

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 12 July 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor T Ward (Vice - Chair) (In the Chair); Councillors Booth, Mawston, Robson, Rogers, Rooney and Wilson.

OFFICIALS: C Arbuthnot, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, J Ord, K E Robinson and E Williamson.

**** 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 14 and 21 June 2005 were submitted and approved.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – HUMAN RESOURCES – DIVERSITY ISSUES

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered the Board's findings on the Final Report relating to Human Resources and Diversity issues.

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

It was noted that the Chair in presenting the Board's findings to the Executive had referred to a number of actions which were Officer lead and had emphasised the importance of the political direction required in implementing the actions.

In commenting on the timescale for the departmental reviews of the Race Equality Scheme to be considered by appropriate Scrutiny Panels it was noted that this would take place at both mid and end of the year.

It was confirmed that the final draft of the Race Equality Scheme had been approved at the Individual Executive Meeting (Environment) held on 22 June 2005.

NOTED

AUTHORITY'S PROGRESS INTO 14/19 AGENDA – CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's investigation into the Authority's progress into the 14/19 Agenda.

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

- i) That due to a history of poor educational attainment in Middlesbrough the 14-19 Agenda is vital to the young people of Middlesbrough and its future and therefore the LEA needs to work with its partners on a number of issues.
- ii) There is a requirement to review and evaluate the current roles of key parties including the LEA, Learning Skills Council, Connexions, educational institutions, employers and work-based providers.
- iii) The profile of vocational learning needs to be raised to strengthen the understanding of the education, training and benefits of the 14-19 Agenda.
- iv) The Authority's current policies and initiatives need to be re-evaluated for effectiveness.

- v) To further develop providers, they receive additional training and support to deliver a 14-19 Curriculum and that this change needs to be fully supported by the Authority.
- vi) A personal learning development plan is needed for all learners to track and develop progression and immediately identify when problems may arise. Tracking of learners is currently undertaken by Connexions, with the information being available to schools when requested although some schools experience difficulties in accessing this information.
- vii) That greater collaboration between pre and post 16 educational institutions is needed, to ensure that the potential routes remain open for the duration of the student's education.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel: -

- a) That because of the importance of the 14/19 Agenda to the Town the LEA should develop a local vision for it, to include the development of collaboration between agencies, educational institutions, employers and other associated parties which would address the local barriers to further education and to ensure that raising achievement and increasing participation figure prominently as priorities on Middlesbrough's 14/19 Learning Strategy Action Plan.
- b) That the LEA should review and evaluate the current roles of key partners including the LEA, Learning Skills Council, Connexions, educational institutions, employers and work-based providers, to deliver the Government's 14/19 Education and Skills Strategy such a review to address the support available for young people at risk of disengaging from mainstream education and ensure that this was a key priority for all agencies.
- c) That with the involvement of the schools and colleges a regional marketing plan should be developed that will raise the profile of vocational learning and strengthen the understanding of education, training and benefits of the 14/19 Agenda.
- d) That the local implications of the Tomlinson reforms be assessed and once identified the implications may require further development of the 14/19 Agenda in Middlesbrough.
- e) That the training needs of providers be identified to enable them to deliver the 14/19 curriculum and when recognised develop a plan that will effectively deliver the required training.
- f) That to ensure that all learners have a personal learning development plan and that schools, colleges and work-based providers have access to this, to track and develop learners progress and immediately identify when problems arise and also to ensure that this plan takes into account the needs of each student, their level of ability and the working environment.
- g) That a review be undertaken of the Curriculum available across all providers (pre and post 16) and create a greater collaboration between pre and post 16 educational institutions ensuring potential routes remain open for the duration of the student's education.
- h) That the LEA and partners broaden the range of apprenticeships on offer for learners and increase the number available at an advanced level.
- i) That the LEA and partners review the learning difficulties and/or disabilities service provision for learners post 16 and implement plans which offer a good quality provision across Middlesbrough.

- j) That the LEA should work with schools to ensure that learners achieve at least the standards expected of them at Key Stage 4 and that performance is close to the national average.

Whilst recognising the Council's limitations in respect of recommendation (b) it was acknowledged that the scrutiny process and monitoring arrangements would ensure that the Board and respective Panel would be advised on the progress of implementation of the recommendations.

Members suggested that paragraph 21 (e) should be amended to read 'To stretch the ability of young people'.

The Board noted the Panel's findings regarding the lack of apprenticeships and suggested that there be scope to review the matter in the future.

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

SCRUTINY REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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.

In terms of the Executive actions which should have been implemented by June 2005, 114 had been implemented, 23 partially completed and progress reports received in respect of 5 of 14 actions which had not been implemented.

Appendix B of the report submitted gave an update in respect of the Health Scrutiny Action Plans.

Members highlighted the importance of receiving information on the current status of the recommendations, which had not been implemented by the target date.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information be noted.
2. That in the event of the outstanding progress reports as requested be not forthcoming for submission to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board, the respective Officers be advised that such cases could be referred to in the Chair's report to Council.

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 or members of the public.

NOTED

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - WORK PROGRAMME 2005/2006

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer regarding the Board's draft Work Programme 2005-06 an indication was given of the increased work by the Board in particular the integration of the Resources and Audit Scrutiny Panel and consideration of corporate issues.

As previously indicated, Members had identified possible topics for inclusion in the work programme to be discussed further such as job evaluation/equal pay, school ICT infrastructure, Strategic Risk Strategy and Policy Framework (from a Members' perspective).

ORDERED that consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting of the Board.

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.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That subject to the Panel's approval, the topic of 'school meals' be added to the work programme of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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