

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 20 September 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors Dryden, Kerr, C Hobson, Mawston, McIntyre, P Purvis, Sanderson, Saunders and J A Walker.

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

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Carr, Executive Member for Children Families and Learning.

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Brunton	Personal/Non-Prejudicial	Agenda Item 4 (b): Report of the Executive Member for Children Families and Learning in so far as it related to Acklam Grange School and King's Academy–School Governor, and Sure Start – Member of Advisory Board.
Councillor J A Walker	Personal/Non-Prejudicial	Additional Agenda Item in respect of Acklam Hall in so far as it related to the Medical Practices – registered at one of the GP Practices.
Councillor Sanderson	Personal/Non-Prejudicial	Additional Agenda Item in respect of Acklam Hall in so far as it related to the Medical Practices – registered at one of the GP Practices.

** MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 22 and 23 August 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.

A revised schedule detailing attendance by Executive Members to meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was outlined at Appendix 1 of the report submitted.

NOTED AND APPROVED

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN FAMILIES AND LEARNING

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member of Children Families and Learning to the meeting who focussed on four key areas of the portfolio.

In terms of the Government's current direction for all schools to be academies by 2015 it was considered important for the Authority to have a clear role as part of wider partnership arrangements in providing support and advice and important to have collaboration and co-operation. The Board was advised that some progress had been made in this regard. An indication was given however of difficulties associated with inconsistent direction from the Department for Education and impact of free schools two applications for which had been submitted but neither of which had been successful.

The Board's attention was drawn to the outcome of a recent Ofsted inspection of the Council's safeguarding services. Whilst in overall terms the safeguarding service had been graded as 'adequate', areas of good practice had been identified and areas recommended for improvement which included the need for greater focus on the emotional health and well-being of looked after children and increased social worker capacity. The Executive Member gave an indication of significant refocusing of work by the Council and with associated agencies with a further emphasis on early intervention. Such work included the extent to which mutual arrangements could be facilitated with other local authorities. Specific reference was made to the Common Assessment Framework to provide a common process for a holistic assessment of a child's needs taking into account the role of families, carers and environmental factors on their development.

As previously discussed the financial pressures as a result of the high rate of looked after children placements often involved children with complex needs. An indication was given of some of the measures being pursued in order to mitigate such circumstances which included renegotiation of certain contracts and working more closely with other Tees Valley authorities. In response to Members' questions examples were given of the Authority's position in having no option but to be responsible for the high costs associated with children with complex needs.

Reference was made to the significant overall budget reduction in respect of Children Families and Learning of £9 million over the next three years which would necessitate reconfiguration of services and different ways of working. Members commented on the impact on areas such as children's centres and the likely need to refocus resources on areas of greatest need.

In discussing the likely future impact of the severe budget reductions together with changes to current funding arrangements for schools the Executive Member reiterated the intention for the Authority to work collaboratively with schools and strategic partners.

In discussing the merits of the Council's early intervention strategies the important role of other agencies such as the police, schools, Health Authority in this regard was acknowledged. Members referred to difficulties however which still remained around the sharing of appropriate information and that all agencies not just the Council were facing severe financial pressures.

Members referred to the 2011 GCSE's results for which 39% of students had achieved five GCSEs at grades A-C (including English and Maths). Although this represented a small decrease from the previous year's results the Executive Member stated that it remained of an upward trend which had seen a 10% increase over the last five years.

ORDERED that the Executive Member for Children Families and Learning be thanked for the information provided.

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – IMPACT OF AIR QUALITY AND VEHICLE EMISSIONS ON HEALTH

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 Joint Scrutiny Working Group regarding the Impact of Air Quality and Vehicle Emissions on Health.

The Executive and the Corporate Management Team had considered and supported the Service Responses and had noted the response from NHS Middlesbrough in respect of recommendations 5 of the final report.

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.

Reference was made to the item relating to the Medium Term Financial Position 2012/2013 – 2015/2016 and Revenue Budget 2012/2013 which was due to be considered by the Executive at its meeting held on 13 September 2011 but had subsequently been withdrawn.

Members requested that appropriate consultation takes place for such a report to be submitted to the Board prior to consideration by the Executive.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the request of the Board to consider the report in respect of the Medium Term Financial Position 2012/2013 – 2015/2016 and Revenue Budget 2012/2013 prior to its submission to the Executive be forwarded to appropriate Executive Members and Officers.

COALITION GOVERNMENT'S POLICY PROGRAMME

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive was presented which summarised the main implications for local authorities within the coalition government's policy programme and set out details of likely forthcoming policy changes.

The government's legislative programme was based on the Coalition Agreement, which established policy direction for the administration based on three shared values: freedom, fairness and responsibility. The concepts of localism, deregulation and fostering the 'Big Society' were key features cutting across the programme.

The report outlined the policy programme with specific regard to local government /public service reform; health and social care; children and young people; and welfare.

To ensure that the Council was in a position to respond effectively to such changes a number of measures had been put in place including:-

- (a) a corporate policy trackers database had been established to collate a high level overview of the major changes, potential implications and how the Council was responding;
- (b) arrangements had been made for a programme of Member briefings to commence from September 2011 onwards to provide further detail on the main elements of the coalition's policy programme;
- (c) the Council's Risk Registers had also been updated to reflect the impact of the forthcoming policy changes which of the top 20 risks facing the Council 13 related to the impact of the Coalition's policy programme with Universal Credit having been identified as the highest scoring risk to the Council;
- (d) reference was made to a number of specific initiatives being developed such as the public health transformation programme;
- (e) implications for Council services and funding would be set out in the Council's Transformation programme and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Given the significant changes the scope for Scrutiny Panels to take on board various issues was acknowledged.

ORDERED 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 – NORTH EAST REGIONAL JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

It was reported that Councillor Dryden had been appointed Chair of the North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee for 2011/2012.

NOTED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

NOTED

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – ACKLAM HALL – FINAL REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL

With the approval of the Chair and on the grounds of urgency the Board considered a final report of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel on its scrutiny review of Acklam Hall.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Panel reported upon the Panel's findings and following recommendations:-

- (a) That the Council's Chief Executive meets with the Interim Chief Executive of the Primary Care Trust as a matter of urgency to discuss the PCT's commitment to funding a new medical centre on the Acklam Hall site and the Scrutiny Panel is advised of the outcome of that discussion. The Panel is convinced that the funding commitment of the PCT is vital for early resolution of the development, conservation and security of the site.
- (b) That the Urban Regeneration Manager provides the Scrutiny Panel with regular updates of the ongoing consultation between Acklam Hall Ltd and English Heritage, the progress of the developer's draft management plan and the outstanding requirements of the planning application to be considered by the Council's Planning Committee.
- (c) That the 24 hour security presence continues to be funded jointly by the Council and Middlesbrough College and subsequently by Acklam Hall Ltd.
- (d) That the Scrutiny Panel's concerns regarding lack of progress to date are raised with the developer, particularly the need to provide details of development proposals and associated timescales.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

**** EXCLUSION – PRESS – PUBLIC**

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the whole of the business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

NATURE'S WORLD – FINAL REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings and conclusions after receiving an update report in respect of its earlier recommendations regarding Nature's World.

The Panel had agreed that the position in respect of the operation of Nature's World continued to be monitored and that a further progress report be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Panel at the end of the current financial year.

ORDERED that the findings and recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny Panel be noted.