

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 7 February 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors Cole, Dryden, Kerr, C Hobson, Purvis, Saunders, J A Walker and Williams.

OFFICERS: J Bennington, P Clark, J Ord and J Shiel.

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Coppinger, Executive Member for Social Care.

**** ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Hubbard and Lowes.
Members of the public.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors McIntyre, Mawston and Sanderson.

**** 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 10 January 2012 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 AND APPROVED**EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SOCIAL CARE**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Coppinger, the Executive Member for Social Care who in his initial comments acknowledged that as in the case of other services the budget constraints was one of the key challenges.

The Executive Member focussed on a number of areas subject to budget proposals which included:-

- a range of proposals to reduce management costs;
- reduce individual social care package costs on the basis of need;
- in consultation with interested local transport providers consideration to be given to an alternative scheme to the Dial a Ride service which possibly involved the provision of travel and taxi vouchers to those people who were most adversely affected;
- voluntary sector involvement in Staying Put Agency;
- savings in respect of rapid response;
- further work being undertaken in relation to sustaining the price level on residential and non-residential social care contracts with a current value of £25 million.

Specific reference was made to Government Health Reforms and significant work being undertaken with particular regard to the Council's public health responsibilities and establishment of the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board. It was pointed out that a Members' Briefing session would be held shortly on the current position and progress achieved to date.

It was acknowledged that one area for future consideration related to the impact of the current economic situation on the utilisation of personal budgets.

Reference was made to the overall liaison arrangements with Officers on a weekly basis and additional meetings with service managers and specific related work such as that recently carried out with social workers. Regular updates were requested on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and also liaison on the possible role of scrutiny with regard to the 26 actions contained within the Service Plan.

Members sought clarification on the aspiration for increased Health input given the development of community based services. In response, the Executive Member confirmed the importance of the ongoing negotiations with the local NHS which would continue over the next few years as the Council's public health responsibilities and the community based services developed.

The Board referred to recent changes to the management structure and the loss of expertise with particular regard to specialised areas such as mental health issues. The Executive Member acknowledged that it was an ever changing scene but referred to the positive attitude which had been shown by a group of middle managers in taking on additional responsibilities.

Members commented on the commendable and very specialised work undertaken by the Welfare Rights service regarded as a key service.

In commenting on the significant implications of the Government Health Reforms Members specifically referred to the lack of clarity around the different models in respect of the Clinical Commissioning Groups covering the area which would have several Health and Wellbeing Boards and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. The Board agreed the importance of ensuring the correct balance of elected Members, Council Officers and appropriate health organisation representation on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Confirmation was given of a Joint Appointments Committee of the Council and the PCT for the appointment of a Director of Public Health.

ORDERED that the Executive Member for Social Care be thanked for the information provided.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN REVIEW

A report of the Director of Strategic Resources was presented which provided an update regarding the medium term financial position for 2012/2013 to 2014/2015. The Medium Term Financial Plan provided an outline of the broad financial position for the period 2012/2013 to 2014/2015. The Plan projected the levels of resources and commitments across the next three-year period and was used to support strategic policy and service planning across the Council.

Members were reminded of the 2010/2011 Final Outturn, the current Year's Revenue Budget 2011/2012, Central Government Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlements.

Middlesbrough would receive a £5.9 million reduction in central government support in 2012/2013 and an additional reduction of £5.6 million had been outlined in 2013/2014.

The report outlined the main variances from the current year's revenue budget.

The Board's attention was drawn to a number of identified potential pressures relating to Supporting Children and Young People Community Strategy theme based on projected levels of demand of £1 million for 2012/2013, £2 million for 2012/2014 and £3 million for 2014/2015.

Within Promoting Adult Health and Wellbeing, tackling exclusion and promoting Social Care a provision of £750,000 had been made to deal with ongoing unavoidable demand led spending pressures in 2011/2012.

A number of potential pressures and efficiency savings over the medium term had been identified. Provision had been made for ongoing lease payments by the Council in respect of

Aurora Court. The Council's income target in respect of car parking charges had been reduced by £482,000.

The report outlined the overall consultation process and engagement with a number of stakeholders.

Based on the above Medium Term Financial assumptions a budget deficit of £13.8 million had been projected for 2012/2013. It was pointed out that the levels of reduction required were significantly higher than those recently required. Whilst all general overhead expenditure would be subject to challenge the level of reductions could not be met without impact on services delivered to residents.

In overall terms the Board noted with regret the higher levels of reduction required and likely impact on services.

Following Members' questions further clarification would be provided on the financial implications to the Council on the Government's proposals to change the youth justice system over the next two years.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

SCRUTINY REVIEWS - CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS

In a report of the Scrutiny Support Officer the Board was advised of a number of requests for scrutiny reviews in respect of the following:-

- (a) Reference was made to information recently received by the Board on the contractual compliance of the Council and Erimus regarding the management or removal of asbestos from houses which had been transferred to Erimus under the stock transfer arrangements. Following such consideration concerns had emerged regarding the 'Health Impact' of asbestos on residents of Middlesbrough and a request had been received from a Member for this to be examined as a scrutiny topic of investigation.
- (b) Over recent months the Board had expressed concerns regarding the severity of budget cuts which had to be made and their overall impact on facilities provided to the public. A request had been received from a Member for a scrutiny investigation to be undertaken into the affects of such budget cuts on individual services and options which may arise from such a review.
- (c) Given recent and likely future changes to service provision a request had been received from a Member for a scrutiny topic of investigation to examine collectively across the Council the minimum requirement for service delivery which would form a base template for the shape of the Council in 2015.
- (d) In relation to the Boundary Commission review and following proposals for Hartlepool a request had been received from a Member for a scrutiny topic of investigation into the rationale of single and multi-Member wards. It had also been suggested that Scrutiny looks at the logical shape of wards which best reflected the shape of Middlesbrough.
- (e) The Board was advised that since the circulation of the agenda and reports for the meeting a further request had been received for a scrutiny investigation concerning the Local Development Framework with particular regard to the strategy and requirements of areas for housing.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That items (a), (b), (c), and (d) be included in the forward scrutiny work programme.
2. That item (e) be examined as soon as possible by the appropriate Scrutiny Panel.

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