

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 1 June 2010.

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

OFFICERS: B Baldam, J Bennington, C Breheny, P Clark, J Ord, N Sayer and P Stephens.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cole and Purvis.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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 2010/2011.

ORDERED that Councillor Dryden be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the Municipal Year 2010/2011.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 4 May 2010 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – SUBSTANCE MISUSE EDUCATION – CANCER SCREENING SERVICES ACROSS THE TEES VALLEY

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Office Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered reports in respect of the following: -

- a) Substance Misuse Education – Final Report of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel
- b) Cancer Screening Services Across the Tees Valley – Final Report of the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee.

The Executive and the Corporate Management Team had considered and supported the Service Response in respect of (a) above and noted the report at (b) above.

It was noted that in respect of (b) above that the proposals from NHS Tees would be considered prior to a formal detailed response from the Executive. It was confirmed that a meeting had been set up between the Executive Member for Public Health and Sport and Madeleine Johnson, Acting Public Health Specialist – Immunisation and Screening, NHS Tees to discuss the matter further.

NOTED

REVENUE OUTTURN 2009 TO 2010

The Deputy Director of Resources presented a report concerning the final outturn position for expenditure against the 2009/2010 Revenue Budget.

The Board was advised that a net budget saving of (-£183,000) was forecast for 2009/2010 within the general fund services which represented 0.14% saving against the £130.980 million 2009/2010 budget.

A detailed breakdown of gross expenditure and income budgets against actual expenditure and income were outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted.

The Council had embedded within its budget monitoring procedures reporting on efficiency savings. It was confirmed that the Council had under achieved on its efficiency savings target by + £425,000 as detailed in Appendix B of the report submitted.

The report summarised the movements on reserves (Appendix C) and provisions (Appendix D) for 2009/2010.

The Board sought clarification and asked for further information on a number of areas.

It was acknowledged that the main area of budget pressure within Children, Families and Learning was around Safeguarding (+£3,373,000). Such pressures had been offset by contributions of (-£36,000) and an additional saving of (-£89,000) from staff turnover.

It was noted that there had been an increased demand for agency fostering services of £1.406 million and agency residential care for children of £1.762 million. The use of agency social work staff to cover essential vacancies in locality teams had added £679,000 to the pressure in Family Services. It was confirmed that an additional allocation of £2.2 million had been included as part of the current year's budget setting exercise to cope with the significant demand led pressures within Children, Families and Learning. Such costs would cover the direct employment of additional social workers to cope with the increased service pressure resulting in a consequential reduction in the use of external agency staff at a higher cost. The initial impact of such a measure would be shown in the first quarter budget outturn figures. The Board confirmed that it would continue to closely monitor such areas of the overall budget.

Following the unprecedented winter weather conditions earlier in the year it was noted that there had been significant budget pressure in Social Care from an increased demand in services for respite care and short stay placement costs. It was also noted that the economic downturn had resulted in a net trading deficit for Ayresome Industries of £446,000. Such a figure had been higher than anticipated although more detailed information would be available as part of the first quarter's budget outturn figures.

The adverse winter weather conditions had also had a major impact on the Environment budget. It was noted that there had been a shortfall in car parking income of £220,00 and a significant reduction in fees and charges income from leisure facilities. Such weather conditions had also resulted in increased waste collection costs of £77,000. It was noted, however, such costs had been offset by additional income of £101,000 from the sale of surplus Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme. Given the unprecedented weather conditions Members referred to the efforts of the Environment Department and acknowledged that a net budget saving of -£57,000 had been achieved.

In relation to the Regeneration budget Members noted a major budget pressure concerning MIMA in respect of problems with the cooling system. It was confirmed that Legal Services were currently reviewing contracts to ascertain if the costs could be recovered.

In response to clarification sought by Members relating to the budget pressure in respect of the Enterprise Centres of (+£124,000) an indication was given of the specific areas being examined such as the level of rents and reviewing the accommodation.

In commenting on the overall financial position and changes in Government direction Members were advised of current work being undertaken with regard to identifying the potential impact of different scenarios on the 107 approximately grant funded schemes. Members highlighted the potential for such areas to be the subject of future scrutiny investigation.

Members commented on the net budget savings of (-£565,000) in relation to Corporate Services with specific reference to savings on staffing costs and £52,000 savings in respect of Members' costs on areas such as special responsibility allowances, car allowances and course fees.

NOTED

NATIONAL INDICATOR SET 2008 TO 2009 QUARTILES – PERFORMANCE COMPARED NATIONALLY

The Corporate Performance Team Leader presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which outlined Middlesbrough's performance in the National Indicator Set (NIS) compared with all local authority areas in England as measured in the last quarter of 2008/2009. Performance against the NIS was published annually by the Audit Commission, as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The information related to 172 National Indicator measures (80% of the NIS) of which 40.5% were in the median to top quartile, and 59.5% were within the lower median and bottom quartiles.

The information included the following: -

- Table 1: outlined the number and percentage of NIs within each quartile, by service area;
- Appendix A: details of the quartile position for each specific indicator, by service area;
- Table 2: outlined the number and percentage of NIs within each quartile, by Strategic Plan theme;
- Appendix B: set out those NIs where Middlesbrough performed in the top 5% of all Council's during the snapshot quarter;
- Appendix C set out those NIs where Middlesbrough performed in the worst 5% of all Councils during the snapshot quarter.

It was noted that areas which had performed comparatively well overall included efficiency savings, road traffic accidents, adult social care, fuel poverty, planning applications, highways maintenance and street cleansing.

Specific reference was made to the NIs for which Middlesbrough was performing in the bottom quartile in the snapshot quarter and identified areas of particular concern, specifically where bottom quartile performance was compounded by continuing decline in performance. In each case details were provided of current performance and measures being pursued to improve the situation.

The Board noted the areas, which had performed comparatively poorly which included; educational attainment; local skills/employment/benefit claimants; anti-social behaviour and community cohesion; alcohol misuse; childhood obesity; premature and overall death rates and recycling.

Members specifically referred to certain areas such as the safeguarding indicators, which were shown to be in the bottom quartile. It was noted that the safeguarding caseload remained very high, with consequential performance issues and significant budgetary pressure. An unannounced inspection by Ofsted in December 2009 identified no areas for priority action, but set out some areas for development. The report referred to an action plan which was now in place to address such matters and other internally identified issues and whilst year-end targets would in most cases not be met, performance improvement was anticipated from Quarter One 2010/2011.

In general terms the NIS was heavily weighted towards key measures of community wellbeing indicators within the bottom quartile often related to community behaviours that would only improve in the longer-term. Whilst the majority continued to improve year-on-year the improvement was often insufficient to meet targets or to keep pace with comparators. The Board was advised that achieving the required step change in such indicators would be dependent upon a range of factors, including a stable economic climate and effective joint working with partners and local communities to transform local service delivery.

Members highlighted the potential for areas, which were shown to be in the bottom quartile to be the subject of future scrutiny investigation.

NOTED

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES TRUST – CHILDRENS TRUST AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Children's Trust Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following its scrutiny review of the Middlesbrough Children and Young People's Trust.

It was noted that the Panel had been keen to ascertain what had been achieved by the Trust; if the Trust had access to a sufficiently strong research and intelligence function; the extent to which the Trust was involved in influencing the commissioning and decommissioning of services; and the extent of responsibility of all partners.

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

1. That the Children's Trust establishes a clear and systematic link with Middlesbrough Council's Executive and the Board of NHS Middlesbrough, to ensure that there is a regular dialogue about children's services, with two key decision making bodies. The Panel also seeks assurance that the Chief Executives of NHS Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough Council regularly monitor progress, to discharge their own responsibilities.
2. That the new CYPP clearly identifies the priority areas for the Children's Trust to tackle until 2014. It should also clearly state how progress against those themes will be measured and specify what actions are expected from which partners to achieve those goals.
3. That the Children's Trust critically appraises whether the Trust has access to a sufficiently strong research and intelligence function, to provide the high quality and current intelligence the Trust requires to discharge its duties effectively and provide the detailed evidence required to advance arguments about service and policy development.
4. That the Children's Trust develops outcomes based measuring framework, which can outline the progress that the Children's Trust is making and the impact it is having. This should also be publicly available to ensure those not on the Children's Trust can satisfy themselves of the progress being made.
5. That the Children's Trust asserts itself as the principal forum for the discussion of children's issues within Middlesbrough and takes steps to raise its profile to a level consistent with its importance.
6. That the Children's Trust becomes much more heavily involved in influencing the commissioning and decommissioning of services for children and their families, making the case for service change where reliable intelligence supports the point. The Panel would like to hear how the Children's Trust will seek to do this.
7. That the Children's Trust becomes much more involved in the wider debate about children's wellbeing in the town and takes every opportunity to influence public policy, to ensure that it is consistent with the needs of children and young people.
8. That the Children's Trust partners increase the levels of integration between services to ensure maximum impact is delivered for the resources deployed. This should extend to the introduction of pooled or aligned budgets whenever most appropriate. The Panel would like to hear how the partners are advancing the sharing of expertise and resources to deliver a shared agenda.

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

SCRUTINY REVIEW 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 other than those which would form part of the overall report for the 2010/2011 Scrutiny Work Programme for the Board and the respective Scrutiny Panels

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.

NOTED

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – SCRUTINY REVIEW – WINTER MAINTENANCE

The Chair referred to the meeting of the Board held on 12 January 2010 when it had been agreed that the Board should undertake a scrutiny review into the Council's winter maintenance and gritting arrangements.

An indication was given that this would commence in the near future.

NOTED