
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 9 August 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor T Ward (Vice- Chair) (In the Chair); Councillors Robson and Rogers.

OFFICIALS: B Baldam, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, R Mitchell, J Ord, K E Robinson and K Stokes.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted o behalf of the Chair, Councillor Carr and Councillors Cole, Dryden, McTigue, Mawston and Rooney.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor Robson	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Any matters relating to the report concerning Building Sustainable Communities in Inner Middlesbrough in view of a relative's interests.

(Councillor Robson made the above declaration at the point in the meeting where the item above was considered under any other business.)

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 12 July were submitted and approved.

FOURTH QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2004/2005

The Board considered a report of the Director of Resources which outlined the final outturn position for expenditure against the 2003/2004 Revenue Budget.

The report detailed the progress on the action points for services following the 3rd Quarters Revenue Budget Outturn and gave a summary of the overall outturn variances from budget.

Members sought clarification on a number of points and during the ensuing discussion made the following key observations:-

- a) whilst in overall terms it was considered to be an encouraging report and mindful of the level of underspend the need for the robust monitoring arrangements to continue was reaffirmed;
- b) reference was made to the success of the budget clinics;
- c) specific reference was made to Social Care in achieving a net saving against budget of £375,000 despite additional service pressures as a result of the statutory requirements of placing 2 children into secure accommodation at a cost of £215k;
- d) it was noted that a report was being prepared on the future operation of the Enterprise Centre.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That further detailed information be submitted in respect of the Streetscene outturn variances from budget.

FOURTH QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2004/2005

The Board considered a report of the Director of Resources which gave an update of the fourth quarter Capital Outturn for 2004/2005 which included a review of capital expenditure alongside revenue expenditure as part of the quarterly budget clinic process.

It was noted that the level of slippage, within the overall programme was continuing to reduce and represented approximately 2.6% of the overall gross programme. In addition to project slippage, the following capital provision had been re-phased:-

- a) Town Hall re-development following the completion of the maintenance works to the Clock Tower;
- b) in terms of equal pay provision the balance of the £10m provision had been re-phased to reflect the current position in respect of actual payments and potential future tax liabilities;
- c) the capital provision had been re-phased to reflect the current position in respect of securing the future provision of the 'Older Person' Change programme.

NOTED

CONSOLIDATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2004/2005

The Board gave detailed consideration of a report of the Corporate Performance Manager regarding the 2004/05 Consolidated Performance Report.

It was noted that overall performance was considered to be satisfactory with approximately 62% of the BVPIs showing an improvement or remaining the same when compared to last year's performance. The Council had focused on a number of areas including; reducing sickness level, increasing the diversity of our workforce and improving attainment. It was acknowledged that such actions had been reflected in the 2004/05 outturn figures:

- working days lost through absence had decreased from 15.2 days to 1.8 days per person;
- the percentage of employees who met the DDA definition of disabled had increased from 1.0% to 2.8%;
- the percentage of BME staff had increased from 0.9% to 2.6%;
- GCSE results had improved for the 6th consecutive year.

It was noted however, performance against target set was considered to be disappointing but would be considered in the light of the challenging targets set and the requirement to adhere to national target setting regimes even when these were not appropriate to local circumstances.

It was confirmed that Performance and Policy would be analysing those indicators which did not meet the target set to see if there were any lessons when setting targets next year.

Members sought clarification in respect of a number of areas and during the subsequent discussion the following key points were noted:-

- a) work of the Integrated Performance Review Clinics;
- b) confirmation that information from the Integrated Performance Clinics were presented to the individual Scrutiny Panels;
- c) confirmation that improvements had been made in the current financial year regarding the collection of Council Tax;
- d) concerns were expressed in relation to the targets not being met in respect of the poor condition of principal and non-principal roads;
- e) it was noted that in respect of (d) above and given the current level of central Government funding the Council was forced to adopt a reactive maintenance policy that concentrated effort towards safety issues rather than targeting econometric principles;

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- f) in relation to BV 201 in respect of the number of adults and older people receiving direct payments it was noted that progress was currently on target;
- g) details were provided of the current topic of scrutiny investigation by the Environment Scrutiny Panel relating to recycling.

NOTED

AUDIT COMMISSION COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT – IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Principal Corporate Development Officer submitted a report which outlined the Corporate Assessment report from the Audit Commission and associated improvement plan.

It was noted that the Inspectors had found that Middlesbrough Council had made good progress in key areas since the 2002 corporate assessment had been carried out. It had been built on its strengths and made changes to address its weaknesses. Strengths identified included:

- ‘Council and partners have a strong vision for Middlesbrough
- Clear priorities for improvement that underpin the ambition for Middlesbrough
- Demonstrated ability to focus on improving service delivery, cross cutting issues and its internal workings
- Strong political leadership and strong corporate management team
- Clear and effective links between ambition and priorities and service plans enabling monitoring of achievement
- Improvements delivered in priority areas such as unemployment, overall crime rates, smoking and conception rates in under 18s
- Improved internal communication
- Clear about what it has achieved and what still remains to be done in terms of improving quality of life of local people
- The Council has robust plans in place to deliver the ambition for Middlesbrough’.

It had also been stated, however, by the Inspectors that they had found the Council had some weaknesses such as:

- ‘No overarching workforce development strategy
- High levels of sickness
- An inconsistent approach to the promotion of service standards
- Performance against some key indicators has not improved
- Systems in place to support risk management are not fully developed, embedded or universally applied.’

Reference was made to the improvement plan, as shown in appendix 2 of the report submitted which had been prepared in response to the weaknesses identified in the Corporate Assessment report, which incorporated the recommendations as set out in Performance Management Arrangements Audit Report.

NOTED

AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT – LSP GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Middlesbrough Partnership Manager submitted a report which outlined the actions to be undertaken in response to the Audit Commission’s report into LSP Governance arrangements.

Reference was made to the conclusion of the Audit Commission’s report which contained the following recommendations which had resulted in an action plan for the Middlesbrough Partnership Team:-

“To ensure good governance arrangements within the LSP, the partnership should:

- ‘clarify the roles of chairs and thematic action groups to ensure all partners understand their individual roles, responsibilities and codes of conduct;

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- clarify how it will prioritise NR funding and intervention levels across the six strategic themes to ensure a transparent approach with clearer criteria is being adopted;
 - undertake a review of support arrangements for the six strategic themes;
 - adopt all the necessary procedures to ensure full compliance with the rules outlined in the partnership handbook; and
 - develop a complaints-handling approach that not only records and deals with complaints consistently and provides opportunities to learn but also publicises the arrangements to encourage people to submit compliments or complaints

Proposed follow-up work would undertake a more detailed study of:-

- how new deal for communities funds are being managed;
- the working practices of the Council's regeneration programmes department;
- specific NRF funded projects to ensure that:
 - they are monitored and reported on adequately;
 - they are compliant with relevant council policies; and
 - they have appropriate exit strategies in place.
- This work will be undertaken in the second quarter of 2005."

Reference was made to an Action Plan which had been produced and for which a number of actions had already commenced or completed.

NOTED

ACTIVE INTELLIGENCE MAPPING – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's investigation into Active Intelligence Mapping.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel: -

- a) 'That additional manpower resources are provided by the Council to support the AIM Manager in the detailed analysis of intelligence received from all the contributing partners. The analysis of intelligence would be improved, by creating a number of separate categories, which reflect the different forms of Anti Social behaviour.
- b) That partner organisations formalise their commitment to the AIM process, by establishing agreed key objectives and incorporating those within their own Individual Service Plans and ensuring the appropriate level of resources are allocated.
- c) That AIM meetings continue to be Chaired by a Senior Officer of the Council to whom the partnership is accountable for the delivery of actions and the agreed deployment of resources.
- d) That AIM meetings continue to be held weekly as an operational meeting reacting to evidence, to supplement this, a quarterly meeting of the partners is convened for the formulation of policy and guidance for the AIM process in determining long term objectives.
- e) That the Environment Department further examine the budget and potential to employ the target level of 80 wardens and also ensure the funding is sustainable. for funding the warden resource.
(The funding and deployment of street wardens is also programmed for a Scrutiny examination in the 2005 – 06 work programme)
- f) That the Primary Care Trust be invited to join the Partnership and a senior representative from the PCT attend Panel meetings. As the actions of the PCT contribute to the improvement of health and lifestyle, which can contribute significantly to the reduction in Anti Social behaviour.

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- g) That representatives of the AIM partnership meet occasionally with the Magistrates Courts to convey any concerns regarding the effects of decisions taken by the Courts. Consideration be given by the AIM Partnership to meet, with court officials every six months on issues of mutual concern, which have emerged from the AIM meeting.
 - h) That when the AIM process identifies the need specific engagement takes place between the Councils Press Office and the Police Press Office to co-ordinated publicity, which improves public awareness of the reduction in crime within Middlesbrough.
 - i) That the concern over Drugs as a major driver for Crime should be explored as one of the issues within the mapping process and targeted by the AIM Partnership.

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

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 REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 12 July 2005 the Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted a report which outlined the current status of the implementation of nine scrutiny recommendations which had not been implemented by the target date.

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 or members of the public.

NOTED

SCRUTINY REVIEW REQUEST – MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny Officer details were submitted of a request from a member of the public for a scrutiny review in relation to concessionary bus fares for persons under 18 years old.

ORDERED that the request be referred to the Head of Transport and Design Services with a view to exploring the feasibility of the request with the bus companies and that the applicant be advised accordingly.

SCRUTINY REPORTS - PROGRESS REPORTS

A report of the Chair of each Scrutiny Panel was submitted outlining progress on current activities.

NOTED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS – OUTCOME OF CALL IN – BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
IN INNER MIDDLESBROUGH**

With the approval of the Chair and in view of the time constraints involved a report on the outcome of the special meeting of the Board held on 3 August 2005 which reviewed the key decision made by the Executive (20 July 2005) in respect of the above was circulated at the meeting.

NOTED AND APPROVED