

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 16 November 2010.

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

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

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor B Thompson, Executive Member for Public Health and Sport.

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

** DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor Brunton	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Agenda Item No. 6 – Allotments Strategy – Allotment Holder
Councillor B Thompson	Personal/Non Prejudicial	Agenda Item No. 4 (b) – NHS White Paper proposals – Non Executive Director South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

** MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 19 October 2010 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

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.

NOTED

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND SPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor B Thompson, Executive Member for Public Health and Sport to the meeting who highlighted some of the current priority areas of work, which included the following:

- (a) Partnership working in relation to raising awareness to healthy living; promoting sports activities; impact of Stop Smoking programmes; healthy eating programmes and promotion of sports activities and exercise with particular regard to children and young people;

- (b) Healthy Town Programme for which funding had been agreed until 31 March 2011 and in particular the good work and level of sustainability that had been built into the programme which was hoped would enable a number of the projects to continue;
- (c) good progress which had been achieved with a number of projects and successful events such as Skyride a mass participation cycling event; funding for new cycle track at Prissick which would complement the skate park and had attracted national interest;
- (d) participation in the Middlesbrough Tees Pride 10km and PCT 3km Fun Run held in September 2010 which had once again increased and consideration being given as to how such an event would be held in 2011;
- (e) given the good work undertaken together with the possibility of joint working with regard to tackling the problems associated with the sale of illegal tobacco it was hoped that funding in this regard would continue to be available;
- (f) opportunities available as part of the Council's Allotments Strategy.

The Executive Member for Public Health and Sport referred to ongoing discussions regarding the implications of the recent White Paper: Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS in particular the role of the intended Health and Well-Being Boards and clarification around the health scrutiny function. The proposals for local authorities to take on responsibilities for the promotion and delivery of public health services was welcomed but clarification was required with regard to funding in this regard. Given the significance of the implications of the White Paper it was noted that it would be the subject of a report to full Council.

In commenting on overall health issues reference was made to the Transforming of Community Services for which South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had been approved as the preferred management partner to host Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Community Services. Whilst such proposals was a challenge to the Trust it provided opportunities to develop appropriate services of a high standard and amongst other areas make better use of hospital beds.

The Board's attention was drawn to some of the current challenges in terms of funding which included certain elements in respect of community centres. Reference was made to the closure of crèches at certain leisure centres, which had been the subject of a Call-In. It was confirmed that much work had been undertaken to develop the subsequent vacant areas to encourage the take-up of activities and increase income.

In commenting on the increasing popularity of the successful Albert Park run Members referred to the possibility of a similar event being organised in respect of Stewart Park. It was agreed that this could be examined further.

Members expressed support for the hard work undertaken by the Executive Member for Public Health and Sport and the increasing involvement of a wide range of organisations participating in a number of flagship events for the Town.

Taking into account the impending new responsibilities for the local authority in terms of public health and given that there was no explicit link to anyone Director with the current portfolio the Executive Member was asked if this presented any particular difficulties. In response the Executive Member confirmed that there were no gaps or particular problems and indicated that whilst there was a close link with the Director of Environment and Social Care she worked in close partnership with a number of Officers across the Council. It was acknowledged however that further clarification was needed around public health issues.

In response to a Members' comments regarding the current challenges in seeking grant funding and ensuring the utilisation of such funding for its original purpose the Executive Member confirmed her close involvement in such matters and gave an indication of the stringent processes involved with the Department of Health.

Reference was made to the importance of the Council's Alcohol Strategy although the impact of issues around staffing capacity in this regard given current circumstances was noted.

ORDERED that the Executive Member for Public Health and Sport be thanked for the information provided.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – IMPROVING THE LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Office Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered the findings of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel's Final Update Report on Improving the Levels of Employment for People with Disabilities.

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

NOTED

ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's conclusions and recommendations following consideration of the Council's revised and updated Allotments Strategy.

In order to address the issues raised the Board considered the following recommendations of the Panel based on the submitted evidence: -

- i) That it is ensured that the time for clearing and re-allocating vacant plots is kept to a minimum- the introduction of a target timescale would be welcomed.
- ii) That stringent action is taken against allotment holders who mis-manage their plots.
- iii) That steps are taken to support allotment holders in moving towards self-management.
- iv) That the creation of half-size plots is continued and that even smaller plots are introduced to encourage allotment usage and reduce waiting times further.

Members acknowledged the improvements which had been achieved so far and supported the recommendations for certain aspects of the Allotments Strategy, which could be actioned at minimal cost.

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

PEST CONTROL SERVICE – FINAL REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following its scrutiny investigation of the Council's Pest Control Service.

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

- i) That the work of the pest control service continues to be highlighted and publicised-for example by writing to all relevant households and businesses to inform them of a successful rat infestation treatment in their area. Such letters could also be used to provide advice on how similar problems can be avoided in the future.

- ii) That, publicity is issued to inform the public of the trend of increasing rat numbers and informing them of steps that they can take to minimise rat problems. Reference should be made to the fact that advice from the pest control service is provided free of charge.
- iii) That arrangements be made to facilitate easier payment of pest control charges – for example accepting immediate payment following treatment, utilising electronic payments or introducing flexible payment arrangements, such as payment in instalments in cases of hardship.
- iv) That Northumbrian Water is informed of the Scrutiny Panel's concerns regarding the reduced frequency of sewer baiting, particularly given the trend of increasing rat numbers in general; and requested to provide regular written updates to the Council on the frequencies and results of the baiting.

Members sought clarification on a number of areas and expressed support for the recommendations.

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

SCRUTINY REVIEW – RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTED

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented a report, which outlined progress achieved in relation to the implementation of agreed Executive actions resulting from the consideration of Scrutiny reports.

The Board was advised that of the 675 Executive actions, which should have been implemented by October 2010, 649 had been implemented, 20 partially completed and six had not been implemented. It was confirmed that there were no areas of concern and that since the circulation of the report further actions had been completed.

Appendix B of the report gave an update in relation to the Health Scrutiny Action Plan, all of which had met the target.

AGREED that the information provided be noted.

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.

It was confirmed that since the circulation of the report the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel had met on 9 November 2010 and had agreed the terms of reference for its next scrutiny topic of investigation in respect of Bullying. An indication was given of the proposed and suggested representatives to provide evidence as part of the investigation.

In commenting on evidence received by the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel regarding the potential impact of Housing Benefit Reform it was noted that it would be the subject of a briefing for all Members of the Council.

In relation to the Health Scrutiny Panel specific reference was made to the Health Bill which was anticipated shortly before Christmas 2010 which was expected to outline the next steps to be taken in respect of the GP Consortia, Health Well-Being Boards, Health Watch and clarification around health scrutiny.

NOTED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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