
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 6 September 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor Mawston (Vice- Chair) (In the Chair – part of meeting), Councillors Dryden, McTigue, Robson and Rooney.

OFFICIALS: B Baldam, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, J Ord, J Richardson, K E Robinson, E Williamson and M Wood.

PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER: Councillor N J Walker.

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

**** 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 3 and 9 August were submitted and approved.

N.B. The Chair apologised for being late which was unavoidable and resumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – GREEN BUDGET – NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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 Reports relating to Night Time Economy and the Council's Green Budget.

The Executive had considered and supported the responses of the Service and the Corporate Management Team and had also agreed the proposed Action Plans subject to the time-scales of the Night Time Economy response being re-examined.

NOTED

REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2004/2005 – STREETSCENE SERVICES

Further to the meeting of the Board held 9 August 2005 the Executive Director Environment presented a report which detailed information regarding the variances from budget in respect of the Streetscene out-turn for 2004/2005.

Specific reference was made to extracts from the individual budget clinics which had addressed the majority of the issues avoiding a structural revenue budget problem, in the medium term financial plan and as part of the current year's budget clinic process.

The Board focussed on the main areas of pressure and expense in respect of the following: -

- a) as a result of the implementation of legal requirements of the new Highways Code of Practice which had increased the number of highway inspections there had been a significant increase in the subsequent work which had to be carried out;
- b) costs arising from the introduction of new legislation on Manual Handling for which specialised lifting equipment had been provided funded from maintenance budgets;
- c) an uncontrollable pressure had been identified in respect of the Winter Maintenance budget.

As a result of the 1st Quarter Clinic, recommendations were likely to be made to the Executive in relation to the following: -

Highways Inspections:

- shortfall in funding of £60k in 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 to be funded from Lane rental income;
- the additional costs had been difficult to predict and a full Value For Money study (including delivery option appraisal) was to be completed by 31 March 2006;

Health and Safety (Highways):

- 30k capital equipment needed should be included in review of Environmental Services capital programme;
- the balance of 30k revenue impact to be re-examined in terms of impact on outputs if existing resources were used as opposed to providing additional resources to meet previous outputs;

Central Support Charges:

- the strategic impact of the increase in central support charges in respect of Streetscene Revenue and Trading Accounts in 04/05 had been acknowledged in 2004/05 and a further report examining the charges was currently being prepared and interim 05/06 charges were assumed to be similar to the 2003/04 charges adjusted for inflation.

In terms of the significant backlog relating to highway maintenance as being experienced by many other local authorities, it was hoped that the situation would be re-addressed by the Government by the adoption of a more consistent approach in assessing the standard of roads and appropriate allocation of resources.

In addition to the Integrated Performance and Budget Clinics, the Executive Member for Resources advised the Board of the establishment of a specific group to examine the situation regarding central resources. The Board suggested that they be kept informed of any changes made in response to the current situation.

NOTED

RISK MANAGEMENT REVISED STRATEGY

The Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report regarding the Council's revised Risk Management Strategy – 'A Sense of Proportion' which took into account the following: -

- the review of 'Chance or Choice' presented to CMT on 4 August 2005;
- progress made since 2002, across the Council with regard to risk management;
- to further embed good practice across the Council;
- reflected the previous statement that regular reviews would be undertaken;
- it was in line with auditor's expectations.

The aim of risk management within the Council was 'to improve our ability to deliver our strategic priorities by managing our threats, enhancing our opportunities and creating an environment that adds value to ongoing operational activities'.

The Board's attention was drawn to the following elements in the revised strategy: -

- expanded definition of risk;
- risk management framework consisting of six steps; identifying strategic priorities; identifying and assessing risks; compiling a risk register; risk treatment; monitoring and reporting; and reviewing.

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- Risk appetite, which identified the level of risk and the appropriate action, which was required.

It was acknowledged that the Council had made significant progress in implementing a risk management culture across the Council.

To assist in the implementation of the strategy, risk management awareness training was being offered to all Members.

NOTED

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER – FIRST QUARTER MONITORING

In a report of the Corporate Performance Manager information was provided on the first quarter monitoring of the 2005-2006 Strategic Risk Register.

Reference was made to the 48 risks that made up the Strategic Risk Register 2005/2006 which were categorised in line with the Council's six Community Strategy themes and the Council's overarching 'Fit for Purpose' theme.

The risk factors and associated risks; summary of approach; specific strategies and actions identified to mitigate the risks were summarised in Appendix A of the report submitted.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That as part of the arrangements of informing the scrutiny process future monitoring reports on the Strategic Risk Register be submitted to individual Scrutiny Panels as well as the Board prior to the Executive.

EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS – JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL – HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's investigation into Emergency Admissions at James Cook University Hospital.

In commenting on the conclusions of the Panel specific reference was made to the following:

- i) there had been a significant increase in the number of emergency admissions despite a reduction in beds;
- ii) there was a high turnover of patients within 24 hours;
- iii) there was an example of prompt action being taken by the production of an information leaflet in response to concerns expressed by the Panel with regard to evidence of an apparent lack of information provided to patients and/or carers upon discharge from hospital;
- iv) arising from experiences of Panel Members the local health and social care economy was urged to ensure that their respective complaint mechanisms were sufficiently flexible to allow complaints made on behalf of patients.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel: -

- (a) That Middlesbrough PCT, with partners in the local health and social care economy investigates the viability of enhancing community facilities in the Town.

- (b) That the processes around discharge are kept under constant review to aim that no one is inappropriately discharged.
- (c) That the information provided to people upon discharge is reviewed to ensure it contains appropriate information regarding the process to follow should they feel they have been inappropriately discharged.
- (d) That a system is prepared to ensure anybody who has been inappropriately discharged, following notification, is subject to a rapid assessment and the appropriate action taken and that such system should be made public and as transparent as possible.
- (e) That should it become clear that anybody has been inappropriately discharged, an investigation is undertaken to ensure lessons are learnt.
- (f) That Middlesbrough PCT continues to monitor the effectiveness of the Out of Hours services as provided by Primecare.
- (g) That a dedicated unit in relation to the Integrated Care Pathway as outlined in the report is advanced with a view to implementation as soon as possible.

In terms of the monitoring arrangements it was noted that the response/action plan would be reviewed as part of the overall scrutiny arrangements regarding the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.

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

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

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor Dryden	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Any matters relating to Connexions and Job Centre Plus referred to in the progress report of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel.

SCRUTINY PANELS - 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 – REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Chair referred to the special meeting of the Board held on 24 August 2005 when consideration had been given to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East. It was reported that the Executive had subsequently agreed at its meeting held on 30 August 2005 to the following additional recommendation being included within the RSS as follows: -

'That in the Regional Spatial Strategy paragraph 2.122 and policy 7, under connectivity, specific reference be made to the role of the East Middlesbrough Corridor in reducing congestion, improving accessibility and assisting with the regeneration of the area. The scheme should be identified as a transportation priority.'

NOTED