

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 10 February 2009.

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

OFFICERS: J Bennington, G Brown, P Clark, A Crawford, S Joscelyne, J Ord, N Sayer, P Slocombe, C Taylor and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Clark, Member of Environment Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Rostron, Executive Member for Social Care
Councillor N J Walker, Executive Member for Resources.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dryden, Sanderson and J A Walker.

COUNCILLOR J A WALKER

The Chair referred to the recent illness of Councillor J A Walker. Following a recent hospital visit Councillor N J Walker advised the Board of Councillor J Walker's progress but indicated that it would involve a long recovery process.

ORDERED that Councillor N J Walker be thanked for the information and that the good wishes of the Board be forwarded to Councillor J A Walker.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillors Clark, Ismail and Williams.	Personal Non-Prejudicial	Agenda Item 5 – Executive Feedback – Rationalisation of the Fire Emergency Control Room – Members of the Cleveland Combined Fire Authority
Councillor Brunton	Personal Non-Prejudicial	Agenda Item 8 – Review of Countryside Matters – any matters in relation to allotments – relative of an allotment holder
Councillor Clark	Personal Non - Prejudicial	Agenda Item 8 – Review of Countryside Matters – any matters in relation to allotments –allotment holder

** MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 13 January 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**SUSPENSION – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10 – ORDER OF BUSINESS

ORDERED that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.10, the Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed that, in order to accommodate Councillor Clark the order of business be varied and that Agenda Items 8 and 12 be dealt with as the next items of business.

COUNTRYSIDE MATTERS FINAL REPORT - ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel Councillor Clark a Member of the Panel outlined the process of investigation by the Panel into countryside matters within the control of the Council.

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

- i) That the allotments strategy is revisited and re-drafted as an achievable and deliverable document and that a timescale is identified for implementation.
- ii) That a decision is taken on the long term feasibility of implementing the Newham Grange Master Plan to develop Newham Grange Leisure Farm particularly whether resources can be made available/obtained and whether the Farm could be developed as a tourist attraction for the wider area. In the shorter term, steps should be taken to improve access arrangements at the farm to deter non-payment for entry, for example through improved signage and checking of tickets.
- iii) That activities currently taking place at Lingfield Countryside Centre are transferred to Newham Grange Leisure Farm, with the Countryside Centre being developed as a community facility, to involve all interested parties.
- iv) That the Council's biodiversity duties are publicised to ensure that all Council departments and services are working towards achieving these.
- v) That with regard to the trees issues examined by the Scrutiny Panel:
 - a) Following completion of the planned tree mapping survey, the results are made available to the Scrutiny Panel together with information on whether action or improvement is needed.
 - b) That the Scrutiny Panel is consulted on the development of possible tree management policies relating to right to light, right to TV/radio/satellite signal and high hedges. This should consider whether such policies should be introduced and, if so, take into account development control and legal considerations.
 - c) That the planned rolling programme of inspection for relevant trees also takes into account the suitability of tree types for areas such as housing estates and open spaces, with action taken where types are found to be unsuitable or where tree growth is causing problems.
 - d) That work is continued in partnership with relevant organisations and groups to ensure that Middlesbrough's countryside facilities remain accessible and enjoyable. This should include:-
 - (i) Helping Friends Groups to access funding by publicising assistance that can be provided.
 - (ii) Exploring the possibility of developing links between various countryside-related attractions such as Nature's World and Newham Grange Leisure Farm, for example by introducing a joint admission ticket.

Members sought clarification and further information on a number of areas.

In response to a query regarding a previous aspiration to identify surrounding areas of Lingfield Countryside Centre to be designated as a country park reference was made to the information received by the Panel in this regard. The report indicated that there was now considered to be insufficient land available surrounding the site to provide facilities on the scale originally envisaged for a country park.

Councillor Clark was thanked for the presentation of the Final report.

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

CARBON REDUCTION AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION ACTION PLAN

Councillor Clark presented a report of the Environment Scrutiny Panel following the Panel's decision to include examination of the Council's Carbon Reduction and Climate Adaptation (CRACA) Plan as a topic in its current work programme.

At its meeting held on 29 January 2009 the Environment Scrutiny Panel had considered a report (Appendix 1 of the report submitted) which had been submitted to the Executive on 6 January 2009.

Although the Panel had welcomed the report and the approach being taken by the Council certain issues had been raised for the attention of the Executive in respect of the following:-

- i) Reference to Local authorities' obligations to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and the use of the statutory emissions trading scheme:

The Panel had suggested that the Council should request that it be supplied with the detailed breakdown on information rather than just an overall reduction target in order to assist in taking steps to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the highest emitting areas, for example, by highlighting areas of housing where action could then be targeted to assist householders in reducing energy consumption.

- ii) Reference to the Council's involvement in reducing Middlesbrough's carbon dioxide emissions by 45,000 tonnes over three years to December 2005.

The Panel had suggested that the Authority as a Beacon Council on climate change should work towards developing the highest sustainability standards possible, including the development of 'eco-buildings', and that the Executive should endorse this approach.

Reference was made to a successful youth climate change debate, which had recently been organised jointly between Middlesbrough Environment City and Middlesbrough Council.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the updated position in terms of the Environment's Scrutiny Panel's 2008/2009 Work Programme be noted and approved.
2. That the comments of the Environment Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Council's Carbon Reduction and Climate Adaptation Plan be endorsed and the Executive be advised accordingly.

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. The process was part of the arrangements of 'holding the Executive to account' and also provided the opportunity for the Board to identify or highlight any issues of concern.

NOTED AND APPROVED

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SOCIAL CARE

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rostron who focussed on her main aims, objectives and emerging issues which included the following:-

Aims:-

- to improve quality of life with particular regard to elderly, people with disabilities and service users;
- continue and develop joint working such as that with Middlesbrough Environment City and recent work in relation to a strategy for affordable warmth;
- pursue employment policies to achieve job satisfaction and stability and assist with staff retention;
- continue to pursue joint working arrangements in partnership with the South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust and Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust and promoting a holistic approach;

Objectives and Priorities:-

- safeguarding vulnerable adults;
 - ensuring protection systems were robust;
 - working towards an integrated social care and health system;
 - roll out of individual budgets for service users to purchase services as and when required;
 - maintain independence and promote independent living, supporting such developments as the Telecare service;
- maintain and develop the intermediate and interim care service;
- continue to support asylum seekers; and refugees;
- continue to improve health activities – much work to be undertaken as part of the Healthy Towns Initiative;
- maintain and improve standards of independent social care;

Emerging Issues:-

- given the overall economic climate, maintaining standards whilst at the same time remaining in budget;
- the increasing number of people with dementia was regarded as a major issue;
- work to be undertaken following the publication of the national Dementia Strategy to improve the quality of life for people with dementia and their carers.

The Board was also advised that although the Council had not recently been successful in an initial Government bid for a pilot scheme for an integrated social care and health system and provide a single point of access, work was progressing to have it in place by 2011.

Members sought clarification and further information on a number of areas.

Specific reference was made to the uptake rate of the Telecare service, which had been lower than expected, and therefore efforts would continue to raise awareness to the provision.

Reference was made to the quality assurance system of grading residential care homes from one to five based on a number of elements. Each home was required to meet minimum standards set by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. As part of the arrangements for the Council to monitor the standard of care homes an indication was given of the training and guidance offered and to the practice of regular checks and making unannounced visits.

In relation to the adaptation service delivered by Erimus Housing in partnership with the Local Authority and the Health Service an indication was given of recent improvements although the

need for continuing efforts to seek further improvements was acknowledged. Reference was also made to improvements made in respect of the Tees Community Equipment Service.

Reference was made to a number of initiatives and procedures which were in place and being pursued in order to assist with staff retention.

ORDERED that the Executive Member for Social Care be thanked for the information provided.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – CCTV – RATIONALISATION OF THE FIRE EMERGENCY CONTROL ROOM

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 the final reports in relation to the following:-

- The Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on CCTV in Middlesbrough;
- The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel's report on the Rationalisation of the Fire Emergency Control Room.

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

NOTED

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

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION 2009/2010 TO 2012/2013 – REVENUE BUDGET 2009/2010

The Director of Resources submitted a report which outlined the updated medium term financial position for 2009/2010 to 2012/2013 and set out proposals to address the funding gap identified within the report considered by the Executive at its meeting held on 9 December 2008.

Since that meeting two key exercises had now been completed namely a full review of the Medium Term financial plan and all services had examined opportunities for efficiency savings in line with agreed Council priorities under the Sustainable Communities Strategy as outlined in the report.

It was intended that the Mayor will recommend his 2009/2010 Revenue Budget and the associated level of Council Tax to a meeting of the Executive to be held on 24 February 2009.

In terms of the Medium Term Financial projections the inflation assumptions had been revised in line with current inflation rates. Provision had also been made for the impact of increased foster carer allowances.

It was confirmed that all growth items had been reviewed and the following amendments proposed for consideration:-

- a) as the likely level of contribution required for 2009/2010 in respect of the development of Middlehaven could be met from existing resources the Council's contribution had been rephrased;
- b) an additional £200,000 had been provided for grant fall-out in respect of the Environmental enforcement team;

- c) following a review of the Middlesbrough Partnership budget it was now considered that an additional planned investment of £250,000 was not required for 2009/2010;
- d) following a review of services including demand led pressures within Social Care and Children, Families and Learning an additional requirement of £383,000 had been identified;
- e) following a review of central government funding and the Council's Collection Fund savings of £227,000 had been identified.

The Board was advised that should the proposals at (a) to (e) above be accepted the revised reduced gap would be £3.340m (2009/2010), £5.259m (2010/2011), £6.718m (2011/2012) and £8.026m (2012/2013).

Details of the respective proposals for efficiency savings categorised by Sustainable Community Theme were outlined in Appendix A of the report.

Appendix B of the report submitted listed service reviews either completed or ongoing which included the waste services review (generating savings of £478,000); in-house fostering allowances (increased short term costs of £185,000 but anticipated to generate long term savings); learning disabilities residential services (new capital investment for improved service); and introduction of Telecare providing anticipated savings of £92,000 in the first year.

Members sought clarification and further information on a number of areas including:-

- i) it was confirmed that the growth item identified at (b) above had always been intended to be eventual mainstream funded;
- ii) in relation to the growth item at (c) above it was confirmed that the renewal date for the partnership was May 2011 and an indication was given of a host of options which were being pursued resulting in the investment not being required;
- iii) it was acknowledged that the need to identify efficiency savings would become increasingly more difficult but in recognition of this areas such as the purchasing arrangements; investment in appropriate technology; and partnership arrangements avoiding duplication of work were being examined;
- iv) it was agreed that reviewing services was a challenge but it was hoped that such work as that identified at (iii) above would be sufficiently thorough and that together with robust monitoring arrangements and with the role of the scrutiny process it would minimise the impact on what was regarded in some cases as difficult political decisions which had to be made in achieving required savings.

ORDERED that the Director of Resources be thanked for the information provided.

FIT FOR PURPOSE – REVIEW OF AIMS AND PRIORITIES

A report of the Head of Corporate Performance was submitted which outlined the rationale for changing the 'Fit for Purpose' priorities and sought feedback on the detailed proposals relating to the suggested wording of the new priorities.

Since 2007/2008 consultations had been undertaken nationally regarding the introduction of a new national performance framework called Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Such changes triggered a review for the existing 'Fit for Purpose' aim and priorities. The aim of the 'Fit for Purpose' theme was to ensure that the Council was organisationally 'Fit for Purpose' to act as a community leader and contribute effectively to the achievement of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

The CAA introduced an integrated Organisational Assessment of councils from 2009, which comprised two assessments (use of Resources Assessment and Managing Performance Assessment) across four themes (managing finances, managing resources, governing the

business, and managing performance). The four themes were underpinned by Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) that provided details of what was included within each of the four themes.

It was recognised that the Organisational Assessment themes could represent an effective performance framework for Central Services. The KLOEs set out the focus for each assessment, which was generally consistent with the core business of Central Services. Whilst the overarching aim of the 'Fit for Purpose' theme fitted well with the Organisational Assessment the existing supporting priorities appeared unclear in comparison.

It was proposed that the 'Fit for Purpose' aim remained largely the same, with a slight addition to the wording of the aim to incorporate the Local Area Agreement but that the supporting priorities be revised to reflect the wording of the key themes of the Organisation Assessment as set out in the report submitted.

The report outlined the overall consultation approach and timetable.

In commenting on the proposals Members referred to the absence of a previously identified priority of supporting Members in the democratic process. The Board was advised that a similar comment had been raised during the consultation process and would be examined further and included as part of feedback for formal consideration.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the proposals relating to the suggested wording of the new priorities in respect of the 'Fit for Purpose' theme be supported subject to consideration being given to the addition of a reference to supporting Members in the democratic process as a priority.

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

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.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – SCRUTINY FINAL REPORTS

The Chair referred to scrutiny final reports and drew Members' attention to the importance of ensuring that detailed consideration is given to the content and recommendations of such reports.

NOTED AND APPROVED