

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 21 October 2008.

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

OFFICIALS: J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, B McGowan, N Sayer and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Kerr (Deputy Mayor).

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

**** 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 23 September 2008 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

As part of the Board's remit in terms of holding the Executive to account Members considered a report of the Executive Office Manager which identified the forthcoming issues to be considered by the Executive as outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS – ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

In a report of the Scrutiny Support Officer the Board was reminded of arrangements for individual Members of the Executive to attend meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and update Members on their respective work in terms of their aims, aspirations, objectives, priorities and any emerging issues. It also provided the opportunity for the Board to identify or highlight any issues of concern.

NOTED AND APPROVED

DEPUTY MAYOR

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Kerr thanked the Board for the invitation and opportunity to outline the work and scope of the portfolio of the Deputy Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor supported the Mayor and was responsible for the day to day business management of the Council and took a lead on a number of corporate issues including the implementation of e-government, human resources, diversity and Council performance.

The Board was advised of the current reporting mechanisms, which included: -

- Regular one to one meetings with Executive Members to discuss relevant matters with particular regard to any areas of concern, Government and Council performance targets, cross-cutting themes and how they were being addressed;
- Regular meetings with the Chief Executive and the Mayor with specific reference to the overall performance of the Council.

It was recognised that one of the many overall challenges was to achieve the correct balance between compliance with Government direction but at the same time trying to identify flexibility within which to reflect local priorities.

In terms of current and impending key issues reference was made to ongoing work in respect of the following: -

- although improvements had been made further endeavours were to be made in relation to the collection of Council Tax including five new members of staff who had been employed in this regard;
- factors such as rising fuel costs and likely increased costs in relation to the provision of children looked after would have budget implications likely to result in an overspend for the current financial year;
- it was confirmed that there were no exclusions from primary schools in respect of 2007/2008;
- although the Council was performing better in terms of green waste and establishing a regular day of collection further improvements still had to be made in respect of recycling targets;
- reference was made to ongoing work for Council buildings to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act currently 50%;
- it was acknowledged that the overall financial climate may impact on the Middlehaven development;
- the difficulties in trying to resolve a continuing decline in use of public transport were recognised.

ORDERED that the Deputy Mayor be thanked for the information provided.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY UPDATE

The LSP Partnership Manager presented a report on the latest draft Sustainable Community Strategy as outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted. The Strategy had been the subject of consultation, which considered the sustainability appraisal, and the risk assessment of the strategy and comments of the Scrutiny Panels incorporated into the strategy. It was intended that the final version of the document would be submitted to the Council meeting scheduled for 26 November 2008.

In addition to the chapters based on the themes, the current draft included the introductory sections relating to: -

- the vision of Middlesbrough
- partnership arrangements
- equality and diversity
- sustainability
- performance management.

The Sustainable Community Strategy was being developed as a partnership document, and would reflect the contributions of a range of organisations as well as the aspirations of local communities.

It was confirmed that further details would be submitted in relation to young person's mental health issues.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted including the ongoing work and proposed action plans.
2. That further information be provided on the structure of the LSP with particular regard to the key roles and responsibilities in respect of the Action Groups.
3. That the Board's thanks be extended to Bren McGowan and best wishes for the future following his recent appointment with another local authority.

ASPECTS OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel gave an outline of the process of investigation and presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny investigation of aspects of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities in accordance with the agreed terms of reference.

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

- i) That the position concerning the number of foster carers in Middlesbrough continues to be monitored and that every effort is made to increase numbers through such measures as publicity via Middlesbrough News, other appropriate media and advertising.
- ii) That existing training provision for foster carers is maintained and built on in order to encourage an increased number of carers.
- iii) That the results of the national pilot scheme relating to the supported lodging scheme are assessed to determine whether any examples of best practice can be developed in Middlesbrough, or whether there are any funding opportunities which can be pursued. Work should also be undertaken to increase the profile of the supported lodging scheme.
- iv) That works is undertaken with appropriate partners (e.g. Connexions and further education providers) to:-
 - a) improve the position in respect of securing local private/commercial sector work experience or employment placements for young people in care;
 - b) reduce the numbers of young people in care who would otherwise be not in education, employment or training ('NEET');
- v) That in respect of mental health support for children looked after:
 - a) work is continued to address the gaps which have been identified in service provision, in particular in relation to children and young people with a dual diagnosis (i.e. more than one mental health need).
 - b) in terms of Middlesbrough Council's staffing and management structure, existing support arrangements are at least maintained, given the high level of service, which is currently provided.

The Board was advised that since the compilation of the report there was a proposal to increase foster carer's allowance.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the findings and recommendations of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.
2. That a progress report on the implementation of recommendations be submitted in approximately two month's time to the Scrutiny Panel.

CLEVELAND SHOW

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel gave an outline of the process of investigation and presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny investigation of the Cleveland Show in accordance with the Panel's agreed terms of reference.

The Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel based on the submitted evidence on aspects upon which the Council had direct control: -

- i) That approaches be made to the large agricultural manufacturers for sponsorship and attendance at future shows.
- ii) That the vintage car and motorcycle clubs be approached and encouraged to attend future shows, where specific areas would be allocated for their displays.
- iii) That the Cleveland Show Committee consider greater youth involvement in the direction and arrangements when developing future shows and indeed has a representative from the Youth Council on its Committee.
- iv) That the Council's services (Culture, Arts and Leisure) have an active role in developing the Show and that they have direct involvement in the methodology adopted for marketing and publicising the event.
- v) That the Executive establishes a Policy, which addresses the Council's stance on underwriting any loss incurred by the Show.
- vi) That as the Cleveland Show is a major agricultural county show, the Council approach other Councils in the Tees Valley for financial support.
- vii) That the Council's Grants Officer pursue sponsorship and grant funding to support the Show in a similar way as achieved with the Mela.
- viii) That the Council's Leisure and Culture service take greater responsibility for any displays at the Show and that the Environment Service be responsible for the Park and not the event held within it.

It was confirmed that following consideration by the Executive a copy of the report and agreed response would be forwarded to the Secretary of the Cleveland Show.

The Board agreed that it would be helpful if the Secretary of the Cleveland Show could report back on the outcome of the 2009 Cleveland Show with particular regard to the impact of the agreed recommendations.

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

SCRUTINY PANELS – PROGRESS REPORTS

A report of the Chair of each Scrutiny Panel was submitted which outlined progress on current activities.

NOTED

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

It was confirmed that no requests for scrutiny reviews had been received from the Executive, Executive Members and members of the public since the last meeting of the Board.

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report, which outlined a request from a Non Executive Member for an investigation to be undertaken into Nature's World in Middlesbrough.

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

ORDERED that a scrutiny review of Nature's World be not undertaken at this time given that it wasn't Council funded.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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