

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 1 May 2007.

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

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

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rooney, Sanderson 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 3 April 2007 were submitted and approved.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2007/2008 – SCRUTINY PANEL’S RESPONSE

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a report, which gave a summary of each Scrutiny Panel’s response regarding their respective sections of the Strategic Plan.

Following a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 16 March 2007 when Members had asked for additional information, the Panel reconsidered the Strategic Plan at its meeting held on 19 April 2007 in particular the Healthier Communities and Effective Social Care for Adults theme and the Children and Learning theme.

The Health Scrutiny Panel had questioned the statement in the document that the ‘Council did not contribute directly to the reduction of suicide nor did it have any control or influence over whether people with learning disabilities had access to primary health care’. Whilst the Panel had accepted that it was the core business of the local NHS, it was considered that the Council could have a significant say over either of these elements.

In relation to the health of children and young people, the Panel noted the achievements of the service in relation to the ‘Stay Healthy’ theme of Every Child Matters. The Panel had endorsed the planned actions for 2007/2008, although they felt that the service needed better baseline information in relation to the incidences of teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse of under 18s and how they may be supported.

Whilst the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel had appreciated that a number of positive actions had been taken under the 2006/2007 achievements of the Creating Safer and Stronger Communities section, the Panel had expressed a preference for the inclusion of references to the impact some of the actions had achieved within the Plan.

In the absence of any reference regarding Leisure in either the 2006/2007 achievements or the 2007/2008 priority actions the Panel had considered that such information should have been included as the promotion of leisure activities was regarded as contributing to the wellbeing of the community.

A number of Panels had indicated that future targets should be supported by present achievement levels for greater understanding and comparison.

In terms of the planned priority actions 2007/2008 the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel had discussed the possible inclusion of dental health as an issue in respect of the ‘Be Healthy’ aspect of the Plan.

The Panel had also suggested the inclusion of a reference to the need for an increased emphasis on learning by Surestart schemes which could be included in the 'Enjoy and Achieve' aspect of the Plan and would assist in addressing learning issues associated with children arriving at reception classes.

The results of Key Stage 1 tests had also been identified as areas for improvement.

In terms of the 2006/2007 achievements the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel had asked for the inclusion of a reference to a successful introduction of Middlesbrough Works.

With regard to the Economic Vitality theme, the Panel had requested that consideration be given to identifying a target, which would aim to drive a percentage of all jobs towards Middlesbrough residents, thereby supporting inward investment. Although it had been acknowledged that this could be explored concerns had been expressed of creating a target for which the Council had no control.

ORDERED that the following recommendations be referred to the Executive: -

1. That the comments received from the individual Scrutiny Panels be considered and appropriately incorporated into the Council's Strategic Plan.
2. That the future submission of the draft Strategic Plan to scrutiny be at a stage of completion which ensures Member engagement.
3. That future targets within the Strategic Plan are supported by present achievement levels for greater understanding and comparison.
4. That the Strategic Plan contains reference to initiatives in Leisure as these will contribute to the wellbeing of the community.
5. That the Strategic Plan contain objectives, which relate to Dental Health.
6. That greater reference is made and contained within the Strategic Plan regarding the Surestart involvement in early learning to assist children entering reception classes.
7. That reference is made to Middlesbrough Works within the achievement section for Regeneration.
8. That consideration is given to establishing a target, which reflects the percentage of jobs, directed towards Middlesbrough residents.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2007/2008 –ANNUAL UPDATE

The Principal Corporate Development Officer presented a report regarding the first draft of Part II of the Strategic Plan 2007/2008 for consultation and direction.

Members were reminded of the meeting of the Board held on 6 March 2007 when it had been reported that Part 1 which outlined the long-term vision and medium term priorities which were expected to remain unchanged for three years would not be updated annually but that Parts II and III would be revised and republished each year.

Following consideration of the outcome of deliberations by the Scrutiny Panels of the relevant sub-sections of the Plan the following actions had been taken: -

- a) health actions relating specifically to reducing levels of suicide had been included within the 'Promoting healthier communities for all and effective social care for adults' theme;
- b) an action relating to the establishment of Middlesbrough Works had been included in the 'Economic Vitality' theme;

c) all suggested minor amendments to wording had been incorporated.

Part II of the Plan provided an overview of Council performance in the financial year prior to publication; details of the actions identified for the following financial year to help the achievement of the Community Strategy themes; and details of the Council's review programme.

It was pointed out that steps would be taken to ensure that the appropriate information across the themes would be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Panel.

NOTED

NUFFIELD TRUST PAPER – POLITICS OF SCRUTINY, RECONFIGURATION IN NHS ENGLAND

In a report of the Scrutiny Support Officer the Board's attention was drawn to the publication of a report by the Nuffield Trust, a copy of which had been circulated, which attempted to outline the evolution of the health scrutiny function and its impact on health policy and associated decision making.

The power of health scrutiny had been in place for around four years and was regarded as a high profile element of local government's scrutiny powers.

With this in mind, the academic/research wing of the Nuffield Trust had recently published a report, which attempted to present a picture of how health scrutiny was working across the country and the impact it was having on health policy and local decisions about the configuration of health services.

Of particular reference to Middlesbrough Council was one of the case studies it employed namely, the Acute Services Scrutiny Review. Such a review involved a joint scrutiny committee of six local authorities and had been chaired and supported by Middlesbrough Council.

The Board acknowledged that it presented a positive account of the scrutiny process in relation to the Acute Services Proposals and the role that scrutiny could play on behalf of the communities it represented.

Given the recent structural changes within the regional NHS, it was considered likely that there would be more statutory consultations for health scrutiny to respond to in the coming year or two. This coupled with the current policy agenda facing the NHS, all evidence indicated that there would be a challenging and expanding workload for health scrutiny.

It was suggested that the report should be brought to the attention of all Members.

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 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

CALL IN REQUESTS

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