executive Regeneration submitted an updated report at the meeting which outlined the key issues regarding the November 2004 Consultation Draft of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East. Details were given of the formal consultation process prior to adoption in winter 2006/07. Once adopted the RSS would form part of the Council's policy framework.

The changes to the planning system introduced through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaced Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) with RSS. The role of RSS was similar to RPG in that it provided a long-term strategy for the spatial development of the North East, within which the Local Development Frameworks (LDF) and local transport plans could be prepared.

The RSS was seen as a crucial document in relation to the future planning and regeneration of Middlesbrough in that:

- it would form part of the statutory development plan for Middlesbrough, and as such would have an impact on all aspects of regeneration within the Town,
- it would impose an upper limit on the number of dwellings that could be built within Middlesbrough for the period to 2021,
- it would impose an upper limit on the amount of employment land that could be developed within Middlesbrough for the period to 2021.

The Board's attention was drawn to the key implications for Middlesbrough and the suggested representations to the North East Assembly seeking amendments to the consultation draft RSS, based on the following recommendations: -

Locational Strategy:

Whilst the prioritisation of the two city regions of Tyne & Wear, and Tees Valley, is to be welcomed, it is considered Policies 6 to 8 do not provide sufficient spatial guidance required from the RSS. It is recommended that these policies should provide greater hierarchical

differentiation, and in particular it is essential that the Middlesbrough/Stockton core is prioritised as the key location for new development in the Tees Valley city region.

Economy:

- i) that Hemlington Grange be identified in Policy 16 of the RSS as a major sustainable mixed use site,
- ii) there should be no land allocation or limit placed on the many varied forms of mixed use development and greater clarity should be provided on the definition and purpose of mixed use allocations,
- iii) the figure of 60ha given in Policy 20 for general employment should be increased to 78ha to reflect the current land availability in Middlesbrough. If Hemlington Grange is identified as a major mixed-use site, the allocation would not need to be increased.

Retail and Leisure:

That for retail and leisure uses Middlesbrough be identified as the sub-regional centre for the Tees Valley city region.

Housing:

- i) the proposed net additional allocation of 5950 dwellings for Middlesbrough for the period 2004 to 2021 be supported.
- ii) It is essential that the RSS provides a consistent and explicit rationale across the suite of policies 30 to 32 regarding the relationship between likely clearance rates and resources, the confusion between gross levels of construction and clearance at sub-regional level yet making net housing allocations at individual local authority level (without any explicit clearance assumptions).
- iii) The proposed phasing of 250 net additional dwellings per annum for the period 2004 to 2011 is far too low and should be increased. At the proposed level it will severely constrain housing development, HMR and wider objectives to stem out migration and regenerate the Town.
- iv) The RSS gives explicit recognition of a strategic greenfield housing allocation on the southern edge of the Town as part of a mixed-use housing/employment urban extension at Hemlington Grange.

Transport and Accessibility:

- i) That the RSS identify as a priority, for the Tees Valley, the development of a sub regional sustainable transport strategy. With such a transport strategy there needs to be a clear priority afforded to improve the transport infrastructure in the urban core of the Tees Valley, particularly in the Tees Corridor area between Stockton and Middlesbrough town centres.
- ii) The reference to 2 million passengers per annum at Durham-Tees Valley Airport be increased to 3 million passengers in accordance with the Airport's projections.

The Board sought clarification on a number of issues in particular:

- the peripheral boundaries of the local authorities in particular, Redcar in the Tees Valley conurbation as defined in the RSS;
- Members concurred with the view that further clarification was needed on the definition and purpose of mixed use allocations;

- It was noted that mixed use development was one of the preferred tools of the ODPM for achieving sustainable communities;
- whilst mixed use developments were seen as a way of assisting regeneration the importance of ensuring adequate safeguards to ensure that the Council's objectives were met was emphasised;
- it was anticipated that where dwellings were occupied at the time that an area was identified for demolition, the replacement dwellings would be in addition the net allocation in RSS of 1,750 dwellings.

ORDERED that the report and the recommendations contained therein be endorsed.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN - ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the review of the Local Transport Plan.

The Board considered the recommendations of the Panel as follows: -

- (a) The central objective of the Local Transport Plan should be that of containing the rise in the number of car journeys within the Town and eventually reducing them which can only be achieved by developing public transport and making it more attractive to travel into the town centre by alternative means recognising that there may be an economic disbenefit to the Town in the short term.
- (b) That the Council seek funding to encourage major employers/schools to establish travel to work plans, which would include car sharing schemes, to promote the use of public transport.
- (c) Recognising that new roads only produce more cars it is recommended that the emphasis in the Local Transport Plan should be on expenditure on road maintenance and improving safety.
- (d) The Local Transport Plan should contain proposals that will encourage bus usage by giving buses more priority, by encouraging new bus routes and supporting the electric or alternative fuel bus experiments.
- (e) The Local Transport Plan should contain measures that encourage cycling by better maintenance of cycle routes, building more cycle routes and more places to park bikes.
- (f) In order to cater for the increased economic growth in the town centre and at Middlehaven, in addition to promoting public transport, cycling and walking, consideration could be given to planning for a Park and Ride scheme to be implemented in the medium term which would entail identifying, in co-operation with our near neighbours, appropriate sites and devising a plan to implement them during the life of the Local Transport Plan.
- (g) Whilst it is recognised that the Council's ability to influence rail service is limited the Local Transport Plan should make reference to clear objectives to working with the appropriate bodies to:
 - i. make the best possible use of the existing rail lines within the town for commuter travel.
 - ii. modernising and better maintaining of Middlesbrough Station.
 - iii. building new stations at Middlehaven and the James Cook University Hospital.

- iv. maintaining and adding to existing local services on the Esk Valley line, to Nunthorpe, to Darlington and on the coastal line to Sunderland.
 - v. encouraging new, faster intercity services directly to Newcastle and London.
- (h) That the Panel receives details at an appropriate time on the progress of the completion of the Policy Framework on Highway Maintenance.
- (i) That the finalised plan is submitted to an appropriate meeting of the Panel for information before approval by Council and Government Office North East.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas and the main points arising from the ensuing discussions which focussed on the following: -

- a view was expressed that more detailed consideration should have been given to the current preferred method of transport, current traffic calming measures and that the position regarding an East Middlesbrough by-pass should have been included;
- recognition was given to the Council's limitations in influencing services in terms of the bus and rail operators;
- reference was made to the Urban Bus Challenge bid which included the provision of a demand responsive service to the James Cook University Hospital;
- the Chair confirmed that the thrust of the scrutiny report was to highlight the need for the promotion of the benefits and development of alternative methods of transport other than that of the car.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive subject to an additional recommendation supporting the provision of the demand responsive service affording links to the James Cook University Hospital.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL - ACTIVE MIDDLESBROUGH STRATEGY

The Chair of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel regarding the assessment and proposals on the Active Middlesbrough Strategy.

The Board considered the Panel's recommendations and noted that they would impact on external organisations who had formed a partnership and given a commitment to delivering the actions contained within the Strategy: -

- a) The Executive Member and Leisure Service Manager urge the Partners to meet every three months to (i) monitor progress of the Strategy and (ii) obtain renewed commitment to areas not being achieved, revising timetables where appropriate to ensure achievement, at the latest, by 2008.
- b) The Partnership Forum be requested that their minutes clearly identify the actions achieved and those which require revised action and timescales and that also the minutes are circulated to all Key Partners and reported by the Council's Executive Member to the Executive to ensure awareness of progress.
- c) The Executive Member ensures an Annual Report is produced on the achievements of the Partnership, which should be clear, and expressions such as 'ongoing' should be avoided.
- d) Ensure all future Sport and Leisure Service Plans are structured to incorporate the actions identified within the Active Middlesbrough Strategy, which are targeted for delivery during the life of that Service Plan.

- e) Council's Education Service to clearly express its position on delivery of actions for which it is responsible and ensure a representative attends each quarterly meeting of the Partnership.
- f) The Primary Care Trust is urged to consider funding the 'Get Active on Prescription' scheme (GAP) in Middlesbrough as they apparently do in other local authorities.
- g) The Primary Care Trust is urged to promote GAP referrals for children, particularly children with obesity since the present system only targets adults.
- h) The Primary Care Trust is requested to feedback on the health benefits achieved by people who complete a GAP referred course of activity sessions.
- i) The Primary Care Trust is urged to encourage many more GP's to use the GAP Referrals Scheme by increasing their awareness of the benefits that can be achieved.
- j) The Executive Member to explore ways of introducing a Bus Pass Scheme for people who are attending for facilities for health improvement as access and transport may be a barrier to attendance.
- k) The Leisure Service to market the facilities in Middlesbrough to present the Council as aiming to improve the health of its community such action to include the promotion of the Active Middlesbrough Strategy and the actions and opportunities being offered and that other key partners should also be urged to market their facilities similarly.
- l) The Primary Care Trust is urged to repeat the funding of free swimming for children during school summer holidays as part of their contribution to healthier children, or other means are found to continue this free facility.
- m) The Council's Education Service, through its development function, increases awareness of schools regarding the benefits physical activity has in contributing towards a good health.
- n) The Council's Education Service encourages schools with special expertise in aspects of physical activity to liaise with other schools so that opportunities are accessible to more pupils who wish further development.
- o) The Education Service urges schools and Teesside University to reconsider the barriers that have previously prevented the use of school and university facilities by the community which would improve the health of users of those facilities.
- p) The Leisure Service review the high income targets identified within the Sport and Leisure Service Plan as the current high levels can inhibit the options available to increase participation in structured physical activity when undertaken for health reasons.
- q) The Volunteer Bureau is requested to consider how they would consider appropriate representation of the voluntary sector could be achieved to address the concerns raised at the inaugural Partnership meeting.
- r) The Leisure Service continues to monitor the operation of the Leisure Link car Scheme at regular intervals to maximise the usage of facilities offered by the Scheme.

In commenting on the operation of Leisure Link cardholders a suggestion was made for such cards to be activated upon when used at the facilities. Members supported the intention to encourage the use of the facilities offered by the Scheme.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

INLOGOV SEMINAR - COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the meeting of the Board held on 21 September 2004 when consideration had been given to a report which had included the possible means of improving the inclusion of elected Members in the Council's processes. The Board was advised of subsequent discussions, which had taken place with the Deputy Mayor and the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Policy), and of the intention for proposals to be implemented for the next Municipal Year.

The Vice-Chair gave a presentation based on the Inlogov Seminar held on 1 December 2004 focussing on ways of developing Council meetings, the key issues of which were as follows: -

- a) whilst acknowledging the legal requirements it was felt that ways which allowed elected members to take a full part in Council activities should be examined;
- b) suggestions for redesigning Council meetings included:
 - i) Policy Development adopting a three stage process of the policy presented in principal, for full debate and final debate leading to agreement;
 - ii) Single issue debates for major issues possibly inviting external speakers; themed meetings; a specific area of policy development;
 - iii) Annual State of the Town report by the Mayor outlining the direction of the Council, what has been achieved, future aspirations;
 - iv) Members Question Time placed at the beginning of an agenda; written questions with a written response; supplementary questions allowed; question and answer session time limited;
 - v) Public Question Time to provide the opportunity for debate including involvement of members and for the session to be time limited;
 - vi) Opposition Supply Days to provide the opportunity for opposition parties to nominate a debate topic on a predetermined number of meetings per year;
 - vii) Annual reports of Executive such a process to provide for verbal questions from members and allow opportunity for general debate and for the report sessions to be time limited;
 - viii) presentation of Petitions which were in excess of a pre-determined number of signatories; the lead petitioner given the opportunity to address Council; political parties and ward councillors also given the opportunity to respond;
 - ix) Early Day Motions for any member to lay such a motion on the Council which at that time need not make a decision or debate and then if 10 members signed up to the motion further action be taken on a Council agenda for debate;
 - x) Scrutiny Reports which had a town wide impact debated at Council and provide the opportunity for the full Council to take evidence from external witnesses on policy matters;
 - xi) Full Council meetings without Executive referred to as Council in Overview and Scrutiny for example in relation to budget setting process;
 - xii) Peripatetic Council meetings primarily related to single issue meetings and such meetings held at a venue close to the area affected by the issue;
- c) the importance of the chair of the full Council to have good chairing skills had been highlighted and reference had been made to many authorities which had adopted a 'speaker' model which also took on the role of Councillor Advocate;

- d) one of the main issues discussed had been the order of the agenda such as questions, policy debate, executive reports and also reference to a variable agenda, which allowed consideration of some of the issues, referred to above on a rotational basis.

The key points arising from the ensuing discussion with the Board Members were as follows:

- a need to develop a clear vision of the purpose of full Council meetings and enhance the opportunity for all Members to take an active part;
- a need to develop the question and answer element with time limited sessions and change the format to encourage attendance and debate although a view was expressed that there were current mechanisms which Members could utilise to instigate debate;
- the focus of full Council meetings should essentially be on policy issues;
- develop the suggestion for wider debates on general themes and to have variable agendas;
- Constitution should be re-examined in so far as it related to the format of meetings of the full Council and more clearly state the purpose of such meetings;
- concurred with the need for the chair of the Council to have good chairing skills and that there should be written reports and annual reports;
- reference was also made to related work being undertaken by the Civic Review Group.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That Councillor Bloundele be thanked for the presentation and participation in the subsequent deliberations.
2. That the general consensus on the direction for change as outlined be taken into account as part of the future examination of the format for full Council meetings.

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

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS - CALL IN BMX TRACK BEECHWOOD

The Chair referred to the scrutiny report which had been compiled following a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 5 January 2005 a copy of which had been circulated to the individual Board Members for comments.

NOTED