
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 3 May 2005.

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

OFFICIALS: T Abraham, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, G Field, J Lewis, J Ord, K Parkes, J Richardson, K E Robinson, G Strange and E Williamson.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mawston and T Ward.

**** 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 4 April 2005 were submitted and approved.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES - INNER MIDDLESBROUGH

The Head of Planning and Regeneration Programmes presented a report regarding Building Sustainable Communities in Inner Middlesbrough, a major regeneration project involving 11,500 older houses which would have considerable impact on up to 25,000 residents and numerous businesses located within the Town's inner housing area.

The scheme, which would take 10 to 15 years to complete, provided a major opportunity for change and improvement and therefore it was considered important that the process was clear and provided effective engagement with the community.

Reference was made to some of the current problems of the area relating to increases in the level of voids; a rise in speculative investment by absentee landlords buying to let; poor quality housing stock; and a decline in the housing market which no longer met the demand or requirements of the local population.

A copy of a report approved by the Executive at its meeting held on 19 April had been circulated together with a newsletter which had been delivered to every house and business in the defined area. The report detailed the Consultant's research findings and a description of six options together with a more detailed account of the impact in each of the six character areas should the preferred option of 4 be implemented.

The comments of the Board were sought in respect of the engagement with the stakeholders and the development of support mechanisms.

In terms of the consultation, it was noted that over 1,000 people had so far been engaged with the project and further work would continue including: -

- a) 5 community drop-in sessions featuring an exhibition explaining the project;
- b) a supporting DVD;
- c) a series of four topic based work groups;
- d) a half day conference for professionals in the housing and building sectors.

Building blocks for implementation included the creation of a focussed team of Officers; the development of a regeneration vehicle such as a joint venture or limited company; an exploration of neighbourhood management models and a joint working steering group.

It was acknowledged that the project was currently at a critical stage when the preferred option was tested in the wider community.

The subsequent deliberations focussed on the following: -

- a) the ongoing work in terms of the various options available for rehousing was noted;
- b) Members stressed the importance of ensuring that the consultation procedures ensured that residents, businesses, local Councillors and service providers all had the opportunity to contribute to the process as it evolved and that appropriate mechanisms were in place in order to deal with any 'conflict resolution' which may arise;
- c) given the long period of redevelopment the need for ongoing consultation and appropriate support arrangements was acknowledged and identified as a possible future topic for a scrutiny review ;
- d) given the uncertainties it was considered essential for the process of consultation to commence as soon as possible and the decision making process to be determined at the earliest opportunity.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the report and information provided be noted.
2. That the comments as outlined above be referred to the Executive.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2005/2006 - SCRUTINY PANELS CONSIDERATION

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer and as presented by the individual Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels, the Board was advised of the responses following consideration of the respective aspects of the Corporate Plan as follows: -

Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel:

- specific reference was made to the Mayor's Reduction Priorities and support of the key target to the measures identified to enhance the learning opportunities for 14-19 year olds;

Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel:

- the Panel endorsed the proposed planned actions for 2005/2006;
- Members suggested that the words 'mischief night' be not used in order to avoid conveying the wrong image;
- it was suggested that the proposed action of providing outreach support and accommodation units should be examined further on the potential impact on neighbouring households;

Environment Scrutiny Panel:

- although clarification had been sought and a number of questions asked the proposed planned actions were supported;

Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel:

- although the Scrutiny Panel had not yet given detailed consideration to the respective elements of the Corporate Plan, the Chair suggested the inclusion of the development of the night time economy;

Health Scrutiny Panel:

- the planned actions for 2005/06 to address the strategic priorities were supported;

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- specific reference was made to the Government's target for the Independent Sector increasing their contribution up to a maximum of 15% of primary care services and to the Panel's decision to arrange a seminar with a view to gaining a better understanding of joint commissioning of services and in particular the extent and range of health and social care services available by voluntary and independent sector health providers;

Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel:

- specific reference was made to improvements made in accessing social care services and in particular noted and supported the increased key target figure in respect of assessments and provision of care packages;
- it was noted that in terms of the Mayor's Reduction agenda that whilst three reduction priorities currently did not have a measure it was acknowledged that the objectives in the theme were long-term and work was ongoing to establish a baseline and set a longer-term target.

ORDERED that the comments be incorporated into the Corporate Plan and the Board be advised of any subsequent major changes following consideration by the Executive and Council.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2005/2006 - DRAFT

The Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report and a draft Corporate Performance Plan 2005/2006.

It was confirmed that the document was subject to change taking into account the comments arising from the scrutiny process and the following: -

- a) a consistent and more streamlined document;
- b) contextual information relating to the financial settlement would be included in the final version and also information on the successful challenge to the census information;
- c) the section on performance during 2004/05 may change as performance information became available;
- d) Part II would contain year-end figures, which may lead to, revised targets.
- e) Information on out-turn performance and future targets would be submitted to individual Scrutiny Panels in line with the Performance Management framework.

ORDERED that the information provided and the draft Corporate Performance Plan 2005/06 be noted.

TNEY TRUST - ADVANCE PROPOSALS

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report regarding the findings of a Joint Committee encompassing the Tees Valley local authorities and Durham County Council in accordance with Section 7 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001. Section 7 of the Act required local NHS to consult with Overview and Scrutiny Committees on significant developments and/or substantial variations to local health services.

A scrutiny review had been undertaken into proposals for development of Mental Health & Learning Disability Services. The Joint Committee had compiled a final report setting out its views on the Tees & North East Yorkshire NHS Trust Advance Proposals based on substantial evidence gained from the NHS, the independent sector, the voluntary sector and carers representatives.

The report had been submitted for the Board's information as the recommendations referred exclusively to the actions of the local NHS and did not place any potential obligations on the Executive functions of the Authority.

In accordance with Department of Health guidance the report had been forwarded to the TNEY Trust for consideration to which they had to formally respond within 28 days.

NOTED

GREEN BUDGET - ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's review of the Green Budget in the context of the Housing Stock Transfer.

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

- i) The service area is limited to a one-year accountancy system and such a system did not allow for well-managed operational planning.
- ii) A major policy change to a three-year rolling programme should be considered once the Authority became an 'Excellent' rated Authority.
- iii) A concentration of standards should be explored, for example, replacing fast-growing and thorny shrubs with slow growing shrubs or trees for ease of maintenance in the future, including litter picking, with capital investment used to facilitate the changes.
- iv) In recent years regeneration had been so great that Streetscene had ceased asking for commuted sums to assist with maintenance and therefore the present budget did not take into account any new developments. This gave a distorted view on which Streetscene had to manage the present ground maintenance provision, forcing the specification to be much lower than was desired.
- v) Currently there is no cross-departmental working in relation to new developments or improvements and initiatives to ensure that long-term sustainability was achievable from Streetscene Service's perspective.
- vi) There is a differing of opinions from both the Authority and Erimus Housing in relation as to whom Erimus tenants currently contact with either complaints or service requests.
- vii) The Authority's current contact mechanism does not allow for the contact centre staff/caller to gain real-time information whilst handling calls.
- viii) The current specifications for environmental issues are substantially lower than in 1989.
- ix) The Panel notes that recommendations were made and agreed in the previous scrutiny review 200/2001 however little implementation has been made to address the issue in financial terms.
- x) The current budget provision for Environment is not sufficient when taking into account the Town's demographic / regeneration growth.
- xi) There is a significant increase in the amount of customer complaints to both Service and to Councillors, due to the current specification.
- xii) This reduction in specification has resulted in a loss of image and possible loss of investment to Middlesbrough.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel: -

- a) That the Authority explores one of the following options in order for the Service to allow any maintenance works to be carefully and efficiently planned for:-

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- i) to implement a three-year rolling programme;
 - ii) to enable the carrying over of surplus funds to the next financial year.
- b) That for the benefit and ease of the citizens of Middlesbrough, a single contact point (Contact Centre) is identified and delivered for dealing with complaints and service requests to ensure that the joint working with Erimus is seen to be seamless.
 - c) That the good-working relationship continue and a Steering Group be set up with Erimus to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of such a Contact Centre.
 - d) That a real-time database (CRM) be identified and delivered to ensure that on contacting the 'Centre' queries can be dealt with efficiently and to expand such a database for the Authority's compliance with E-Government Standards and enable it for online public services.
 - e) That the Environment Service produce a deliverable Strategy that identifies the environmental maintenance problems in Middlesbrough which should provide the procedure for, and benefits of rectifying these problems and the budget required for this one example being that there does not appear to be any flexible working within the Service area and that staff should embrace cross-boundary working.
 - f) That the Authority agrees that the Strategy is beneficial to Middlesbrough and provides the budget for it in its next setting process.
 - g) That Streetscene be consulted in the planning stages of any new development within Middlesbrough and to negotiate any applicable sums for the sustainable maintenance of such developments.
 - h) That the Town's street furniture which currently shows the Authority's old logo be updated and standardised throughout Middlesbrough.
 - i) That the Authority's Procurement Policy for ground maintenance, be dependent upon quality and not price and therefore reintroduce the 1989 ground maintenance specification and that the Service Area's Green Budget reflects this upgraded specification.
 - j) That funding should be made available for the creation of an appropriate horticulture apprenticeship scheme in conjunction with the 14-19 Agenda.

An indication was given of work, which had already commenced in response to the recommendations including discussions with Erimus.

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

SCRUTINY REVIEW REQUEST - EXECUTIVE MEMBER

The Executive Member Social Care and Health reported upon a request for an investigation in relation to the NHS complaints procedures including the South Tees Acute Trust, PCT, Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust and any other relevant health organisation.

Reference was made to a recent meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel during which references had been made to the standard of patient care within primary care settings and specific problems concerning the processing of complaints and in particular the requirement for a patient's signature in respect of such a procedure.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel referred to the current scrutiny topic relating to Emergency Admissions and confirmed that the areas of concern as outlined would form part of the current investigation.

ORDERED that the request for an investigation be noted and the Executive Member Social Care and Health be advised that the issues raised would be considered as part of the ongoing scrutiny investigation into Emergency Admissions by the Health Scrutiny Panel.

SCRUTINY REVIEW - PUBLIC REQUEST

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer details were given of a request from a member of the public which had been assessed in accordance with the criteria previously approved by the Board.

The request related to the procedures in respect of the litter removal programme within the Town Centre.

It was noted that street cleansing had been the subject of a recent scrutiny examination.

ORDERED that a response from the respective Service Department be sought and copies of the final report, action plan and an update on the implementation of recommendations in respect of the street cleansing review be forwarded to the respondent.

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

It was confirmed that no requests for scrutiny reviews had been received from the Executive and Non Executive Members.

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.

In terms of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel it was noted that the Panel was scheduled to meet on 12 May 2005 to conclude the scrutiny investigation into the Authority's progress into the 14-19 Agenda. It was anticipated that a final report would be submitted to the Board early in the next Municipal Year.

It was noted that all Members of the Council had been invited to attend an additional meeting of the Social and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel on 16 May 2005. As part of the consultation process it was intended to seek the views of Members' in respect of the Government Green Paper, 'Independence, Well-Being and Choice ' which set out the proposals for the future direction of social care for all adults of all groups in England.

NOTED AND APPROVED

CRIME, DISORDER, DRUG AND ALCOHOL STRATEGY

The Executive Director Environment presented a report on draft 6 of the next three year Crime, Disorder, Drug and Alcohol Strategy which had been prepared in accordance with the 1998 Crime & Disorder Act. The creation of the new Safer Middlesbrough Partnership and its associated working structures and processes formed a key element of the strategy. The strategy outlined what the Partnership intended to do to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Middlesbrough, reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour and reduce the harm caused by the misuse of drugs and alcohol. It explained how the strategic priorities had been established and what was hoped to be achieved through the new arrangements by March 2008.

Over recent months consultation had taken place with residents and an assessment had been made of the current situation and of the priorities of responsible authorities, other key partners and Government. In the summer 2004 an audit report of the Safer Middlesbrough Partnership had been compiled and formed the basis of the consultation for which 1200 responses had been received. The respondents had identified anti-social behaviour, misuse of drugs, house burglary, robbery/mugging, and street violence as the five main areas of greatest concern. The key anti-

social behaviour priorities had been identified as drugs/substance misuse, criminal damage/vandalism, misuse of alcohol/street drinking, and threats/verbal abuse.

The three main drivers which, determined the priorities for action were identified as follows: -

- i) extensive Community Consultation which was used to assist stakeholders to make informed choices as to the key areas for action;
- ii) Shared National Priorities which included the challenging crime reduction and harm minimisation targets set by central Government and shared by local partner agencies;
- iii) Shared Local Partner Priorities, which included the Mayor's 'Raising Hope' agenda and subsequent wider 'Reduction' agenda.

The strategy linked to various local and national agendas including; Mayor's Reduction Agenda; LSP's Community Strategy; National and Local Policing Plans; Public Service Agreement Targets 2005/2008; Prolific and Other Priority Offenders Scheme; National Drug Strategy; National Alcohol Strategy; and Drugs Intervention Programme.

The draft strategy had been compiled with the support of various agencies including input from senior Council Officers, and had been approved by the Safer Middlesbrough Partnership.

The strategy included additional areas of activity with some new approaches including:

- working through an area based team approach by agencies to seek to divert more young people from anti-social behaviour and targeting individuals through enforcement activity where necessary;
- implementation of the Priority & Prolific Offenders scheme to 'prevent & deter', 'catch & convict', 'resettle & rehabilitate' the relatively small number of people who committed large numbers of crimes;
- establishment of an Alcohol task group, linking enforcement activity with health education;
- linking action against drug dealers with nationally recognised treatment and rehabilitation services.

The strategy set out the relevant targets locally and nationally. It was recognised that there was a need to maintain and further develop a quarterly performance management regime in accordance with the partnership, other agencies and Government office requirements.

In terms of the national agenda reference was made to new Public Service Agreement Targets set by the Home Office during 2004 which had been taken into account when setting targets for the Partnership.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made: -

- a) the need to be explicit as to the stated priorities and not to raise expectations too high was acknowledged;
- b) the attempts as to what was perceived by the public as to the key issues of anti-social behaviour was supported;
- c) it was recognised that certain aspects could not be measured including the 'level of tolerance' but it was acknowledged that an important element of the Strategy related to the tackling of the fear of crime;
- d) although it was recognised that the British Crime Survey provided a better measure of the level of crime the need to reflect local circumstances including reference to the 'experience of crime' was highlighted.

It was pointed out that the Strategy incorporating the views of the Board and the Executive would be considered by the full Council in June 2005.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the Officers be thanked for the information provided.
2. That the views of the Board be incorporated into the Strategy.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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