

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

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

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

OFFICERS: J Bennington, P Clark, J Ord, K Warnock and E Williamson.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Rooney, Executive Member for Transport.

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

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Williams	Personal and Non Prejudicial	Agenda Item 5 – Review of Libraries – service user and treasurer of Stainton Memorial Hall.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 10 February 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record subject to the deletion of 'relative of' in respect of the declaration of interest of Councillor Brunton.

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 TRANSPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rooney to the meeting who focussed on the main aims, objectives and emerging issues of the portfolio of Executive Member for Transport.

From the outset it was recognised that the portfolio of transport covered many areas including highway maintenance, road safety and parking.

The Board discussed and sought clarification on a number of the areas highlighted by Councillor Rooney in relation to the following: -

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan – specific reference was made to the work being undertaken at Fairy Dell;
- University Ward Residents Parking Scheme – problems associated with the timetable for implementation in view of the need for specialists consultants to oversee consultation, detailed design and implementation of the scheme;
- promotion of specific projects around sustainability such as the bike loan scheme and car share scheme;

- progress on improving road safety;
- Middlesbrough Environment City had organised free training sessions for Middlesbrough residents in cycle maintenance at the Cycle Centre within Middlesbrough Bus Station;
- reference was made to a number of projects as part of the Healthy Town Initiative funding;
- East Middlesbrough feasibility study;
- full impact of credit crunch on car parking income not yet known although there were already indications of reduced revenue;
- future requirements in terms of Building Schools for the Future and to deal with problems such as those identified at Acklam in Hall Drive area;
- national indicators and the need to increase the number of passengers using buses;
- provision of timetable rolling screens at bus stops within the Town Centre;
- the provision of segregated cycle routes along key corridors in the Town as part of ongoing programme of works funded through the Local Transport Plan.

In discussing cycle routes reference was made to other countries such as Holland whereby cycling was allowed in pedestrian areas. Given the volume of traffic on certain major roads it was felt that with appropriate measures and a separate cycle route where space allowed similar arrangements could apply in the UK thus encouraging more people to use bicycles. Reference was also made to problems of indiscriminate parking not only on cycleways and lack of legal powers in this regard to alleviate such situations.

In view of financial constraints it was confirmed that the timetable rolling screens at bus stops would for the time being only be available within the Town Centre.

The Executive Member for Transport noted the request for Members to be kept informed of progress in relation to the proposed phased programme in respect of the Marton Road Corridor.

In response to a suggestion to extend the use of the SMART card in terms of travel it was agreed that this could be a matter for future consideration.

In discussing the budget arrangements it was confirmed that given current financial constraints there was little flexibility and that a full review of the Local Transport Plan programme had been undertaken to establish a list of prioritised list of schemes. Reference was also made to changes and re-profiling of schemes in the capital programme such as the North Middlesbrough Access Road as a result of the DfT's late confirmation of the bid and the need to move the significant preparatory costs into 2009/2010.

In response to an enquiry about the provision of sufficient footbridges to link Middlehaven with the Town Centre an indication was given of a number of current transport schemes being implemented to ease congestion of traffic such as that at the Hartington Road Interchange.

With reference to a lack of salt bins in certain areas it was confirmed that they were provided on a priority basis and it was noted that the period for gritting had been over an extended period from October and was still continuing.

ORDERED that the Executive Member for Transport be thanked for the information provided.

REVIEW OF LIBRARIES - FINAL REPORT –AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Panel outlined the process of investigation of the Panel's review of Libraries in Middlesbrough.

The Board considered the conclusions reached by the Panel and the following recommendations based on the submitted evidence: -

- a) In view of the current over provision of libraries a programme of library closures should be developed based on closing those libraries with low usage and where there was another library in close proximity. The programme should be one that ensures that alternative provision, such as community management and longer opening hours in remaining branches, is provided. This should be agreed in consultation with local communities.
- b) That the responsibility of the running of Abingdon Library should be returned to Abingdon School.
- c) That the current Whinney Banks Library is closed in view of the closure of the Youth and Community Centre.
- d) That alternative arrangements are sought for the current library provision at Stainton Village Hall.
- e) That any staff that are affected by the closures are offered re-deployment within the Council or voluntary redundancy where appropriate.
- f) That a review of the current use of the mobile library is undertaken with a view to encouraging further use in areas where closures have occurred.
- g) A review of the pricing structure for the media rentals market and the annual charge for internet use is undertaken with a view to raising charges.
- h) That the service increases its promotion of the library facilities in Middlesbrough including placing an emphasis on the learning facilities provided by libraries (i.e. promoting literacy events, IT and Information Skills etc) and also the services that are available to library members through the website.

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

SCRUTINY REVIEW – IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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 February 2009 (Appendix A), 490 had been implemented, 13 partially completed and 9 had not been implemented.

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

An update was given in respect of the implementation of a number of recommendations since the circulation of the report. It was also noted that a review was to be undertaken in respect of the developing role of street wardens.

As carried out recently by a number of Scrutiny Panels the opportunity existed within the overall process for 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

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS – DOG FOULING

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 Dog Fouling in Middlesbrough.

The reasons for the request were reported as follows: -

'I am a resident of North Ormesby and Dog fouling has always been an environmental nuisance. Unfortunately it's getting worse and being allowed to go unchecked.'

Taking into account the agreed criteria the Board considered the appropriateness of undertaking a scrutiny review into the suggested topic. Specific reference was made to a previous scrutiny review of Streetscene services, which included the area for suggested investigation.

Whilst the Board considered that the topic was not appropriate for a scrutiny review at the present time it was felt that further measures could be undertaken to raise the public's awareness to the problems. It was also suggested that the possibility of increasing enforcement action should be examined.

ORDERED that a scrutiny investigation be not undertaken but that the Director of Environment be advised of the Board's comments relating to the suggestion to examine ways of raising public awareness to the problems of dog fouling and that the possibility of increased enforcement action in this regard be examined.

SCRUTINY PANELS – PROGRESS REPORTS

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

NOTED

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES – FINAL REPORT UPDATE – HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

Further to the submission of the final report of the Health Scrutiny Panel on Audiology Services to the Board on 1 July 2008 a report of the Chair of the Panel had been circulated which outlined significant progress and improvements which had been achieved.

ORDERED that consideration of the report be deferred to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

MIDDLESBROUGH LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

A report of the Head of Corporate Performance was presented which outlined the outcome of the Local Area Agreement review for 2008/2009.

LAAs were reviewed and refreshed annually by Government Office on behalf of the Government. GONE would report to Whitehall at key stages. The key milestones for the process were set out at Table 1 of the report.

As part of the review process an indication was given of the areas examined by GONE.

Middlesbrough Partnership had used Accountability Sessions for a number of years as a key component of its performance management framework. The Accountability Sessions reflected

the requirements of the LAA review and it was therefore considered they provided a suitable evidence base for GONE to review Middlesbrough's LAA. Following the Accountability Sessions GONE had prepared a LAA Annual Review Report which assessed Middlesbrough's LAA. The report outlined a statement from the report, which included: -

'Middlesbrough has made good progress with developing and bedding down delivery arrangements across the majority of designated targets. There is a strong performance culture in place and evidence of innovative practice. As a result of the focus on Community Safety and Children's Services within this LAA, there remain more than half of the measures that currently have no performance data that can be reviewed. However, it is clear that interventions and activities are in place to drive forward progress throughout the LAA'.

The refresh element of the LAA had been in terms of 'unfinished business' from earlier negotiations, which included: -

- Delayed indicators;
- Revised indicators;
- Targets that were inconsistent with their indicator definition.

For Middlesbrough there had been 13 designated targets where Middlesbrough's LAA had baselines and/or targets outstanding. It was noted, however that during the refresh process further indicators had been included, as indicator definitions had changed during the year. As a result the increased number of targets were being discussed as part of the LAA Refresh to 19.

In addition Middlesbrough had requested that those targets which were directly impacted by the credit crunch were also included in the refresh process, namely:

- **NI 153** - Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods
- **NI 154** - Net additional homes provided.

It was noted therefore that a total of 21 targets had been involved in the LAA Refresh.

It had been agreed with GONE that targets for NI 153 and NI 154 should be left out of the refresh process for 2009 and left aside until the 2010 Refresh of the LAA and a more realistic target had been renegotiated when the impact of the credit crunch may be fully understood. It was pointed out however that this would mean that should the renegotiated targets be achieved Middlesbrough would not be eligible for reward for those targets.

The timetable for completing the LAA Refresh was very tight, a draft refreshed LAA needed to be submitted to GONE 2 March 2009 (to be formally approved by Deputy Mayor before 26 March 2009).

The Board was advised of progress since the circulation of the report and noted that there were only two targets which were still being negotiated. The table set out in the appendix outlined the refreshed LAA targets and highlighted where changes had been made to the original LAA.

ORDERED AS FOLLOWS: -

1. That the outcome of the LAA review for 2008/2009 be noted.
2. That the current position with regard to the refreshed LAA for 2009 be noted.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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