

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 8 April 2008.

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

OFFICIALS: J Bennington, A Crawford, C Davies, J Ord, N Sayer and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Budd, Executive Member for Regeneration and Culture.

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** J Fitzpatrick and V Gallant, Corporate Assessment Inspectors.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cox, Dryden, Ismail, Mawston and Sanderson.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Carr	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Any matters relating to Erimus Housing – Chair of Erimus Housing

MINUTES – FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11 March 2008 were submitted.

The Chair referred to information received from the Director of Resources regarding details requested by Members following consideration of a report in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan and Revenue Budget.

It was confirmed that the activities currently carried out at Lingfield Countryside Centre were to be transferred to Newham Grange Leisure Farm and Stewart Park. The long term future use of Lingfield Countryside Centre had yet to be determined.

Details were also provided of the total amount of Council debt at 31 March 2007.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11 March 2008 be approved.
2. That the financial information provided be noted.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CULTURE

As part of the current arrangements to invite Members of the Executive to attend meetings of the Board, Councillor Budd outlined the scope of the portfolio of the Executive Member for Regeneration and Culture.

Councillor Budd highlighted progress in a number of priority areas including the following: -

Housing/Regeneration:

- Housing Market Renewal funding to tackle Housing Strategy supporting renewal programmes such as those at North Ormesby, West Lane, St Hilda's;
- other recent additions included Gresham and Middlehaven areas;
- other changes included in the Local Development Framework;
- remodelling of estates such as Grove Hill by Erimus Housing;

Local Heritage:

- a bid for Heritage Lottery funding to commence restorations works in Stewart Park;
- a Development Brief for the Grade 1 listed building at Acklam Hall and surrounding grounds had been prepared on potential future uses;
- given the major changes in St Hilda's it had so far proved more difficult to find an alternative use of the Custom House, Grade II listed building;

Development of the Town Centre/Middlehaven:

- extended Town centre area included University of Teesside and Cannon Park;
- importance of the Mall shopping centre and attracting different retailers ;
- efforts to seek ways of improving shop frontages on Linthorpe Road and the upper storeys;
- opening of new Middlesbrough College in September;
- recently opened marketing suite in Middlehaven showing apartments which hopefully would be sufficiently different and attractive to encourage interest;
- Railway Station improvements;
- BoHo development;
- staged refurbishment of Wellington Street hostel;

Stockton/Middlesbrough Initiative:

- long term (20-25 years) initiative;
- depending on the availability of investment extended activity use of the barrage area which was currently limited by the tide;
- other developments between Middlesbrough and Stockton over the next five years;

Culture: use of MIMA, Central Square and increasing opportunities for the use of the Town hall facilities;

Employment: worklessness agenda an important area of work;

City Region Agenda; requiring much work over next five to ten years dependent to a large extent on attracting significant private investment.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas including: -

- a) the efforts to continue to seek improvements to Linthorpe Road frontages was supported;
- b) a good joint working relationship and co-operation was key to the success of the Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative;
- c) recognition of the need for significant investment both in the short and long term to achieve overall objectives and continue work as to how this could be secured;
- d) whilst there were a number of opportunities for specialised shops it was considered that further work was needed to prove that there was a market;
- e) recognition that there was much work to be done in terms of the skills and training agenda and for the right message to get across in terms of the increasing opportunities in the Town;

- f) the need for an appropriate frontage to the Mall shopping centre opposite Central Square was being pursued with the private owners.

Councillor Budd emphasised the need to promote the current and future developments of the Town to community groups and in particular to young people. It was acknowledged that getting the right message across in promoting the opportunities within the Town to encourage the retention of the population was one of the most difficult tasks to achieve.

ORDERED that Councillor Budd be thanked for the information provided.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – WASTE SERVICES – EXECUTIVE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Office Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered the Board's comments on final reports in relation to the Executive Scheme of Delegation and the Council's Waste Services.

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

NOTED

COUNCIL MEETINGS FUTURE STRUCTURE

The Members' Office Manager submitted a report, which outlined the findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel in relation to the future structure of Council meetings. The aim of the Panel had been to consider ways in which to make Council meetings more inclusive and to better reflect the difference between the roles of the Council and the Executive.

The Board considered the recommendations of the Panel as follows: -

Council Cycle:

- (1) That the 6-week cycle is retained.

Council start time:

- (2) Council meetings should commence at 6.30 p.m. if there are presentations by outside bodies, presentation of awards, or where 'Policy Conferences' are scheduled to take place.

Mayor's Report:

- (3) The Mayor should be required to provide a written report to Council, but also have the opportunity to make a statement on urgent, important or recent matters.

- (4) Consideration of the Mayor's written report and any statement made by the Mayor should normally be limited to 30 minutes in total.

Executive Reports:

- (5) The present method of distributing Executive Reports in advance of Council meetings should be retained, and that in future, a written report of the Mayor should be included.

- (6) That 20 minutes should be allocated for questions on, and consideration of, the Mayor's written report.

- (7) The current 30-minute limit on debate of the Deputy Mayor's and Executive Members' reports should be enforced more rigorously.

- (8) That following consideration of the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's reports, all other Executive Members' reports should be considered, but on a rotational basis.

(9) Consideration should be given to limiting each Member to two minutes maximum, or introducing requirement that any points to be raised are submitted in writing to the Chair prior to the Council meeting.

(10) If the latter recommendation is accepted by the Constitution Committee, then the period of notice required would have to be given careful consideration.

Scrutiny reports:

(11) Scrutiny reports should be brought up the order of business to allow for a fuller debate earlier in the meeting.

Policy Conferences:

(12) Consideration should be given to having a 'Policy Conference' on a quarterly basis; that these should have a fixed maximum period of one hour, starting at 6:30pm on the night of the Council meeting; they should be part of the Council agenda; and that they be followed immediately by the main business of the Council.

(13) The determination of topics for 'Policy Conferences' should be jointly agreed by the Chair of the Council, in discussion with the Executive and Scrutiny Members, to ensure that the Mayor, Executive Members, Scrutiny and other Members have the opportunity to set the topic for discussion.

Fixed Business and alternating business:

(14) Consideration should be given to Council considering certain items on an alternating, or periodic basis – perhaps 2 or 3 times a year - rather than on every Council agenda. Such items might be:

- Mayor's question time
- Executive Members' Reports
- Scrutiny Reports

Order of Business:

(15) In future the order of business should normally be:

- Apologies
- Minutes of previous meetings
- Declarations of Interest
- Announcements and Communications
- Presentation of Petitions
- Public Questions
- Mayor's Statement
- Mayor and Executive Reports
- Scrutiny Reports
- Policy Framework Reports
- Urgent items
- Members' Questions
- Motions
- Business Reports
- Business from last Council.
- Joint Arrangements/External Organisations
- Any other business specified on the summons

whilst recognising that, on occasions, the order of business might need to be changed to allow for earlier, later or extended discussion on certain matters.

Time Limits:

(16) The Council's procedural rules should be amended to incorporate the following time limits:

Questions:	Public and Members' questions are allowed 15 minutes each maximum; as at present, 1 minute to be allowed in which to put the question, 3 minutes to be allowed for the response;
Petitions:	No change- presentation by lead petitioner maximum 2 minutes; portfolio holder response and any debate maximum 5 minutes.
Mayor's statement:	10 minutes
Mayor and Executive reports:	20 minutes maximum for the Mayor's report, plus a further 30 minutes maximum for Deputy Mayor's and the Executive Members' reports.
Motions:	as at present, no speech may exceed 5 minutes.

Executive Members' Surgeries:

(17) Although these are not part of Council meetings, the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel noted the success of the surgeries that certain Executive Members hold, and recommend that the Constitution Committee requests the Deputy Mayor that these are extended to all Executive Members.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Constitution Committee for their consideration prior to the submission of a report to Council.

MAIL COMMUNICATIONS TO MEMBERS

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 11 March 2008 the Members' Office Manager presented a report which detailed the outcome of a recent investigation into reported problems with the Members' mail service which was a daily courier service provided by Mouchel Business Services.

The report detailed the findings as shown in Appendix 1 of the report submitted of an investigation by the Corporate Policy Manager in the Performance and Policy Section and the Business Support Manager in Mouchel Business Services who had responsibility for managing the courier service.

It was noted that the courier service handled approximately 2,600 deliveries per quarter and in the last quarter prior to the submission of the complaint in question only four problems with mail deliveries had been received by Mouchel Business Services which represented a failure rate of less than 0.2%. All of the problems had proved to be caused by 'human error'.

The Board's attention was drawn to the following conclusions of the investigation: -

- a) There had been a breakdown in the courier service that had led to the mail of two Councillors being delivered to each other's houses. A personal apology had been made by Mouchel Business Services to the respective Councillors for the error.
- b) The Mouchel Business Services Manager responsible for the courier service had spoken with the particular courier and was satisfied that the error was due to a genuine mistake.
- c) There was an extremely low failure rate by the courier service. Nevertheless, the reported failures in the services were being taken seriously, and ways of improving the service were being sought.
- d) The courier service was a manual service with little opportunity to automate through technology.

- e) The courier service was currently provided by a casual bank of staff. Mouchel Business Services were developing a proposal to employ permanent staff which it was felt should provide for greater reliability in service.
- f) It was confirmed that the Members' Office would continue to take up failures in the courier service with Mouchel Business Services.

With the approval of the Chair and Members a copy of a letter which had been received from a Councillor was circulated at the meeting which referred to a problem of timing and delivery of mail throughout the Council.

In commenting on current arrangements Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that all mail was placed all the way through a letterbox. Officers confirmed that this would be conveyed to relevant staff and courier service.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That a scrutiny review be not undertaken and the proposals as outlined to continue to identify ways of improving the service and investigation of failures in the courier service be supported.

WASTE SERVICES REVIEW UPDATE

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel presented a report, which gave an update to the Panel's interim final report on waste services, which had been approved by the Board at its meeting held on 15 January 2008 and by the Executive on 3 March 2008.

One major aspect of the review related to revised refuse collection arrangements. The Panel had noted in its interim final report that a more efficient service would be needed if the Council was to achieve stringent recycling targets. It was also noted that it would be necessary for the Council to move towards providing the most efficient waste collection service possible while encouraging the reduction of waste and maximising the collection of recyclable waste.

The Panel at its meeting held on 12 March 2008 had considered a report and a detailed presentation updating the position in respect of the Executive Director's proposals, including those relating to revised refuse collection arrangements. Members had been reminded that, in order to maximise resource efficiency, a specialist consultant had been commissioned to advise on that aspect of the service review.

The Panel had been advised that in order to achieve the above changes to the service, a number of options for working arrangements had been considered, including four, five and six day working patterns. Following detailed consultation with staff - including the use of focus groups and "challenge events" (where potential options for key areas of the review were analysed in detail) - the following service changes had been put forward for the Panel's consideration:

- a) a refuse collection service based on a four day, 37-hour week;
- b) the anticipated reduction from twelve to ten refuse collection rounds;
- c) fortnightly collections of kerbside recycling and green waste on the same day, wherever possible;
- d) reorganisation of ancillary services, such as junk jobs and collection of electrical goods.

The submitted report had also outlined proposals to extend the existing kerbside recycling contract (which expired in October 2008) for one year which would allow an assessment to be made of any necessary changes to the recycling scheme in the light of revised recycling targets. Any such changes could then be incorporated into the new contract.

In addition, Members' views were sought on proposals to redirect savings, which would be generated from the waste services review as follows:

- funding litterbin provision (£30,000);
- funding the Cleveland Show marquee (£13,000);
- mainstreaming the environmental protection service in Community Protection budgets (this service was currently funded via Neighbourhood Renewal Fund with funding due to end in March 2008).

The Environment Scrutiny Panel had agreed to support the following recommendations, which reflected the Panel's earlier findings, as outlined in its interim final report. The Executive Director of Environment had been advised to include reference to the Panel's decision in his report to the Executive meeting of 1 April 2008.

- i) That the waste collection service moves to four day, 37 hour working, Tuesday to Friday for all core waste services.
- ii) Recycling and green waste collections to be on the same day as refuse collection wherever possible.
- iii) The funding of litterbin provision and the Cleveland Show marquee from service efficiencies within the review.
- iv) The redirection of some savings towards mainstreaming the environmental enforcement service in Community Protection.
- v) The extension of the current kerbside recycling contract for up to one year to allow Officers to report on new statutory targets and any service changes needed to achieve those targets.
- vi) Members noted that some aspects of the Executive Director's review of waste services were still being developed and would be reported to the Environment Scrutiny Panel (and subsequently to the Overview and Scrutiny Board) in due course.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the decision of the Environment Scrutiny Panel to support recommendations contained in the Executive Director of Environment's report dated 1 April 2008 to the Executive be endorsed.
2. That it be noted that further reports on the outstanding aspects of the Executive Director of Environment's review of waste services would be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Board in due course.

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 the operation of the Councils Youth Service in particular the aims and objectives of the service and its effectiveness in achieving such goals.

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 considered for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme 2008/2009.

SCRUTINY REVIEW – RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION

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.

In terms of the Executive actions which should have been implemented by March 2008 (Appendix A), 447 had been implemented, 13 partially completed and 3 had not been implemented.

Appendix B of the report gave an update in relation to the Health Scrutiny Action Plan.

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.