

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 19 September 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Dryden, McTigue, Mawston and Wilson.

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

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Booth, Cole, Harris, Rooney and 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 22 August 2006 were submitted and approved.

REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN – FIRST QUARTERS 2006/2007

A report of the Director of Resources was presented on the first quarter's review of revenue expenditure against the 2006/2007 Revenue Budget.

A summary was provided of the overall outturn variances from budget. 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) in response to a significant budget pressure on Home to School Transport of (+£163,000) as a result of additional transport needs for pupils with special needs and the increased use of taxis for disruptive children, a review of the Council's transportation together with the Children's Families and Learning budget review was being undertaken with a view to bringing the service within budget by the end of the year;
- b) in terms of the budget relating to vulnerable children there was a significant pressure of (-£121,000) arising from additional residential placements (+£55,000) and in-house fostering payments, out of Borough placements to independent fostering and agency fostering service,
- c) work was ongoing to produce a report of the changing trends within the out of borough, in-house and independent fostering areas of the budget the outcome of which would inform the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and the budget review currently being undertaken by Children, Families and Learning;
- d) an increased demand arising from 26 clients had resulted in financial pressure on the Learning Disabilities budget of £196,000 for 2006/2007 which would be partly offset by savings within purchased community support and day care services of £48,000;
- e) as a result of changes to Government rules the outcome of the Supporting People Reviews of Learning Disability services represented the most significant financial pressure facing Social Care as a result of a much greater element of the overall package of care/support a client receives becoming the responsibility of Social Care the impact of which was a net pressure of £503,000.

Members expressed concern at the overspend situation in respect of (a) and (b) outlined above given that such budget pressures had been predicted. It was suggested that given the trends, which had been demonstrated, in such areas, the budget should have been adjusted accordingly or alternative earlier action should have been undertaken to alleviate such a situation.

NOTED

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/2006 TO 2008/2009 – FIRST QUARTERS 2006/2007

A report of the Director of Resources was presented on the first quarter 2006/2007 review of the Capital Programme 2005/06 to 2008/09 and estimated variances.

Details of additional net expenditure were provided at Appendix A of the report submitted most of which had been approved and the source of such approval identified.

Expenditure had been re-profiled to reflect the actual outturn position for 2005/06 and information from services as detailed in Appendix A of the report.

The revised programme was shown at Appendix B of the report submitted. Projects approved in principle would be subject to individual appraisal in accordance with approved criteria.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That further information be provided regarding any additional costs arising from the Marton Road Traffic Experiment.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEME REVIEW

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 comments relating to the final report of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel in respect of its review of the residents Car Parking Scheme.

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

NOTED

STRATEGIC AUDIT PLAN

A report of the Director of Resources was presented which outlined the Annual Audit Plan for Internal Audit covering the financial year 2006/07.

To ensure the work of Internal Audit remained focused on the risks facing the Council, work areas would be re-assessed throughout the year to determine their continued appropriateness in the light of any emerging risks. Significant variations would be brought to the attention of the Board.

The proposed Audit Plan for 2006/07 was outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted. The plan contained audits to ensure that sufficient work was undertaken to enable production of an opinion about the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk and internal control.

It was confirmed that recruitment had taken place since the last report to the Board and that the Corporate Management Team would shortly consider a report on the review as to how the internal audit function could be developed.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

CONSOLIDATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2006

In a report of the Corporate Performance Manager details were provided of the Council's performance, for quarter one, April – June 2006/07 in respect of:

- a) Planned Actions (formally Key Commitments) given in the Strategic Plan

b) Performance to date against targets set for BVPIs.

In overall terms it was considered that the Council had performed well in the first quarter of 2006/07. It was confirmed that 92% of planned actions were on target to be achieved within timescale and 70% of BVPIs were expected to achieve the target set.

Details were provided of the Planned Actions not achieving the target set and the agreed response.

Reference was made to the 2006/07 suite of BVPIs of which 69% were meeting the target. The report detailed the remaining 31%, which were not meeting the target. It was confirmed that with additional actions it was expected that 19 could be brought on track to achieve the target by year-end.

Information was provided of the BVPIs, which were not projected to achieve the target by year-end 2006/07.

It was noted that the Council's risk management process had been incorporated within the performance management process. The Council's strategic risks were mitigated by actions included within the Planned Actions or within other Council documents. It was confirmed that all actions undertaken to mitigate the Council's strategic risks were progressing and no additional action was currently required.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT DRAFT

In a report of the Principal Corporate Development Officer the Board was advised of the proposed structure, focus and content of the draft Local Area Agreement, upon which comments were sought.

Local Area Agreements (LAA) were part of the Government's 10-year vision to strengthen the leadership role of local government, increase partnership working and engagement and involvement with local people. LAA's were a three year agreement between a local area, (represented by a local authority, the Local Strategic Partnership and key partners) and Central Government (represented by the regional government office).

It was reported that Middlesbrough was expected to have agreed its LAA by March 2007 (Round 3), a draft of which had to be submitted to the Government Office North East by 29 September 2006.

The Board's attention was drawn to the key points of a LAA in particular the use of existing resources to be used more effectively in responding to local need.

The LAA built on the outcomes and priorities identified in the Middlesbrough Community Strategy 2005 and focussed on the actions required continuing raising aspirations and optimism on the six community strategy themes. For each theme there were several priority outcomes to be tackled through the LAA along with a number of indicators to measure the achievement of the outcome.

Clarification was sought on the extent of Member involvement with particular regard to a number of statements within the LAA such as the proposed increase in the delivery of services through the voluntary and community sector. An indication was given of the current arrangements with the VCS especially in relation to social care services.

Apart from the Thematic Groups associated with the Local Strategic Partnership the Board queried the extent of Member involvement and expressed concerns at the lack of opportunity so far to comment and /or influence such an important document as the LAA. The Board stressed the importance to ensure that key stakeholders and the scrutiny process were afforded the opportunity of contributing towards the formulation of the final LAA document.

It was confirmed that the document would be the subject of consideration at an Individual Executive Decision-Making Meeting (Deputy Mayor) on 20 September 2006.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the comments of the Board be reported at the Individual Executive Decision-Making Meeting (Deputy Mayor) at its meeting to be held on 20 September 2006.

OUT OF HOURS SERVICE – HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny review into the Out of Hours services.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel based on the submitted evidence:

- i) That the Primary Care Trust, together with partner organisations, considers whether it can make any changes to the triage process to eliminate any 'hand-offs', (unless strictly necessary) a caller may receive before accessing the necessary service. It is recommended that this be considered as vital when considering the desired criteria for a successful bid for the new Out of Hours contract in 2007.
- ii) That the PCT, together with partner organisations, reconsiders how the Out of Hours service manages its contact with patients suffering from long term chronic conditions. The Panel holds the view that this cohort represents a different group of patients, which has specific needs and expertise in relation to their condition. Accordingly, those needs and that expertise should be taken into account by the service. It is recommended that a plan for dealing with those with long term chronic conditions be required to be included in any bids for the new Out of Hours Contract in 2007, that incorporates appropriate patient pathways, together with appropriate safeguards.
- iii) That the PCT, together with partner organisations, proactively engages with the Patients Forum and other appropriate groups to get their input in relation to the criteria needed for a successful bid for the Out of Hours contract when it is renewed in 2007.
- iv) It is recommended that in moving towards the establishment of a process for the awarding of the contract in 2007, the PCT conducts its own survey of Out of Hours users to establish the levels of satisfaction. This will ensure that the PCT is more aware of service performance ahead of the contract being due for renewal.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive subject to the substitution of 'Patients Forum' in recommendation (iii) above with 'appropriate public forums' in order reflect the impending changes affecting Patients Forums.

PARKING ON AND PROTECTING GRASS VERGES – ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

A report of the Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel on the findings of the Panel's scrutiny review into issues around damage caused to verges by vehicle trespass had been circulated.

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

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 and 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.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.

2. That in relation to health scrutiny a report be submitted on the Government's plans for the future development of patient and public involvement in health and social care including the establishment of Local Involvement Networks and their relationship with overview and scrutiny committees.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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