

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 14 November 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Booth, Dryden and T Ward.

OFFICIALS: J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, A Crawford, J Ord and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Rogers, Vice Chair of Environment Scrutiny Panel.
J Malone, Assistant Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cole, Harris, Robson, Rooney and Wilson.

**** 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 18 September, 19 September and 17 October 2006 were submitted and approved.

PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH

In a report of the Scrutiny Support Officer the Board was advised of proposed changes within the Patient & Public Involvement Framework, in relation to the National Health Service. The Chair welcomed Jo Malone, Assistant Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust who focussed on the key areas of the proposals and latest information available.

Over the past five years the Department of Health had led a drive to increase the level of involvement of local communities in the planning of local health services as reflected in the health scrutiny powers given to local authorities.

As part of the scrutiny arrangements, a local NHS had a statutory duty to consult health scrutiny when planning/proposing substantial variations to the way services were provided. Should there be disagreement Health Scrutiny had the ultimate power to refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Health for determination.

Patient & Public Involvement Forums comprising volunteers for each NHS Trust currently existed which were intended to express the views of the patient in the day to day running of the Trust. Specific reference was made to the current PPI in Middlesbrough, which was particularly active and an indication given of the strong links which had been developed with overview and scrutiny committees including joint health scrutiny arrangements, which had responded to a wide range of issues raised.

Reference was made to the Department of Health paper, A Stronger Local Voice, which stated that Patient & Public Involvement Forums would be abolished and replaced by a forum called the Local Involvement Network (LINKs).

It was intended that LINKs would be geographically based rather than focussed on specific organisations and would be coterminous with the boundaries of social services authorities. LINKs would bring together parties and individuals from the community and voluntary sector with an interest and involvement in health and social care systems and would compile information about local people's needs and their experience of health and social care services.

The overall aim was to assist local authorities and the NHS to work together to tackle health inequalities and deliver better health care services. Specific reference was made to the powers to be given to LINKs in setting their own agendas and being able to refer matters to Health Scrutiny and be entitled to a response. The proposals were seen as enhancing the current arrangements

between the local NHS and Health Scrutiny and provided the opportunity to establish a more robust and effective process.

Local support for the LINKs would be the responsibility of social services authorities, which would be given funding to secure appropriate arrangements for hosting LINKs through consultation with local groups and a tendering process. The host organisation chosen would develop the LINK, recruit members, establish good communications and develop and manage the governance structure.

It was acknowledged that the proposals were at the consultation stage and detailed information and guidance was still awaited from the Department of Health. Whilst earlier indications had suggested an implementation date of June 2007 latest correspondence from the Department of Health had suggested the end of 2007.

It was noted that the right to visit and inspect NHS premises currently held by PPI forums would not be transferred to LINKs.

Members in particular noted the need for further guidance on aspects of funding, tendering and the process for establishing and supporting LINKs further details of which would be submitted when available.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – LITTER BIN POLICY – SCHOOL MEALS – OUT OF HOURS SERVICE

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 in respect of the following final reports: -

- a) Council Litter Bin Policy – Environment Scrutiny Panel
- b) Review of School Meals – Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel
- c) Out of Hours Service – Health Scrutiny Panel.

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

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. 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

CALL IN OUTCOME – HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

A report of the Chair was presented regarding the outcome of the meeting of the Board held on 18 September 2006 which had been arranged in accordance with the Authority's call-in procedure to review the decisions made at an Individual Executive meeting of the Executive Member for Economic Regeneration and Culture held on 31 August 2006 relating to the Housing Renewal Policy.

Taking into account the evidence presented it had been agreed that the decisions taken at the above meeting should not be referred back for the reasons stated although the Executive was asked to consider the following recommendation: -

'That whilst the current financial limits were considered appropriate in respect of the Older Housing Relocation Assistance Scheme as outlined in the report entitled, Housing Renewal Policy Additions and Amendments, the upper limits be kept under review in order to take into account any potential changing housing market conditions.'

It was confirmed that the above recommendation had been agreed at an Individual Executive meeting of the Executive Member for Economic Regeneration and Culture held on 29 September 2006.

NOTED

PARKING ON AND PROTECTING GRASS VERGES – ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

The Vice Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny review into Parking On And Protecting Grass Verges.

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

- i) That the sum of £380,000 recently provided to Streetscene Services from Council reserves and balances to fund verge repairs be utilised immediately to undertake priority works from the current list of outstanding schemes.
- ii) That current joint working arrangements with Erimus Housing be continued and further developed with a view to:-
 - a) Erimus providing future funding for verge schemes which are mutually beneficial to it and to the Council;
 - b) maximising Council investment on verge schemes by undertaking these, where possible, in conjunction with Erimus's environmental improvement works and housing improvement schemes.
- iii) That discussions be undertaken with Erimus Housing with a view to ascertaining its policy on enforcement in relation to damage to verges and to determine whether the Council and Erimus can take a joint approach in this area.
- iv) That the issue of damage to verges – including costs- is publicised, in conjunction with Erimus Housing in areas where this is appropriate, together with the fact that enforcement action will be taken against offenders.

Members sought clarification and made a number of observations in relation to the following aspects: -

- a) whilst the links and joint working with Erimus were recognised and that one-off funding of £380,000 from the Council's reserves and balances had been approved for outstanding verge schemes Members referred to the lack of a guaranteed dedicated Council budget for future years to be used in this regard and suggested that this should be examined;
- b) in response to a suggestion that greater emphasis should be placed on enforcement action it was reiterated that such action was taken where considered appropriate and the recommendations included a proposal for further discussions with Erimus to ascertain their policy on enforcement with a view to establishing a joint approach;
- c) although it was noted that there was no set criteria other than to determine the most effective and/or cost effective solution from a range of options Members considered that given the current financial constraints the need for an effective system of priority for repairs should be further emphasised.

ORDERED that the Environment Scrutiny Panel be asked to re-examine the final report in the light of the Board's comments in particular the emphasis placed on the important issues surrounding the budget and priority system for repairs.

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.

NOTED

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted a report which outlined progress achieved in relation to the implementation of agreed Executive actions resulting from the consideration of Scrutiny reports an update of which was provided at the meeting.

In terms of the Executive actions which should have been implemented by October 2006, 360 had been implemented, 6 partially completed and 8 had not been implemented.

Specific reference was made to Appendix A of the report submitted which outlined those recommendations, which had not been fully implemented by the target date.

NOTED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL –MEETING POSTPONEMENT

Local Area Agreement:

The Chair referred to previous discussions regarding the overall process in respect of the Local Area Agreement.

It was suggested that an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be established with a view to examining the structure and process involved in the compilation of the Middlesbrough Local Area Agreement.

Overview and Scrutiny Board 22 November 2006:

It was reported that in view of a change to the reporting timeframe the financial reports would not be completed for consideration at the meeting of the Board scheduled for 22 November 2006.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That a Local Area Agreement Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be established comprising Councillors Carr (Chair) Booth, J Jones, Mawston and T Ward.
2. That the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board scheduled for 22 November 2006 be cancelled.