

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 6 March 2012.

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

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

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** The Mayor (R Mallon)
J Daniels, Middlesbrough Partnership, Chair of Financial Inclusion Group.

**** ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** A member of the public.

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

**** 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 7 February 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

MAYOR

The Chair welcomed the Mayor to the meeting who in his opening remarks referred to a list of specific strategic and operational priorities in relation to 2011/2015 a copy of which was circulated at the meeting. Such issues were considered important in taking the Town forward in a difficult economic situation. It was confirmed that the list was not exhaustive and continued to be refined and did not include ongoing sub-regional and regional work. In overall terms it was acknowledged that given such a difficult situation there was a need to explore different options and if necessary do things differently in the future in order to make significant savings.

Members referred to a recently published report from Experian which identified Middlesbrough as being at greatest risk across England of falling into poverty taking account of multiple factors. The Mayor emphasised the importance of such factors as attracting businesses and people to Middlesbrough especially into the Town Centre. As previously indicated there was still considered to be an imbalance of housing stock and a need for further residential dwellings in Band B and upwards in order to provide a better housing mix and assist in addressing the population decline from the Town.

The Board's attention was drawn to a number of specific areas which included the need to address the 'benefit culture'. Reference was also made to a project to help improve outcomes for certain families with a particular focus on assisting young people to get a better start in life in terms of education and employment. An Apprenticeships Programme was considered important

to the future of the Town and for young people to develop skills whilst at the same time pursuing formal qualifications.

Members reiterated concerns regarding the demand led pressures and associated significant costs around Middlesbrough continuing to have unprecedented numbers of looked after children. The Mayor acknowledged that given such circumstances there was a need to pursue and develop a different strategy to provide a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention.

Members asked the Mayor to what extent the Raising Hope initiative which had been established some years ago setting out the vision for Middlesbrough and focussing on four pillars of environment, regeneration, business community and transport underpinning the education of young people and support for vulnerable people was still valid. The Mayor confirmed that it largely still remained although the overall agenda was much wider and continued to be refined as circumstances dictated.

In overall terms it was acknowledged that given the very difficult financial situation there was a need for the Council like many other organisations to consider how things could be done differently in the future.

ORDERED that the Mayor be thanked for the information provided.

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

EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK – NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH – ENTERPRISE ZONES

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 two Final Reports in respect of No Health, without Mental Health and Enterprise Zones.

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

It was pointed out that the response received from NHS Middlesbrough in respect of recommendations (d) and (g) of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel's report had been noted by the Executive.

It was suggested that an update report be requested in due course from NHS Middlesbrough or successor Clinical Commissioning Group in respect of recommendations (d) and (g) of the Final Report, No Health without Mental Health of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel.

NOTED AND APPROVED

FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY FOR MIDDLESBROUGH

In a report of the Middlesbrough Partnership Manager (Governance) Members were advised of plans to review Middlesbrough Partnership's Financial Inclusion Strategy.

In November 2009, Middlesbrough Partnership formed its Financial Inclusion Group which brought together partners from the private, public, community and voluntary sectors to co-ordinate the Partnership's response in promoting and improving financial inclusion across the Town.

In the light of emerging new agendas and changes to Government policy and based on the key emerging financial inclusion related issues highlighted at a Development Session held on 8

February 2012 the Group had agreed to re-examine and jointly agreed the new priorities within the Financial Inclusion Strategy focussing on Joint Working, Financial Capability and, Supporting, developing and Building the Capacity of Credit Unions as outlined in the report submitted.

Specific reference was made to a number of options being pursued in order to support, develop and build the capacity of Credit Unions which was considered to be one of the key issues and for which external funding was being sought.

The Board discussed ways in which Councillors could encourage membership and assist in promoting the work of Credit Unions for instance at ward surgeries or in newsletters. As part of the Financial Inclusion Group's priorities it was intended to arrange a series of more targeted local Advice Days within community settings. In response to Members' comments regarding the likely take-up at such events reference was made to a pilot scheme in certain areas to encourage interest on a more individual basis with families rather than at a large scale event. It was also intended to explore the link between financial capability and the work of credit unions and how this could be progressed. In commenting on the Group's promotional work Members referred to the potential for undertaking campaign work such as that in relation to Living Wage campaign.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the proposed new priorities within Middlesbrough Partnership's Financial Inclusion Strategy as outlined be supported.
3. That Middlesbrough Partnership be requested to consider as part of its promotional work to include campaigning for a Living Wage.

PAVEMENT AND CARRIAGEWAY WORKS BY THE UTILITIES COMPANIES

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation regarding pavement and carriageway works by the utilities companies.

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

- (i) That the Executive notes that the Environment Scrutiny Panel is pleased to find that the Council's system for the notification, undertaking, co-ordination and inspection of road works by the utilities companies is comprehensive and ensures that disruption is kept to a minimum.
- (ii) That, subject to an analysis of potential benefits, consideration is given to the introduction of a permit scheme to undertake such works. If introduced, this should include an appropriate charging system to cover administration costs.

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

ENERGY REDUCTION

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings following consideration of an update report on its 2010 scrutiny investigation on the topic of energy reduction.

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

- (i) That the updated position, and the wide range of schemes and initiatives being implemented to both monitor energy usage and to reduce it, is noted.

- (ii) That the issue of providing advice to schools on energy reduction is taken forward and highlighted, for example, by Councillors who are school governors raising the issue with their schools and a joint letter from the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel and the Executive Member for Streetscene Services and Transport being sent to all head teachers.

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

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.

NOTED

CALL IN REQUESTS

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

NOTED