

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 8 February 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair); Councillors Booth, Dryden, Mawston, Rogers, Rooney and Wilson.

OFFICIALS: T Abraham, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, R Mitchell, J Ord, K E Robinson, P Slocombe, T White and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** L Hunt (Audit Manager, District Audit) and S Nicklin (District Auditor and Relationship Manager).

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cole and T Ward, and Councillor N J Walker (Executive Member, Resources).

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 5 and 11 January 2005 were submitted and approved.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – SCRUTINY REPORT - DRAFT LICENSING POLICY

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Office Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered the Board's comments in respect of the draft licensing policy.

The Executive had also considered and supported both the Service Response and the response of the Corporate Management Team.

The Statement of Licensing Policy had subsequently been approved at a meeting of Middlesbrough Council held on 20 December 2004.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – SCRUTINY REPORTS - DIRECT PAYMENTS - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

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

Direct Payments: Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel

Educational Attainment of Children Looked After: Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

The Executive had considered and supported both the Service Response and the response of the Corporate Management Team and had agreed the proposed Action Plan subject to investigations into all the recommendations that contained financial implications.

NOTED

ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2003/2004

An introductory report of the Corporate Performance Manager had been circulated regarding the annual audit and inspection letter 2003/2004 which highlighted the key areas.

Although the 2003/04 inspection and audit letter represented a significant improvement it was acknowledged that the Council should implement the actions outlined in the report to secure continuous improvement.

The District Auditor and Relationship Manager and the Audit Manager presented the Executive Summary of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2003/2004 which focussed on the conclusions and significant issues arising from recent audit and inspection work.

Specific reference was made to the three key areas as follows:-

CPA Scorecard:

- recognition of improvements which had been made in service delivery in particular reduction in crime, social care for older people and cleanliness of the area which had resulted in the Council being eligible for a proportionate corporate assessment and subject to a successful outcome of the inspection would move into the 'excellent category';

Inspections and Performance:

- the Council had been complimented on its new performance management framework and had been pleased to note the improvement in data collection arrangements for performance indicators;
- the framework had been modified to ensure good performance management to the LSP which had resulted in an amber/green rating from GONE;
- progress had been made especially in the implementation of new IT systems;

Accounts and Governance Issues:

- an unqualified audit opinion had been given on the accounts and corporate governance arrangements in that most key areas had been found to be satisfactory.

Reference was made to a number of actions which the Council needed to undertake in several areas.

ORDERED that the District Auditor and Audit Manager be thanked for the information provided which was noted.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer a summary was provided of the individual Panel's responses to the Community Strategy for onward transmission to the LSP's thematic groups, LSP Board and subsequently the Executive and full Council in April 2005 as part of the Council's policy framework.

It was hoped that the Board would have an opportunity of seeing the final report prior to consideration by the Executive and the Council.

NOTED AND APPROVED

EXECUTIVE 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

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 in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- a) the outcome of a recent meeting held with the Chairs of Scrutiny Panels regarding general progress of work and in particular the suggestion that all final reports include an executive summary, and the Board and Panels monitor the progress of scrutiny recommendations on a regular basis;
- b) recent meeting with Audit Commission inspectors as part of the review of the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment.

NOTED AND APPROVED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS - NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUND CONSULTATION 2006/2008

With the approval of the Chair and on the grounds of urgency in terms of the time constraints involved, the Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive Regeneration regarding the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's consultation in respect of the allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) resources for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008.

A consultation document had been compiled which referred to the areas of eligibility in terms of Super Output Areas which were geographical units each of which contained on average 1500 people which allowed the identification of small pockets of deprivation at neighbourhood level which were not co-terminus with wards.

Four examples were provided on options for delivery, 2 and 4 of which were considered to be the most beneficial to Middlesbrough in terms of a greater number of areas and larger population were eligible for funding and targeted the most severe pockets of deprivation.

It was noted that the Middlesbrough Partnership Executive had expressed a preference for Example 4 on the basis that it would maximise the resources and would result in a more focussed approach to the NRF programme and have a greater impact on communities in most need.

It was reported that the Executive at its meeting held on 8 February 2005 had agreed that the response to the consultation document be based on Example 4 as the favoured option of the Council and that the Executive Member for Regeneration and Culture be given delegated authority to agree the final wording of the consultation questionnaire.

ORDERED that the decision by the Executive in selecting Example 4 as the favoured option of the Council as part of the response on the Consultation document of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit be endorsed.