

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 13 March 2012.

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

OFFICERS: B Baldam, J Bennington, P Clark, C Davies, R G Long, J Shiel and P Slocombe.

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

** DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillors Brunton and Dryden	Personal/Non-Prejudicial	Agenda Item 4: 3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring and Review 2011/2012 in so far as it related to Levick Trust-Trustees.
Councillor Brunton	Personal/Non-Prejudicial	Agenda Item 4: 3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring and Review 2011/2012 in so far as it related to Ashdale School and Marton Manor Primary School-School Governor.
Councillor Cole	Personal/Non-Prejudicial	Agenda Item 4: 3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring and Review 2011/2012 in so far as it related to Rosewood School - School Governor.

THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET PROJECTED OUTTURN

A report of the Director of Strategic Resources was presented which provided an estimate of the annual projected outturn for 2011/2012 based on the third quarter review of revenue expenditure against the current year's Revenue Budget. In overall terms the projected outturn reflected a large pressure on financial resources and included significant pressures within services as outlined in the report.

The projected outturn position for 2011/2012 was reported as a net budget saving of (-£142,000) which represented a 0.10% saving against the £136.508 million 2011/2012.

Significant savings had been achieved in relation to staffing, supplies and services in respect of Children, Families and Learning, Environment and Regeneration. In overall terms, Members expressed concerns at the need to and impact of service areas not filling posts as they became vacant.

The Board's attention was drawn to a number of key budget pressure areas on which Members sought clarification on the action being taken to address such pressures.

Such areas included the continuing demand led pressures within safeguarding which had increased to £2,057,000 from £1,894,000 at Quarter Two. Members noted the recent submission of reports to CMT on tackling such pressures which included options to increase local residential care places, proposals for joint procurement and alternative management options.

In relation to Social Care specific reference was made to the following:-

- (a) the likely overspend on demand led pressures had reduced from £830,000 at Quarter Two to £457,000 in Quarter Three;
- (b) the budget pressure on Ayresome Industries had increased to £245,000;
- (c) a pressure still existed in relation to Supporting People contracts of £248,000 which the service was aiming to bring into balance by 2012/2013;
- (d) an additional £480,000 Winter Pressures funding had been received;
- (e) savings of £636,000 had been secured on purchased care packages.

Members commented on Ayresome Industries and noted the actions being taken to increase trading such as the Data Destruction service and a pilot scheme involving staff in several activities in the Environment Department.

The Board noted the factors involved regarding the projected pressures on Parking Solutions and referred to the importance of attracting potential shoppers to the Town Centre rather than out of town shopping centres.

In relation to Corporate Services it was noted that within Strategic Resources there were budget pressures on commercial property and the Enterprise Centres and the Council was working with Mouchel to agree proposals put forward to achieve the outstanding savings on the partnership.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the respective Officers be thanked for their hard work and detailed information provided which was noted.
2. That the Board's concerns regarding the areas of significant budget pressures be referred to the respective Service areas.

THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING AND REVIEW 2011/2012

A report of the Director of Strategic Resources was presented which provided an update on the Council's capital programme (2008/2009 to 2012/2013) based on the third quarter review of the capital expenditure.

It was reported that the change in overall net expenditure across all schemes since the last review was an increase of £576,000 in Council wide resources to support the programme (0.17% of the total programme) as outlined in Appendix A of the report submitted.

The main change in Net Expenditure on the Capital Programme was due to the former Mouchel Partnership ICT Investment being built into the Council's Capital Programme, an investment of £539,000 in 2011/2012.

Reference was also made to other significant variations to the programme in respect of the Supported Capital Expenditure Block Budget (-£808,000), resurfacing of Windward Way (£275,000), Local Transport Plan (£146,000) and Grass Verge Replacements (-£100,000).

The re-profiled gross expenditure and resources since the last review were shown by service and individual scheme in Appendices B and C of the report submitted.

Gross expenditure had increased from £344.130 million to £344.283 million and the level of under-programming at Quarter Three was currently estimated at £3,937 million (1.14%).

Members noted with concern the impact of reduced Government grants on the capital programme.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE QUARTER THREE 2011/2012

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive was presented which provided an overview of the Council's performance at Quarter Three 2011/2012.

The report summarised progress at the end of December 2011 by Department and Service against the Council's corporate performance measures and improvement actions.

The Council's floor target for achievement of improvement actions was stated as 85% and performance at the end of Quarter Three was 82% of actions achieved or on target to be achieved by deadline with 26 actions reported off target and four cancelled. It was noted that the position in respect of performance indicators was more complex in that many indicators were annual and/or were not scheduled to report at Quarter Three. It was anticipated that the current overall performance level of 57% (41/72) on target would increase by the end of the year.

The Board considered the key performance issues at the end of Quarter Three as discussed at recent budget and performance clinics.

ORDERED that the information provided be noted.

LOCAL BOUNDARY REVIEW

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 7 February 2012 the Senior Scrutiny Officer submitted an introductory report on the Board's investigation on the principles of the Boundary Commission's Review and to examine the rationale which would be applied to Middlesbrough.

The Members' Office Manager gave a presentation which focussed on the processes to be undertaken in order to review the Council's electoral arrangements, administrative boundaries and structure. Details were given of the statutory criteria associated with the review and an explanation given as to how the review recommendations would be developed and consultation undertaken.

The aim of the review was to ensure that each councillor represented approximately the same number of electors. It was confirmed that the scope of the Boundary Commission Review would cover the whole of the Council and not just the Wards that exceeded the electoral variance levels of more than 10% of the average which affected 30% of current wards of Middlehaven (-35% electoral variance), Linthorpe, Acklam, Beckfield, Stainton & Thornton and Coulby Newham. An indication was given of the Review process which would cover agreement on the forecasts for electoral size 2018, the size of the Council, Warding arrangements and Parliamentary Order.

A preliminary consultation stage lasting between six to eight weeks would consider the eventual size of the council size, a further ten weeks information gathering would follow seeking views from the Council, members of the public, parish councils and anyone else who took an interest. Open consultation on draft recommendations would last for an additional 10-12 week period before final recommendations were published prior to an order being laid before Parliament.

The Board's attention was drawn to the factors which needed to be taken into account in determining the Council size based on the Commission's rules of sound evidence and rationale focussing on four key areas of managing the business of the Council, Scrutiny arrangements, representational role between Councillors and electors, and representing the Council in the Community.

The Board's attention was drawn to other issues for consideration. Reference was made to the basic democratic principle of each person's vote should be of equal weight across the local authority area. The higher the electoral variance proposed the stronger the evidence of community identities needed to be. It was acknowledged that 'Community identities' was difficult to define and was often subjective. It was noted that evidence should not be assertion but have a basis in practical examples such as shared community events; shared amenities and facilities;

public facilities such as shops, doctors' surgeries, hospitals, libraries or schools; what defined it and marked it out as a distinct community; and showing how facilities provided a focus for community interaction.

The considerations which needed to be taken into account in the third stage on warding arrangements involved the delivery of effective and convenient local government covering aspects such as councillor workloads; whether wards or divisions were coherent; clearly identifiable boundaries; consideration of transport and communication links; and whether electors could engage in the affairs and activities of the ward without having to travel through an adjoining ward.

An indication was given of the work undertaken to date which included:-

- Background: Unitary council, service provision, population, budget
- Roles of councillors: ward and community, Council, Executive duties;
- 1998 White Paper and Local Government Act 2000;
- Area of significant disadvantage: deprived wards: literacy and numeracy problems, educational attainment;
- Ward and Community Work: role profiles, ward and street surgeries, community councils (attendance and office holders), One-Stop;
- Council work: Committees, Regulatory Committees, Standards/Audit, Scrutiny, Review of Committee structure /size;
- Executive Duties & Responsibilities: portfolios, delegations, Single Member decisions;
- Scrutiny: holding the Executive to account, Call-In;
- Other Duties and responsibilities: outside bodies, school governing bodies.

An indication was given of possible lines of Scrutiny enquiry which included forecast of electorate numbers although it was largely a statistical exercise; Council size which was central to the outcome and could involve examination of a number of issues in the Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry; and Warding in terms of the 'effective and convenient local government' considerations.

Following a recent seminar in London details were provided of comparative outcomes in other areas which had been reviewed which demonstrated very little change in the majority of such local authorities. It was confirmed that there was no set model.

In commenting on aspects of Councillor's workloads specific reference was made to the involvement with Community Councils which could be two to three within a ward and an area for possible consideration as part of the scrutiny examination.

Members referred to the extent to which observations could be made on the proposed consultation arrangements. It was indicated that whilst there was limited opportunity on stage one there was an expectation for the Council to take the lead on consultation in relation to stage two in respect of wards.

The Board reaffirmed their intention to examine the principles of the Boundary Commission's Review and to examine the rationale which would be specifically applied to Middlesbrough and for subsequent observations to be considered by the Executive for possible submission to the Boundary Commission. Although it was acknowledged that it would be difficult to quantify Members discussed possible options for compiling detailed information on the extent of Councillor's workloads in the Community which as previously identified included amongst other areas involvement with Community Councils, ward surgeries and attendance at public meetings.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the Officers be thanked for the information provided which would be incorporated into the overall review.
2. That draft terms of reference for the review be compiled for consideration at a further meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.