
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 1 November 2005.

PRESENT: Councillors Booth, Cole, Dryden, Robson, Rogers, Rooney and Wilson.

OFFICIALS: B Baldam, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clarke, P Clark, A Crawford, C Hawking, J Ord, D Robinson, K E Robinson and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** Councillor N J Walker (Executive Member for Resources).

CHAIR – APPOINTMENT - MEETING

ORDERED that in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chairs, Councillor Booth be appointed to the Chair for the meeting.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of the Chair, Councillor Carr and Councillor 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 October 2005 were submitted and approved.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – ACTIVE INTELLIGENCE MAPPING PROCESS

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 the Active Intelligence Mapping Process.

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

NOTED

MIDDLESBROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration Programmes was presented relating to the Local Development Framework (LDF) which had been prepared following a new planning system which had been introduced by the Government in 2004.

A core component of the LDF was the core strategy which set out the principal elements of the planning framework for the Town, and comprised a spatial vision and strategic objectives, a spatial strategy, and core policies.

The LDF core strategy had been produced having regard to the consultation undertaken on the Issues and Option paper during July 2005. The core strategy was at the preferred options stage and would be published for consultation in December 2005. A submission version would then be produced having regard to consultation responses and submitted to the Secretary of State in the summer of 2006.

The Board considered the core strategy report which was a working document which continued to be refined and acknowledged its importance in setting out the strategic planning framework for the Town over the next fifteen years.

The core strategy document comprised the following components:-

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- a) spatial portrait, vision, and objectives;
 - b) strategic policies that provide the planning framework for delivering the spatial vision and objectives;
 - c) development control policies; and
 - d) monitoring framework.

In considering the report Members sought clarification on a number of points including:-

- i) the extent of mixed use development and at Greater Middlehaven as outlined in the core strategy;
- ii) it was acknowledged that one of the key issues to be addressed was to stop the decline in population and reverse such a trend by ensuring that Middlesbrough retained and enhanced its role as the principal centre for the Tees Valley region to attract people to the area;
- iii) in terms of the extent of employment land it was confirmed that the strategic locations identified included approximately 5 hectares in East Middlesbrough.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

FIRST QUARTER BUDGET OUTTURN REVENUE 2005/2006

A report of the Director of Resources was presented of the first quarter's review of revenue expenditure against the 2005/2006 Revenue Budget.

It was noted that a net saving of just under £100,000 was projected within general fund services for the year as outlined in the report.

The Board's attention was drawn to some areas of concern and the proposed action to be taken to address such issues which included the following:-

- a) Children, Families & Learning to ring fence net savings to cover the fees for Building Schools for the Future;
- b) an assessment of the medium term position to be provided for the next quarter's budget in respect of the ongoing pressures in respect of the Authority's Children looked After requirements;
- c) a report on (b) above would include consideration of maximising grant funding, allocation of contingency funding and progress against stretch targets;
- d) a Working Group had been established to develop a long-term strategy in respect of (b) above and to report to CMT in the near future the timescale of which had been sought from Members;
- e) net pressures of £197k and not £187k as stated in the report had been projected of Transport & Design (£118k), Community Protection (£60k) and Streetscene (£9k);
- f) an assessment of the medium term position was to be produced in respect of the significant pressures in respect of the Learning Disabilities Budget both in the year and in the longer term.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORTS 2002/2006

In accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit on Local Government a report of the Director of Resources was submitted which outlined the work of the Internal Audit Section for the financial years 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05. The report provided performance

information and an opinion on the overall effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment. An update was also provided on the first two quarters of 2005/06.

Based on the work undertaken during the years reported upon and the implementation by management of the majority of the recommendations made, Internal Audit could provide reasonable assurance that the systems of internal control within such areas of the Council were operating adequately and effectively.

The Board noted in particular the current staffing situation and vacancies.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the 2002/03, 2003/04, 2004/05 Annual Reports of Internal Audit be noted.
2. That the update of the first two quarters of financial years 2005/06 be noted.

ONE STOP SERVICE REVIEW

The Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report on the outcome of the review of the One-Stop Service following concerns raised by some Councillors about the service provided.

Details were provided of the review process and the two main themes which had emerged as follows:-

- i) the high quality of service provided by the One-Stop staff;
- ii) problems relating to a lack and timeliness of feedback and the quality of the responses provided.

Information was also provided of other issues arising from the review which included:-

- low usage of the system by some Councillors;
- lack of agreement between the One-Stop staff and Environment services staff on definitions in use;
- IT system developments;
- process issues arising from the transfer of housing stock and responsibility for complaints relating to housing, Erimus.

The eleven recommendations which had been made were outlined which focussed on ensuring that feedback was provided, improving the quality and timeliness of feedback and improving the internal processes.

The report included the Action Plan the implementation of which would be monitored by Performance and Policy and a follow-up review undertaken by September 2006.

The Board supported the partnership approach with Erimus in respect of queries relating to housing and requested that Members be informed of the proposed outcome of discussion with Erimus.

ORDERED that the information provided be 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 since the last meeting of the Board.

NOTED

SCRUTINY PANELS - PROGRESS REPORTS

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

NOTED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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