

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 29 June 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors Cole, Dryden, C Hobson, J Hobson, Khan, Mawston and Sanderson.

OFFICERS: J Bennington, C Breheny, G Brown, P Clark, A Crawford, S Joscelyne and J Ord.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ismail, Kerr, Purvis, J A Walker and Williams.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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 1 June 2010 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – RECYCLING AND PACKAGING REDUCTION

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Office Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered the Environment Scrutiny Panel's Final report on Recycling and Packaging Reduction.

The Executive and the Corporate Management Team had considered and supported the Service Response.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

NOTED

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011

The Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted a report, which outlined progress by the various scrutiny panels in considering the proposed scrutiny work programme for 2010/2011.

The report summarised the suggested topics for investigation in respect of the following: -

Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel (in order of priority)

- a) Delivery Issues re: Primary Strategy for Change
- b) Bullying
- c) Child Poverty
- d) Safeguarding
- e) Substance misuse by parents and carers
- f) Support for problem families (including real costs)

Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel (in order of priority)

- a) Licensing Policy (is it robust enough)
- b) Dog Control (policies, re-restraint in public areas, controls re dangerous dogs)
- c) Food store ratings (controls, how applied, benefits achieved)
- d) Gypsy Site (Council funding/provision/controls)
- e) Golf Centre (its use and financial requirement)
- f) Anti-Social Behaviour linked with Alcohol

Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel

The Board was advised that since the circulation of the report the Panel had met and had identified the following topics for its 2010/2011 work programme: -

Economic Regeneration/Housing Areas

- a) Social Housing (the impact/welfare/availability of social housing on tenants of Middlesbrough following the stock transfer of homes – 6 years in November 2010)
- b) Estate Design (to accommodate car parking, pedestrians and community space)
- c) Support for the unemployed (what support is currently provided to job seekers by the Council and other agencies)
- d) Park and Ride (investigate the potential of a Park and Ride scheme)
- e) Speed Limits (the introduction of 20 mph limits in residential areas)

Transport

- a) Park and Ride (investigate the potential of a Park and Ride scheme)
- b) Speed Limits (the introduction of 20 mph limits in residential areas)
- c) River Tees (maximising the use of the River Tees for transport, trade, leisure and tourism)
- d) Access to buses (with regard to disabled people and persons with children's pushchairs)

Environment Scrutiny Panel

Following a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel the Board was advised of a list of topics for possible inclusion in the scrutiny work programme to be considered by the Environment Scrutiny Panel at its meeting to be held on 5 July 2010. It was noted that the Panel had previously agreed that the topic of Pest Control would be the first subject for investigation.

Detailed investigations

- a) Vehicle emissions/air quality (possible joint with Health Scrutiny Panel)
- b) Joint authority working on refuse collection
- c) Property services
- d) Fleet services

Shorter investigations

- a) Pest Control
- b) The future needs of neighbourhood management and links with environmental matters
- c) Noise complaints
- d) Maintenance of Play Areas
- e) Pavement repairs
- f) Street lighting – intelligent use/energy efficiency – part of update on Energy Reduction Final Report recommendations
- g) Liaison arrangements with other agencies in relation to environmental matters
- h) Fees and charges
- i) Threatened species and maintenance of natural woodland

Health Scrutiny Panel

- a) End of Life Care
- b) Dental Services capacity
- c) Safeguarding vulnerable adults
- d) Regional specialisms

Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee

The Board was advised that the Joint Committee was scheduled to meet in July to consider and agree a range of suitable topics for inclusion in its scrutiny work programme 2010/2011. The suggested topics included: -

- a) preparing for a tighter NHS financial climate
- b) Community Mental Health services
- c) Cancer screening updates

South Tees Health Scrutiny Joint Committee

The Board was advised that it was proposed that the Joint Committee meet in July 2010 to consider and agree a range of suitable topics for inclusion in the work programme.

Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel

The Board was advised of a list of suggested topics for possible inclusion in the scrutiny work programme to be considered by the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel at its meeting to be held on 1 July 2010.

It was noted that following consultation with the Chair specific reference had been made to the following: -

- a) Telecare (what is the take up, if it is not as high as expected why is this happening and what can we do about it and how do we compare nationally)

- b) Strategic Plan (2010 update) under Promoting Adult Health and Wellbeing, Tackling Exclusion and Promoting Equality – action being taken to ensure that the gap is closed between levels of health of Middlesbrough residents and the national average, as well as the gap between priority neighbourhoods and the Middlesbrough average with particular regard to participation in sport and active recreation.

Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

Members were reminded that the Board at its meeting held on 12 January 2010 had agreed that the Panel should undertake a review into the Coroner's Department.

The report set out a number of other suggestions for possible future inclusion in the Panel's work programme.

Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Board was reminded that at its meeting held on 12 January 2010 it had been agreed to undertake a review into Winter Maintenance.

ORDERED as follows: -

1. That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2010/2011 as outlined above be approved.
2. That the Board be advised of any suggested additions and/or revisions to the work programme of the Scrutiny Panels and Joint Committees accordingly.

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

In a report of the Senior Scrutiny 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.

A schedule detailing the proposed attendance for Executive Members to meetings of the Board was outlined at Appendix 1 of the report submitted.

NOTED AND APPROVED

EXECUTIVE MEMBER – RESOURCES

The Chair welcomed Councillor N J Walker, Executive Member for Resources to the meeting who focussed on key and emerging issues.

In terms of the overall situation the Coalition Government had announced proposed substantial financial cuts in public spending, initially £6 billion, which would be required nationally over the next 12 months. Middlesbrough Council faced a cut of £2.7 million in its Government support.

Whilst it was acknowledged that it would be a significant challenge to achieve such savings the full extent of such cuts would not be known until the Government completed its spending review which was expected in the Autumn 2010. Although the precise figures were unknown each Executive Member had commenced discussions with Officers on the possible ways of achieving the required savings. Initial discussions had included areas such as energy saving measures; occupancy levels in buildings, Council tax collection, benefit take up and grant funding regimes.

Given the difficult financial circumstances it was considered important that careful consideration was given to the engagement of all Members, both Executive and the involvement of scrutiny

and the public in the process of identifying ways of achieving the required savings and as part of the consultation on subsequent proposals.

The need to engage with the public and to keep them informed throughout the process was acknowledged and had been highlighted at a recent CIPFA conference recently attended by the Executive Member for Resources and the Director of Resources. It was considered that a number of different methods would have to be explored in order to effectively communicate with a wide range of individuals, partners, stakeholders and the public. Members agreed that it was important to obtain the views of the public around what they regarded as the priority areas but also to inform them of services, which are subsidised, and at what level.

Members discussed the potential methods of consultation and noted the intention to engage with Members and the public at an earlier stage of the process prior to October 2010. It was suggested that the potential use of the Big Screen in Centre Square, supermarkets and roadshows should be considered. It was considered important to get the right message across and for the information not to be too complex and appropriately adapted to target the needs of the different audiences.

The Board supported the suggestion for Members to be advised accordingly once the proposals for the consultation process had been formulated.

In terms of asset management reference was made to areas such as efficiency savings in relation to equipment and resources in buildings and reference made to the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy.

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

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 – MEMBERS' TRAINING – WINTER MAINTENANCE SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Chair advised the Board of a place which had become available on the Diagnostic Workshop training for Members and Officers to be held on 7 July and also referred to a training course, entitled Power of Effective Questioning and Listening to be held in September.

It was confirmed that arrangements were being made for a meeting of the Board in relation to its scrutiny investigation of the Council's winter maintenance activities. An indication was given of the draft terms of reference for the Board to undertake such a review.

NOTED