

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 31 January 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Booth, Cole, Robson, T Ward and Wilson.

OFFICIALS: C Barnfather, J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, A Crawford, J Ord, K E Robinson, N Sayer and E Williamson.

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

**** 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 January 2006 were submitted and approved.

JNC RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION – OUTCOME OF CALL IN

A report of the Chair of the Board was submitted regarding the outcome of the meeting of the Board held on 9 January 2006 which had been arranged in accordance with the Authority's call-in procedure to review the decisions made by the Mayor on 15 December 2005 relating to JNC recruitment and retention.

Taking into account the evidence presented in particular the level of research and comparisons undertaken to align with regional competitors and following a vote, the Board had formally referred the decision back to the Mayor for reconsideration on the basis that the decision had been taken too hastily.

The Chair referred to the overall scrutiny process and in particular the importance of the role of the Board in providing reasons in support of decisions made in respect of the Call-In procedure.

NOTED

JNC RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION – OUTCOME OF INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEETING

In a report of the Executive Office Manager the Board was advised of the outcome of an Individual Executive Meeting of the Mayor which had been held on 19 January 2006. The findings of the Board at its meeting held on 9 January 2006 had been presented by the Chair, Councillor Carr.

The JNC Recruitment and Retention report had subsequently been reconsidered by the Mayor and a response given to comments made by Members of the Board prior to making a decision.

The Mayor had considered that there had been extensive research and consultation undertaken to support the report's recommendations and he had not accepted therefore that the decision had been taken too hastily. The original decision to approve the report's recommendations had therefore been upheld.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – ACUTE HOSPITAL SERVICES REVIEW

In a report of the Executive Manager it was reported that at the request of the Board the Executive at its meeting held on 20 December 2005 had considered a report on the Acute Hospital Services Review regarding the potential implications for Middlesbrough residents.

The report considered by the Executive recommended that the Council should seek reassurances, which ensured that the quality of care for patients in Middlesbrough was not compromised. It had also been recommended that the transfer of the gastro-intestinal cancer services and the endo-luminal vascular services to the University Hospital of North Tees should not result in a resource deficit.

The Executive had expressed serious concerns on the potential implications of the review especially in relation to the James Cook University Hospital and the residents of Middlesbrough.

It had been determined that the Mayor would agree a response to the Strategic Health Authority as outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted. The concerns of the Executive had also been raised in a letter to the Prime Minister as shown in Appendix B and the Secretary of State for Health in Appendix C to the report.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS – JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

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 on the Emergency Admissions at James Cook University Hospital.

The Executive had considered and supported the responses of the Corporate Management Team and Service response by the South Tees NHS Trust and the Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust.

NOTED

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.

Clarification was sought regarding the status and purpose of the reports to be submitted to the Executive in respect of the following: -

- a) Housing Regeneration Strategy
- b) Middlesbrough Urban Renaissance Strategy.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That further details be provided of the reports to be submitted to the Executive in respect of (a) and (b) above.

NOTED

WORKLESSNESS – FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's investigation into the Council's, and its partner agencies', role in tackling worklessness and more broadly on the nature of a strategic approach to dealing with worklessness.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel: -

- a) The Council vigorously pursues its role as a co-ordinator of agencies operating in the field of tackling worklessness through the establishment of the Middlesbrough Works Partnership.

- b) That reducing the proportion of Middlesbrough residents who are workless should be a very high priority for action and for policy development and that a specific target should be set for reducing the numbers of workless people in the Town and that reports on progress towards meeting that target should be provided to the Middlesbrough Works Group and the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel on an annual basis.
- c) The Council should consider how employment opportunities within the Authority could be used to attract, train and employ workless residents.
- d) In developing new opportunities for employment with inward investors in the Town, every effort should be made to ensure that as many of the new jobs created as possible are filled by previously workless Middlesbrough residents.

The Board acknowledged the significance of the subject matter of the report and in particular the importance of having a specific Action Plan in this case.

Reference was made to the overall scrutiny process and the opportunity for Members to make observations on the Action Plan and subsequent monitoring arrangements in particular the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.

Members sought clarification on a number of points and commented on the following: -

- a) possible additional recommendation asking for comments on the potential implications on the report arising from the Government's recent Green Paper, 'A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work', which included the replacement of Incapacity Benefit and Income Support with a new benefit 'Employment and Support Allowance';
- b) in view of the plethora of agencies pursuing employment initiatives Members suggested that in respect of recommendation 1 and in addition to pursuing its role as co-ordinator the Council also seek to rationalise wherever possible;

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive taking into account (a) and (b) outlined above.

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The Corporate Performance Manager submitted a report which gave an update on progress that the Council had made in implementing improvement plans arising from the: -

- a) Access to Services Inspection
- b) Cultural Services Inspection
- c) Comprehensive Performance Assessment Corporate Assessment
- d) Risk Management Internal progress review.

In each of the above inspections at a, b and c Middlesbrough Council had scored well and the auditors had found many strengths although some areas for improvement had been identified. It was confirmed that improvement plans to address the areas for improvement had been drafted and taken to CMT, Scrutiny and the Executive.

In addition to the improvement work identified from external sources, the Council had also identified risk management as an area that needed progressing and a revised risk management strategy and associated action plan had been produced.

The report provided an update of progress against the four improvement plans and information regarding how any actions not yet achieved or were of an ongoing nature would be mainstreamed into other Council plans as detailed in Appendix A of the report submitted.

The Board acknowledged the improvements made and enhanced data collection and method of recording in some cases.

NOTED

SCRUTINY REVIEW – NON EXECUTIVE MEMBER – COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted a report, which outlined a request received from a Non Executive Member for a review to be undertaken into aspects relating to the use of Community Centres.

ORDERED that further consideration be given to the inclusion of the above as a scrutiny topic within the work programme of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel when formulating the annual work programme for the next Municipal Year 2006/2007.

SCRUTINY REVIEW - PUBLIC – REGENERATION – NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

The Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted a report, which outlined a request received from a member of the public for a review to be undertaken into the Council's regeneration policies in particular that the emphasis should be placed on refurbishment.

ORDERED that the matter be reconsidered following clarification regarding the reports identified above in the Executive Forward Work Programme in respect of Housing Regeneration Strategy and Middlesbrough Urban Renaissance Strategy.

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

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