OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 18 November 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors Cox, Dryden, Dunne (as substitute for Councillor Purvis), C Hobson, Ismail, Khan, McPartland (as substitute for Councillor Cole), Sanderson, J A Walker and Williams.

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

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of the Mayor (Ray Mallon) and Councillors Cole, J Hobson, Mawston and Purvis.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Williams	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Agenda item 6 (Rationalisation of the Fire Emergency Control Room – Member of the Cleveland Combined Fire Authority
Councillor Ismail	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Agenda item 6 (Rationalisation of the Fire Emergency Control Room – Member of the Cleveland Combined Fire Authority

** **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21 October 2008 were submitted.

In terms of the programme for inviting Executive Members to meetings of the Board a Member emphasised the importance of clearly demonstrating this part of the overall scrutiny process in holding the Executive to account and that this be appropriately reflected in the minutes. In response the Chair confirmed that the matter would be examined.

ORDERED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21 October 2008 be approved.

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

MAYOR

The Chair advised the Board that owing to a change of circumstance the Mayor was now unable to attend the meeting.

It was confirmed that arrangements were being made to identify a mutually acceptable date for the Mayor to attend a subsequent meeting of the Board and that provisional arrangements had been made for 5 May 2009 or earlier should a date become available within the programme

NOTED

CCTV IN MIDDLESBROUGH

The Chair of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel gave an outline of the process of investigation and presented the findings of the Panel's scrutiny investigation of CCTV in accordance with the agreed terms of reference.

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

i) The Panel considers the CCTV system is a powerful and invaluable tool for modern Police detection and prosecution and that discussions should be undertaken with the Police to secure a substantial financial contribution to the CCTV system. This to be achieved before budget setting in February 2009.

ii) That the issue of Staff Training /Awareness be undertaken promptly in relation to two key areas:

- communication/involvement with the Police to improve the awareness of the terminology used or required by operational Police officers;

- awareness and greater understanding to improve the communication between CCTV operators and the retail security staff. That a programme be established and introduced within 3 months of the Executive accepting this recommendation.

iii) In recognition of the relatively neutral view the public has regarding feeling safe due to CCTV the Panel considers that the issue of improving public awareness through publicity etc should be revisited and assessed on a regular basis to see if this would improve the public's opinion.

iv) That the Council clearly establishes a policy, which states that clips or extracts of footage obtained from CCTV are not sold to generate income. As such extracts could present Middlesbrough very negatively.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas including: -

- confirmation was given that CCTV had been installed in 'hot spot' areas and not just in the Town Centre area;

- Members noted with interest the results of the public perception survey undertaken as part of the voiceover survey which demonstrated the increased public awareness of young people of CCTV in Middlesbrough but that the Panel had agreed that further improvements could be made in this regard as reflected in the recommendations;

- in response to a comment regarding the lack of a cost benefit analysis the Board was advised that the Panel had acknowledged that CCTV was regarded as a key preventative measure to deter and detect crime and tackle anti-social behaviour and as such was very difficult to identify a tangible cost analysis;

- it was noted, however that the Panel's final report at paragraph 10 stated that the scheme currently managed 216 cameras with three operators per shift at a cost of approximately £440k per annum for which Middlesbrough received contributions from three organisations;

- although strengthened by a recommendation of the Panel to establish a clear policy Members emphasised that although it was noted that CCTV footage had been used for

training/educational purposes it was agreed that it should not be made available to generate income;

- in order to portray a more positive stance it was suggested that the last sentence of recommendation (iv) above be deleted.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive subject to deletion of the last sentence on recommendation (iv) as outlined above.

FIRE EMERGENCY CONTROL ROOM - RATIONALISATION

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel gave an outline of the process of investigation and presented the findings of the Panel's assessment and proposals on the issues associated with the rationalisation of the fire emergency control room affecting Middlesbrough.

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 a procedure is introduced which ensures Members, who sit on outside bodies such as the Fire Authority, have the opportunity to alert the Council or the Executive to significant issues which emerge and are available to answer questions to full Council.

ii) That Members who are appointed to outside bodies are informed that they are expected to keep their host authority alerted to significant issues, which affect the residents or the environment of Middlesbrough.

Reference was made to the recent award to the Tees Valley of a high percentage of significant Government investment for the North East which would provide for the upgrading and/or refurbishment of several fire stations in the Tees Valley area.

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

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 October 2008 (Appendix A), 472 had been implemented, 22 partially completed and 2 had not been implemented.

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

As recently demonstrated by the Environment Scrutiny Panel in receiving information on the progress on the implementation of recommendations of an earlier scrutiny investigation in relation to Allotments the opportunity existed within the overall process for Scrutiny Panels to revisit topics to monitor progress made.

The opportunity for inviting back individuals or groups that had previously provided evidence to inform a scrutiny review to discuss whether there had been any discernible change in the service provided since the recommendations had been approved and implemented was supported.

NOTED AND APPROVED

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

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

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report, which outlined a request from a member of the public for an investigation to be undertaken into aspects of the Council's recycling activities.

The suggested scrutiny topic had arisen following the submission of a complaint to a Ward Councillor regarding the condition of an area around a recycling facility. Aside from the issues of complaint, the following specific queries had been raised for further investigation: -

a) what is the value of recycled material after expenses associated with its recovery are accounted for?

b) what is the cost of constantly having to remove fly tipped waste, its disposal and cleaning up operation?

c) state in terms of profit and/or loss the usefulness of recycling facilities.

The Board was advised of a response from the Environment Department in which it was confirmed that in view of ongoing problems associated with the site it had been agreed to re-site the recycling facility to a nearby Council-owned car park.

The responses from the Environment Department to the specific issues raised at (a) and (c) above were reported as follows: -

a) There was no charge to the Council in terms of recycled materials from Council sites. Private companies were involved in collecting and processing the materials, with associated costs being recovered by any income, which they received from the processed materials. Income, which the Council received from the sale of materials, covered the majority of costs for paper, glass and cans collected from Council sites. There was, however, a unit cost not related to the tonnage of materials collected, to cover transport and supply of the specialised recycling containers. Overall there was no income to the Council although it was noted that each tonne of material recycled was a tonne less for the Council to dispose of. The use of recycling sites meant that the Council therefore incurred less disposal costs and landfill tax.

b) The service did not have costs identified for this specific location. Any litter in the street was covered by the main street-cleansing budget, which was not divided into individual locations. As clearance of the site had been undertaken by the selling agent who controlled the site, the associated costs were not known to the Council.

c) The recycling service was not run on a profit and loss basis and a number of factors determined service provision which included the need to meet national performance indicators; the Council's commitment to offering a range of options to residents to recycle; and demand form residents to recycle more of their waste. Although much of the recycling tonnage was generated from doorstep collections, there continued to be a number of items, which continued to be recycled through local 'bring sites'. The nature of the materials and/or the amounts of materials produced were such that 'bulking up' the waste at such sites continued to make them workable.

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

It was confirmed that the scrutiny work programme for the Environment Scrutiny Panel included the submission of regular updates in respect of recycling. It was suggested that as part of such arrangements consideration be given as to how to make further improvements to raising public awareness to the bring sites and the Household Waste Recycling Centre. Reference was also made to the opportunity to donate to and/or collect by charities.

ORDERED that in view of the response by the Service Department to the complainant and the ongoing work by the Environment Scrutiny Panel in relation to recycling issues as outlined the request for a scrutiny review be not pursued and the applicant be advised accordingly.

SCRUTINY PANELS – PROGRESS REPORTS – NORTH EAST AMBULANCE SERVICE CONTACT CENTRE PROPOSALS – DEMENTIA SERVICES

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

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel advised the Board that since the circulation of the progress report the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee had met at its meeting held on 13 November 2008. At that meeting it had been agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Secretary of State for Health expressing concern at the lack of information regarding the criteria used and detailed rationale in not approving a three month review of the North East Ambulance Service's Contact Centre proposals.

Reference was also made to the intention to conduct a scrutiny topic of investigation with regard to local dementia services.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted.

2. That a Dementia Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be established comprising Members of the Health Scrutiny Panel and the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel to undertake a scrutiny investigation of local dementia services.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – SCRUTINY REVIEW – LIBRARY PROVISION IN MIDDLESBROUGH

The Chair referred to the possibility of undertaking a scrutiny investigation of the library provision in Middlesbrough.

ORDERED that the library provision in Middlesbrough be the next topic of scrutiny investigation by the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel.