

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

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

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

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

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor N J Walker (Executive Member Resources).

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cole and Robson.

**** 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 8 and 15 February 2005 were submitted and approved.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – SCRUTINY REPORTS - ALLOTMENT SERVICE - ACTIVE MIDDLESBROUGH STRATEGY - LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

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 following final reports:-

- a) Allotment Service Provision in Middlesbrough - Environment Scrutiny Panel
- b) Local Transport Plan - Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel
- c) Active Middlesbrough Strategy - 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 also agreed the proposed Action Plans.

The Board's attention was drawn to the report relating to the Allotment Service Provision and the comment of the Executive in that any financial pressures would have to be dealt with from within Environment and Neighbourhood Service's budget.

NOTED

THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2004/2005

The Director of Resources presented the third quarter's review of revenue expenditure against the 2004/2005 Revenue Budget.

The report detailed the progress against the action points arising out of the second quarter's revenue budget outturn report and outlined actions which were being pursued.

The ensuing discussion focussed on the undermentioned areas: -

Education:

- projected savings of £161,000
- following the establishment of the new Children, Families and Learning Service a feasibility study was to be carried out to estimate the cost of work required for a combined information system;

- a report would be prepared detailing the options available regarding the provision of home/hospital extra district service for post 16 pupils;

Environment:

- projected additional spending of £110,000;
- Executive (21 December 2004) had approved virement of £120,000 from the central budget for pay and inflation to fund the identified inflationary costs within Streetscene for 2004/05;
- Executive (21 December 2004) had approved virement from the Environment Agency levy of £49,000 and from the inflation provision of £7,000 to cover the pressure within the Becks budget of £56,000;
- a report would be compiled regarding energy costs in relation to Street Lighting;
- the Director of Resources was to identify resources from existing Housing Stock Transfer provisions to meet the costs of grounds maintenance, street cleaning associated with the Erimus land transfer agreement;

Housing General Fund Services:

- anticipated spending pressures of £11,000 offset by staff savings of £10,000;

Housing Revenue Account:

- although additional expenditure had been estimated at £109,000 there were projected savings totalling £103,000;

Regeneration and Cultural Services:

- anticipated savings of £63,000;
- a review of the administration support for retained housing services was to be resolved by the Director of Resources;
- a report on the future position for planning fee income and service proposals was to be submitted to CMT in the early part of the next financial year;
- a report on the future of the Enterprise Centre to be completed within the first quarter of 2005/2006;

Social Care:

- net savings anticipated of £50,000;
- a review of the allocation of the contingency provision and stretched targets was to be completed and agreed between Social Care, and Children, Families and Learning, and Strategic Resources;

Corporate Services:

- projected net savings of £413,000;

Central Provisions:

- other provisions expected to generate savings of £707,000;
- an over accrual in 2003/04 of monies due from Designated Authorities required correction in the current year causing a pressure of £688,000 in net capital financing costs.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted and the actions together with the virements as outlined be endorsed.

THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2004/2005

The Director of Resources presented a report, which provided an update of the 2004/2005 third quarters capital outturn position.

The main changes arising from increases, re-phasing and resource changes for 2004/05 and 2006/07 were summarised in Appendix A and a summary of financing and expenditure within capital programme in Appendix B of the report submitted.

The main changes from the previous report were summarised in Appendix A of the report submitted which also showed an increased amount of resources (£3,849k) arising from capital receipts.

Specific reference was made to:-

- Executive (22 February 2005) had agreed to develop the athletics element of Clairville Stadium which identified a capital requirement of £75,000;
- in order to assist the Council to meet its overall agreed financial contribution in respect of key developments at Middlehaven £2m would be made available from within existing capital resources;
- a review had been undertaken of the current Housing Capital position;

NOTED AND APPROVED

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Further to the meetings of the Board held on 14 December 2004 and 8 February 2005 a report of the Middlesbrough Partnership Manager had been circulated together with a copy of the final draft of the Community Strategy 2005.

The document which had been revised in response to issues raised during the consultation period including comments of the Board and Scrutiny Panels was to be considered by the Middlesbrough Partnership Board on 15 March, Executive on 22 March prior to approval by Middlesbrough Council on 13 April 2005.

NOTED AND APPROVED

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2005/06

The Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report regarding the content and production timetable for the 2005/06 Corporate Performance Plan.

The 2003/04 Government guidelines had provided increased flexibility to Councils categorised as good or excellent thus enabling Middlesbrough Council to produce its first Corporate Performance Plan, which had subsumed the requirements of the Best Value Performance Plan.

It was suggested that the Plan should remain in the same format as last year but takes into account new developments including: outcome from CPA Proportionate Corporate Assessment; Mayor's Reduction Agenda; Gershon and efficiency requirements; revised Community Strategy Strategic Priorities and targets where applicable; and Local Public Service Agreement 2.

Specific reference was made to Appendix A of the report submitted which outlined the proposed timetable for the 2005/06 Plan which allowed for sections of the plan to be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Panel and the draft overall Plan by the Board.

NOTED AND APPROVED

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report on the draft Communications Strategy and associated Action Plan.

The report outlined the significant progress, which the Council had made on improved communications. In order to pursue further improvements and to ensure that the Council's aims and objectives in relation to communication were clear, a Communications Strategy and associated Action Plan had been produced a copy of which had been circulated.

The aims and objectives of the Strategy were reported as follows: -

Aim

To ensure that Council communications assist stakeholders to understand, participate in and benefit from council activity.

Objectives

The objectives of this communication strategy is to contribute to the organisation being 'fit for purpose' by:

- improving understanding and support for the Council's vision and priorities
- developing a clear and positive Council identity
- ensuring all Members and staff are ambassadors for the Council
- improving external communication.

The Board supported the principles in particular those under the heading of 'clear and easy to understand' and the intention to provide a Plain English programme to be in place by March 2005.

Reference was also made to the need to incorporate some indication as to the extent to which the Strategy took into account the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

As part of the overall monitoring and evaluation procedure there would be an opportunity for the scrutiny process to be involved in such arrangements.

NOTED

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL - HEALTHY LIVING INITIATIVES

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Healthy Living Review.

The Board's attention was drawn to the conclusions of the Panel in particular: -

- i) That there was at present, significant amounts of work being undertaken in attempting to arrest the continuing poor health of Middlesbrough residents.
- ii) That at present, there were not sufficient links between organisations at a strategic level to carry forward a co-ordinated Healthy Living approach for Middlesbrough in its entirety.
- iii) Although the Local Strategic Partnership provided an opportunity to carry forward a co-ordinated public health agenda in Middlesbrough there was a need to reinvigorate such structure to drive forward such an agenda.
- iv) That at present, there was insufficient evaluation carried out in relation to Healthy Living Initiatives and consequently not enough is learned about the success or otherwise of projects and little known as to whether they were worth arranging again.
- v) That whilst a 'dash for cash' approach was not widespread it should be guarded against in considering healthy living initiatives to be arranged.

- vi) That if a 'dash for cash' approach was allowed to grow, there was a strong possibility that the quality and relevance of projects may suffer and the time allowed for evaluation would be damaged.
- vii) That in coming to a judgement as to the topics to be covered by Healthy Living Initiatives, proper attention should be paid to the health priorities of the Town, as outlined by the local health economy.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel which aimed to develop stronger links across agencies at a strategic level; with appropriate levels of accountability; and to maximise the potential impact of healthy living activities:

- a) That the Local Strategic Partnership is acknowledged as the appropriate forum in which to drive forward the healthy living agenda for Middlesbrough and is encouraged to perform that role.
- b) That a performance management framework within the Local Strategic Partnership Theme Groups is developed, to monitor activities being pursued by stakeholders and the level of impact.
- c) That at regular intervals, the Chair of the Health and Social Care Team on the Local Strategic Partnership holds to account the activities of Group Members as regards their activities within the remit of the Health and Social Care Theme Group.
- d) That the Health Scrutiny Panel receives twice yearly reports from the Chair of the Health and Social Care Theme Group on the Local Strategic Partnership on the outcome of the above.
- e) That the Council (Annual General Meeting) receives an annual report by the Director of Public Health.
- f) That a common health impact assessment framework is drafted with the Director of Public Health and agreed with major stakeholders and such an assessment identifies the short and long-term impacts of changes to or introduction of services or projects and the match against local health priorities.
- g) That any significant changes to services, projects and developments commissioned or provided jointly or solely by Middlesbrough Council are subject to the health impact assessment.
- h) That the Council seeks to encourage its partners to agree to likewise implement a Health Impact Assessment.
- i) That Middlesbrough Council continues to take advice from the local Health Community regarding the priority themes for Healthy Living Initiatives and that following such advice, the Council should concentrate any Healthy Living Budgets, mainstream or otherwise, in attempting to address these problems.
- j) That evaluation frameworks be developed and run for the life of each healthy living initiative, accompanied by pre-identified targets against which, the evaluation will take place and whilst the impact of some initiatives may be harder to ascertain than others, measured and recorded efforts should be made to determine impacts and ultimately, whether a project is worth running again.

Members of the Board suggested that in respect of recommendation (e) above it needn't necessarily be at the Annual General Meeting of Middlesbrough Council. It was also suggested that in general, the evaluation approach as outlined in recommendation (j) above be applied to other Council initiatives.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

SCRUTINY REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 13 October 2004 the Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted a report which outlined progress achieved in relation to the implementation of agreed Executive actions resulting from the consideration of Scrutiny reports.

Reference was made to the electronic Scrutiny Monitoring Database which had been introduced in June 2003 to enable Members to track the implementation of agreed Executive Action Plans and had since been revised to enable more effective recording and generation of information.

It was noted that previous reviews had contained 251 recommendations of which 114 should have been implemented by February 2005. Of those 114, 68% had been implemented, 18% partially completed and 14% had not been implemented as indicated in Appendix A of the report submitted. Although in overall terms it was seen as positive it was noted that position statements had been sought in respect of those recommendations, which had not been implemented, although it was acknowledged that some of the outstanding responses were awaited from external organisations.

It was intended for the Board to receive update reports on a quarterly basis and a copy circulated to each Scrutiny Panel.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That a position statement be requested in respect of the recommendations which had not been completed by the target of February 2005.

SCRUTINY REVIEW REQUEST - NON EXECUTIVE MEMBER

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer the Board was advised of a request from a Non Executive Member for an investigation into the provision of an 'Off Road' Facility within Middlesbrough for the following reasons:-

'To offer a safe, controlled, and stimulating facility whereby off road Motorcycles, Quad bikes, Scooters and 4 x 4's owners can enjoy the use of their machines.

The present and continued expected high level of ownership of these machines and their use on the open space, and greens surrounding high density residential areas is a major cause of noise, nuisance and damage to the environment, and by implication, anti-social behaviour.

Such a facility would be within the ownership of Middlesbrough Council, and the resulting revenue possibilities, which could accrue from such a facility, are explored.'

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the request be forwarded to the appropriate Executive Member (s).
2. That the problems highlighted in the request be considered alongside other possible topics for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme for 2005/2006.

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:

NOTED AND APPROVED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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