

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 11 March 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Biswas, Cole, Cox, C Hobson, Ismail, Mawston, G Rogers, Rooney and Rostron.

OFFICIALS: B Baldam, J Bennington, G Brown, A Crawford, J Ord, N Sayer, P Slocombe and K Stokes.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor N J Walker, Executive Member for Resources.

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** Councillor Rehman.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Sanderson and Williams, and Councillor Khan, Executive Member for Streetscene.

** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Biswas	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Any matters relating to Middlesbrough Mela – Chair of Middlesbrough Mela Management Committee.
Councillor Rostron	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Any matters relating to Mouchel Business Services – employee.

** MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 29 January, 7 February and 12 February 2008 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STREETSCENE

The Chair advised the Board that owing to a change of circumstance the Executive Member for Streetscene was unable to attend the meeting.

It was confirmed that arrangements had been made for the Executive Member for Streetscene to attend a subsequent meeting of the Board.

NOTED

THIRD QUARTER – REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2007/2008

The Director of Resources presented a report regarding an estimate of the annual outturn for 2007/2008 based on the third quarter review of revenue expenditure against the current year's Revenue Budget.

The Council at its meeting held on 7 March 2008 set its revenue budget at £117.7 million for 2007/2008. The budget had included a temporary use of balances of £1.143 million to support the overall expenditure of the Council. A Council tax increase of 3.7 % for Middlesbrough Council had been applied.

In setting the 2007/2008 budget, approximately £2.6 million of efficiency savings had been identified. The Council had approved an extra £3.5 million for key services consisting of £1.9m for Vulnerable Adults and Children, £0.7m for Regeneration projects, £0.4m for investment in

Environment, £0.2m for Street Warden Services, £0.1m for Leisure, Sports and Health, and £0.2m other services.

The projected outturn position for 2007/2008, based on the third quarters review was a budget saving of -£253,000 (Social Care -£37,000, Environment + £48,000, Regeneration -£41,000, Corporate Services and Provisions -£223,000).

A summary was provided of the overall outturn variances from budget and the Board's attention was drawn to the information contained in the following appendices: -

Appendix A: requests for virements;
Appendix B: Gershon efficiency savings;
Appendix C: actions to be taken arising from the 3rd quarter budget clinics;
Appendix D: resources and balance schemes budget 2007/2008.

The Director of Resources confirmed that over the medium term the Council should maintain General Fund Revenue Balances at between £4 million and £4.5 million. A review of the level of balances and the requirements of the change programme would be undertaken at the close of the financial year.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas in particular the action to be taken to mitigate some of the identified pressures.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted including the proposed action plans and implications upon the Medium Term Financial Plan.

EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

As part of the Board's remit in terms of holding the Executive to account a report of the Executive Office Manager was submitted which identified the forthcoming decisions of the Executive as outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted. Members considered the list of items and if any value could be added by any matter being considered by the Scrutiny process in advance of any decision being made. It was reaffirmed that this would not negate Non Executive Member's ability to call-in a decision after it had been made.

As part of ongoing improvements additional information had been included in the Forward Work Programme.

In commenting on the proposal for consideration to be given to the level of Council support and future involvement in the Cleveland Show, Members suggested that consideration be given to a similar framework being adopted in relation to Middlesbrough Mela.

A suggestion was also made for the Forward Work Programme to identify issues which had already been selected for consideration as part of the scrutiny process.

NOTED

STRATEGIC PLAN 2008 TO 2011

In a report of the Chief Executive the comments of the Board were sought on the proposed content of the Council's new three-year Strategic Plan covering the period 2008-2011, highlighting specific changes to the content in response to key changes in the national frameworks.

Whilst there was no requirement for the Council to produce a three-year strategic plan, it was considered good practice and it was proposed that the Council would continue to produce a plan to:

- set out its medium term priorities;
- provide details of the key service activities planned each year to help deliver improved outcomes against these priorities;
- report on performance against its annual targets.

It was proposed that the Plan be revised a year ahead of schedule and that the new strategic plan was produced to cover the period 2008/2009-2010/2011. The rationale for such an approach was to align the Council's strategic planning cycle with the new requirements for the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA and to bring into line with the service and medium-term financial planning processes.

It was intended that the Strategic Plan would continue to follow the three-part structure introduced in 2006: Part 1 Corporate Overview; Part 11 Achievements and Future Actions and Part III Supporting Documentation.

For 2008/2009 it was proposed that the set of plan documents would include an additional section to accommodate the change over from BVPIs to the new national indicator set and the introduction of a new set of strategic themes to frame the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA. The additional section would allow the Council to report on its performance against its existing priority themes and to restructure its strategic plan around the new set of themes, ensuring consistency and continuity for its performance reports in future years.

The proposed content of the Plan for 2008/2009, which broadly followed the existing model, was set out in Appendix A of the report submitted.

Specific reference was made to proposed minor changes to bring the content in line with the expectations set out in the White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' and the Audit Commission's 'Use of Resources 2009', summarised as follows: -

- Part 1 - a general restructure of the content around the new Sustainable Community Strategy themes;
 - summary of progress towards the Mayor's Raising Hope Agenda;
 - Sustainability, including carbon footprint reduction;
 - Delivering increased efficiency;
 - Commissioning & procurement capability;
- Part 11 - format change as previously outlined;
- Part 111 - the transition to a single set of national indicators made it possible to incorporate two sets of information that were currently included as separate sections into the core content of the plan:
 - LAA Priority Outcomes and Targets
 - Quality of Life Index.

The proposed timetable for the production of the Strategic Plan was outlined in Appendix B of the report submitted.

It was proposed that Parts I and II of the Strategic Plan be updated each year to:

- outline any key changes that had occurred over the previous 12 months;
- reflect on achievements made in respect of the previous year's key actions;
- report the Council's performance against national indicators;
- set out planned actions for the forthcoming year.

It was confirmed that the relevant detailed information would be submitted to Scrutiny Panels by the end of March and a composite report would be presented to the Board at its meeting to be held on 6 May 2008.

NOTED

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN MIDDLESBROUGH

The Chair of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel gave an outline of the process of investigation and presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny review into Public Transport in Middlesbrough.

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

- a) As part of their work programme the Panel had agreed to undertake an investigation into the potential for a Park and Ride Scheme for Middlesbrough. In addition the Panel would also like to see a Council investigation into this issue to which the results of the scrutiny examination could be submitted.
- b) That the Council continues to pursue the option of an east Middlesbrough by-pass with Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.
- c) That Council writes to the appropriate rail authorities and ask them to comment on how they will improve the issues that arose from the Panel's discussion with passengers regarding the following:-
 - improving the standard of trains;
 - providing better passenger announcements;
 - making the station brighter, improving lighting and heating;
 - confirmation of the timescales for the installation of the lift;
- d) That in their dealings with the bus companies the Council pursue the following:-
 - that they continue to use mystery shoppers on buses;
 - that there is an introduction of double deckers as a pilot scheme where demand warrants it on certain routes;
 - that bus companies consider providing more late night services by the end of the year and work with the Council on providing transport in Middlesbrough to coincide with the Alive After 5 initiative;
 - to ensure that bus routes are planned into the Middlehaven Site;
 - increase the percentage of disabled access buses.
- e) That with any new school or college development, the Council starts communication with schools at an early stage to ensure that there are bus stops/waiting areas which can cope with the demand.
- f) The Panel would like to see the implementation of real time bus information across the Town as soon as possible.
- g) That a marketing campaign by the bus operators should be established to publicise the special offers, including more details of weekly tickets and cheaper tickets with the aim of encouraging more bus patronage which could include:
 - the consideration of widening the Nunthorpe pilot scheme to the whole of Middlesbrough;
 - the appropriate distribution of bus timetables, with the consideration that they should be issued to community centres and libraries as ways of publicising services.
- h) The Panel would like to invite the bus operators back to the Panel in a year's time to discuss any areas of improvement made as a result of the discussions with the Panel and in particular the provision of night time bus services.
- i) That the Panel endorses the Major Bus Bid and the Tees Valley Metro bid and if it were successful the Panel would like to see the Officers involved undertake a benchmarking exercise with similar projects to seek out best practice.
- j) That the Council develops an incentive scheme for their staff to encourage them to use public transport and that the Council works with other major employers in the Town to help them implement such a scheme.

In supporting the recommendations of the Panel, Members in particular acknowledged the need for the Council to communicate with schools at an early stage in relation to any new school

and/or college development to ensure that buses, bus stops and/or waiting areas were able to cope with demand. As part of the joint working arrangements between the Council and the local bus companies it was suggested that there might be scope to consider the feasibility of implementing an appropriate bus pass scheme with a view to reducing the problems of dealing with large number of pupils at peak times and subsequent congestion of traffic.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report which outlined a request from a Member for an investigation to be undertaken into mail communications to Members at home and the internal mail to departments.

Taking into account the agreed criteria the Board considered the appropriateness of undertaking a scrutiny review into the suggested topic.

ORDERED that the matter be investigated and the Members' Office Manager report back to the next meeting of the Board.

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.