

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 3 June 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors Cole, Cox, Dryden, C Hobson, J Hobson, Ismail, Khan, Purvis, J A Walker and Williams.

OFFICIALS: J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, A Crawford, D David, B McGowan, J Ord, N Sayer, L Starrs and E Williamson.

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

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** Councillors McPartland and Rehman.

****AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor Sanderson.

**** WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Board in the Municipal Year 2008/09.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

APPOINTMENT – VICE CHAIR – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

The Chair sought nominations for Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the Municipal Year 2008/2009.

ORDERED that Councillor Williams be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the Municipal Year 2008/2009.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 6 May 2008 were taken as read and approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor N J Walker, Executive Member for Resources in the list of those present at the meeting.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – DEVELOPING ROLE OF THE STREET WARDEN SERVICE – TEENAGERS HANGING AROUND – PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN MIDDLESBROUGH

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 Developing Role of the Street Warden; Teenagers Hanging Around; and Public Transport in Middlesbrough.

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

NOTED

REVENUE OUTTURN 2007/2008

The Director of Resources submitted a report, which outlined the final outturn position for expenditure against the 2007/2008 Revenue Budget.

In setting the 2007/2008 budget, approximately £2.6 million of efficiency net savings had been identified and the Council had approved an additional £3.5 million for key services which included £1.9m for Vulnerable Adults and Children; £0.7 m for Regeneration Projects; £0.4m for Investment in the Environment; £0.2m for Street Warden Services; £0.1m for Leisure, Sports and Health; and £0.2m other services.

It was reported that the Executive at its meeting held on 1 April 2008 had considered the 3rd Quarter Revenue Budget outturn that projected a net budget saving of (-£253,000). The Board was advised that the actual outturn for 2007/2008 was (-£485,000).

A summary was given of the overall outturn variances against the 3rd Quarter projections and a detailed breakdown was given of each service outturn position together with a summary of the position relating to corporate costs and central provisions.

Although a number of budget pressures within certain Service areas were highlighted it was noted that each service Department had remained within budget.

The Board sought clarification and asked for further information on a number of areas including: -

- a) a saving had been achieved on Highways Engineering primarily due to an overachievement of (-£130,000) in respect of abandoned shopping trolleys;
- b) it was noted that although increases in car parking fees had been deferred there had still been a pressure on parking income owing to a poor Christmas trading period;
- c) an indication was given of the options being examined to address the issues referred to in respect of the operational costs of MIMA which included examining the level of certain changes of corporate hire, different marketing and ways of selling products;
- d) further clarification was asked regarding the variance of £10,000 in respect of local elections associated with postal ballots and by-elections the costs of which had been met from the corporate provision;
- e) the ongoing difficulties in recruiting staff in the Internal Audit section had been the subject of a review the outcome of which would shortly be reported to the Executive;
- f) it was reiterated that the net variance across the Council of £-485,000, which represented a small percentage of the available budget, had been as a result efficiencies in the use of budget and not a structural budget issue and any reduction in service.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. Those additional quarterly meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board be arranged to correspond with the budget timetable to consider future performance and budget outturn reports.
3. That further information be provided on the areas outlined.

STRATEGIC PLAN DRAFT 2008/2009

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 11 March 2008 a report of the Chief Executive was presented which outlined the draft versions of Parts I and II of the Council's strategic plan for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11.

It was confirmed that the plan had been through individual department's development processes and relevant scrutiny panels had considered the draft content. CMT had considered a revised draft of the Plan on 1 May and a wider consultation exercise with the Council's key partners had been concluded on 21 May.

The finalised strategic plan was scheduled for submission to the meeting of the Executive on 24 June.

Although the difficulties in the timing of the process were acknowledged Members sought assurance that ways of ensuring a more meaningful engagement and input from the scrutiny

process would be considered in the future. Members emphasised the need for the fullest and most appropriate information on performance data be provided to the scrutiny panels and that a summary of the Panel's comments be included in the briefing report (not the complete document) for the Board's consideration.

NOTED AND APPROVED

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY – LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT TARGETS

A report of the Principal Corporate Development Officer was presented which outlined proposals to revise the Community Strategy themes in line with the national outcomes and reviewed strategic priorities. Information was also provided on the structure and timetable to develop the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the draft designated targets for Middlesbrough and Local Area Agreement 2000-2011 and local targets.

Middlesbrough's first LAA had been developed based around the themes of the Community Strategy rather than the four LAA blocks. It had previously been agreed that the development of the LAA and the refresh of the Community Strategy to create the SCS should be aligned. In addition the Executive had previously discussed the proposal to revise the Community Strategy themes to align with the new National outcomes set out in the new national performance framework's Single Set of National Indicators.

The Board's attention was drawn to the main areas of difference as follows: -

- a) in order to correlate with the National Outcomes, transport issues were to be placed within Local Economy section whilst recognising the cross cutting nature of transport;
- b) although identified as a separate theme in National Outcomes it was proposed that Tackling Exclusion and Promoting Equality be within the Adult Health and Well-Being Theme given strong links to the Supporting People agenda.

Reference was made to a number of anomalies within the individual themes.

As the themes chosen by Middlesbrough were so closely matched to those in the new National Outcomes it was considered that this reflected well on the approach previously taken by Middlesbrough. Although there were no requirements to link the SCS themes to the national headings, it was felt that it would make the structure clearer to partners and to the wider community.

The report outlined the proposed Community Strategy themes and the issues to be addressed within each theme.

The SCS would be refocused around the new themes, which provided an opportunity to review the strategic priorities that supported the achievement of the Community Strategy themes.

Following consultation with relevant Officers, partners and LSP Action groups a list of proposed strategic priorities against the new Community Strategy themes had been compiled as set out in Appendix 1 of the report submitted. The revised Strategic Plan 2008-2011 had been structured around such themes.

It was proposed to structure the SCS and LAA in the following four parts:

- Part 1: the long term vision and priorities
- Part 2: the medium term priorities as well as providing details on the improvement activities to be undertaken over the medium term
- Part 3: the Local Area Agreement
- Part 4: supporting documentation.

Details of the proposed content for each of the Plan were shown in Appendix 2 of the report submitted.

The LAA was based on a menu of 198 indicators, which included 16 mandatory attainment targets, as well as up to 35 improvement targets. A final draft of the LAA was outlined in Appendix 4 of the report submitted the targets for which had been negotiated on the basis of a number of factors including: -

- alignment of existing targets set out in supporting plans and strategies, for example teenage pregnancy target;
- alignment of targets agreed through other Government Department Performance Frameworks, for example PCT Vital Signs Framework; and
- agreement of targets negotiated with other agencies and their relevant Government Department, for example Police and Probation Targets.

Reference was made to the link to the economic prosperity of the sub-region. The Tees Valley City Region Business Case aimed to reduce the output gap between the Tees Valley and the rest of the UK by developing its economic assets and improving urban competitiveness. A Multi Area Agreement (MAA) was being negotiated as a mechanism to deliver much of the Business Case by securing resources for the next five years for regeneration, transport and housing market renewal.

It was agreed that the MAA and LAA should be seen as complementary documents. The Tees Valley Authorities and JSU had agreed an approach regarding the interaction between LAAs and the Tees Valley MAA. Such an approach aimed to demonstrate clearly the links between the LAA and the MAA without compromising the fundamental fact that LAAs should be driven by local priorities.

The MAA included four targets for the Tees Valley, which had been derived from the National Indicator set. Middlesbrough's LAA included two of such targets as designated targets. For those MAA indicators that Middlesbrough did not have a designated target it was proposed to use further local targets.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas including: -

- a) the amount of resources involved under the reviewed element of the LAA which was likely to be less than that previously received under the PSA targets;
- b) although it was recognised that GONE required that Middlesbrough should have more challenging targets it was nevertheless felt that careful attention needed to be given in determining stretched targets to try and ensure that they were attainable.
- c) In terms of the links with the sub-region and recent examples of a drift of public sector employment to Tyneside, it was confirmed that although not explicit the MAA was being negotiated as a mechanism to deliver much of the Business Case to secure resources in relation to regeneration, transport and housing market renewal.

ORDERED that the proposals and targets outlined be supported with particular regard to the following: -

- i) proposals to revise the Community Strategy themes with the national outcomes and reviewed strategic priorities;
- ii) the structure and timetable to develop the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement;
- iii) the draft designated targets for Middlesbrough's Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 and local targets.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT – FINAL REPORT – ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel (at the time of the scrutiny investigation) gave an outline of the process of investigation and presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny investigation into the Council's enforcement services.

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

- i) Mainstream budget funding should continue to be provided in the future for the Community Service's Respect team.
- ii) The future position regarding joint work undertaken with the Dogs Trust to neuter dogs should be clarified. If the Trust discontinues the scheme, the Council should identify funding to ensure its continuation.
- iii) All options should be explored to ensure that the scheme of microchipping dogs, to assist in identifying and re-homing strays, is also continued.
- iv) The implications of the Council's recent increased responsibilities for providing an out of hours stray dogs service (taken on from the police) should be closely monitored to determine the financial implications and steps taken to ensure that the service operates cost effectively. An update on the operation of the service, and any financial implications, should be reported to the Scrutiny Panel after approximately six months.
- v) The position concerning increased cigarette litter outside business premises, offices, pubs and social clubs etc should continue to be monitored. Discussions should be continued with premises owners and appropriate trade and licensing bodies to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and to consider how this problem can be reduced. The issue should also be publicised and enforcement action taken where appropriate.
- vi) The Environment Scrutiny Panel should be consulted, prior to the Executive, on any significant changes to the Environmental Enforcement Policy.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE – WORK PROGRAMME – CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

The Vice Chair (at the time of the scrutiny investigation) of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel gave an outline of the single meeting regarding the findings of the Panel's 'one-off' overview of school attendance.

The Scrutiny Panel had concluded that the Council had made significant improvements to attendance levels, particularly in respect of the level of persistent absentees. Middlesbrough had achieved the third greatest reduction nationally over the past two years. It was noted however, that stringent national targets that had been introduced (a reduction to below 5% persistent absentees by 2011) meant that work needed to be continued in this area to ensure that the improvement was sustained.

The recommendation of the Scrutiny Panel was to note the information and that, given the importance of the topic, consideration be given to undertaking a detailed scrutiny review of school attendance as part of the Panel's 2008/2009 work programme.

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

CALL IN REQUESTS

It was confirmed that arrangements had been made for a meeting of the Board to be held on 11 June 2008 to consider a Call-In in respect of the community workshops at the Southlands Centre.

NOTED

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – TIME OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD – MEMBERS' TRAINING

The Chair sought the views of the Board with regard to the commencement time of the scheduled meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Members were encouraged to attend one of the training sessions on questioning skills, which had been arranged on 12 June 2008.

ORDERED that the time of scheduled meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board remain at 4.30 p.m.