

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 8 March 2011.

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

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

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor P Thompson, Executive Member for Streetscene and Transport.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cole, J Hobson, Ismail, Khan, Mawston and Sanderson.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interests were made at this point of the meeting.

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

ORDERED that in accordance with Council Procedure No. 10, the Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed that, in order to accommodate attendance of the Vice-Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel at another meeting, the order of business be varied and that agenda item no. 8 be dealt with after agenda item 4 (b).

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 8 and 23 February 2011 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 STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor P Thompson, Executive Member for Streetscene and Transport to the meeting who highlighted some of the current priority areas of work.

The Executive Member for Streetscene and Transport referred to the demands of the unprecedented winter weather conditions experienced over the last two years and congratulated all staff concerned for their hard work during such periods. It was considered that more recently improvements had been secured especially with regard to the Town Centre and enhanced co-ordination had been achieved across departments.

Whilst current arrangements ensured that main roads and bus routes remained a priority within the winter maintenance plan it was considered that within the financial constraints alternative measures needed to be examined to further tackle the minor roads. Areas being examined included the feasibility of modifying grass cutting equipment to cope with snow clearance.

Reference was made to a recent meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel when Members had been advised of the likely impact of the proposed £400k reduced Area Care budget (8.5%) for 2011/2012. Members hoped that the higher standard of environmental improvement could be maintained but recognised the need to examine different ways and systems in order for this to be achieved.

In commenting on the recent review of the Council's fleet services reference was made to particular problems associated with the verges in areas of Stainton as result of the use of larger vehicles. It was confirmed that the issue would be examined.

Reference was made to numerous requests made by residents during the winter period for additional salt bins. The Executive Member for Streetscene and Transport advised the Board of the need for alternative measures to be examined given the current extent of misuse of the salt bins.

Members referred to a number of problems relating to the build up of litter and dumping on the banks and fallen trees in becks across the Town. Although it was noted that as a general rule water courses was the responsibility of the Environment Agency there were complexities around land ownership issues. The Board was advised that an update report in relation to flood prevention arrangements including the position in respect of becks and watercourses would shortly be considered by the Environment Scrutiny Panel.

With particular regard to the winter maintenance plan the Board supported the current arrangements for Members to receive information and updates on a regular basis. Given the difficulties around budget cuts Members were keen for such arrangements to continue and for them to be regularly appraised of the situation in respect of the concerns raised.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the Executive Member for Streetscene and Transport be thanked for the information provided.
2. That the various measures being pursued to mitigate the situation against the budget cuts be 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

NORTH EAST JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – REGIONAL REVIEW OF THE HEALTH OF EX SERVICE COMMUNITY

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted an introductory report to the Final Report of the North East Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Regional Review of the Health of the Ex-Service Community.

It was pointed out that the Regional Review had been supported by a £5k grant by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, aimed at assisting innovative approaches to Health Scrutiny. It was anticipated that the work would be appearing in a Good Scrutiny Guide, published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Members acknowledged that such a piece of work was a first for the entire region to come together to undertake a topic of mutual interest and concern.

The Regional Report was currently being considered by the 12 North East local authorities, but it had already received positive coverage in the local media. It was also noted that the report had been referred to in a positive light in both Houses of Parliament.

It was confirmed that the Final Report would be formally launched at an event to be held on 30 March 2011 where senior military figures would also be present to discuss their views on the report. It was anticipated that the North East Health Scrutiny Chairs, would meet at appropriate junctures in the coming months to track the impact of the Final Report.

Councillor Dryden, the Chair of the Physical Health Workstream referred to the 49 recommendations contained in the Final Report and specifically focussed on the importance of recommendation 6: 'local authorities in the North East should consider dedicating a chapter in their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to vulnerable service leavers and their needs and identifying as a target population the ex-service community within their strategic planning processes in relation to social exclusion, anti-poverty, homelessness and offending.'

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the North East Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND BIRTH DATA – FINAL REPORT OF THE HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation on the topic of Children's Centres and access to Birth Data.

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

- (i) That the Department of Children, Families and Learning undertake the necessary steps to receive regular birth registration returns that it is entitled, under legislative provision, to receive.
- (ii) That the Department of Children, Families and Learning, and Registrar Services establish a working relationship that ensures the dissemination of information to and about the Children's Centres, at the time of registration.
- (iii) That the Department of Children, Families and Learning, establishes systematic processes to ensure that the birth data is accurately and regularly disseminated amongst Children's Centres.
- (iv) That Children's Centres use that birth data to appropriately target services to those most in need of them.
- (v) That the Department of Children, Families and Learning reports back to the Health Scrutiny Panel, at an appropriate juncture, on how birth data is being applied to plan and market Children's Centre services to those who would most benefit from them.

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

ANTI BULLYING WORK IN MIDDLESBROUGH SCHOOLS – FINAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

The Vice- Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation on the topic of anti-bullying work in Middlesbrough.

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

- (i) That Middlesbrough Council's commitment towards addressing bullying in local schools - and therefore fulfilling its duty of protecting children's physical and mental health and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children – is reiterated. This should be achieved by ensuring that, as far as possible in the current difficult financial

climate, schools continue to be supported through the work of local authority behaviour support staff and in particular the continuation of the Behaviour and Attendance Group to ensure that examples of best practice – such as the successful use of peer mentors – continue to be promoted and shared.

- (ii) That measures are put in place to mitigate the impact of any funding reductions – for example by liaising with schools so that victims of bullying can be directed towards the wide range of provision that is available to support them both within and outside schools, or by promoting and publicising available support through Council agencies and facilities such as the Connexions service or MyPlace development.
- (iii) That, following the abolition of the annual Tell Us survey, schools are encouraged to introduce a recording system for all reported instances of bullying. Results of this exercise should be collated centrally by the local authority so that the effectiveness of anti-bullying work can continue to be monitored.
- (iv) That the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel is updated with information and statistics on bullying as part of the Annual Standards Report that is currently considered by the Panel.

During the ensuing discussion Members specifically referred to the responsibility of the Council's elected Members appointed as school governors with particular regard to the extent to which they were able to ensure that appropriate anti-bullying measures were in place including the monitoring of their effectiveness and suitable reporting arrangements for the recording of incidences.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive subject to an additional recommendation based on:

That, through the Council's Governor Support Team, the issue of bullying is highlighted, for example, in training provision, and governors are encouraged to champion the issue of bullying to ensure that it is satisfactorily addresses, recorded and reported in all schools.

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.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – STRATEGIC PLAN

With the approval of the Chair reference was made to the possible timetable for the Board to examine the Strategic Plan following consideration by the various Scrutiny Panels and prior to Council in June 2011.

Given the significant reduction in the number of statutory Performance Indicators it was considered that there was greater opportunity for Members to have an input in the setting of appropriate targets for services to secure measured outcomes and improvements.

ORDERED that an additional meeting of the Board be arranged in consultation with the Chair the week commencing 18 April 2011 in order to consider the Council's draft Strategic Plan.