

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 1 April 2014.

PRESENT: Councillors Brunton (Chair), Arundale, Kerr, Mawston, McIntyre, P Purvis, P Sharrocks and Williams

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor B Thompson, Executive Member for Children's Services.

OFFICERS: J Bennington, S Blood, G Brown, J Cordiner, E Pout and C Simpson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cole, Dryden, C Hobson, Sanderson and J A Walker.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor Brunton	Non-Pecuniary	Agenda Item 8 - Allotments - Plot Holder

1 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 4 MARCH 2014**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 4 March 2014 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

2 **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 to the report submitted. It was confirmed that the Forward Work Programme was constantly updated and available on the Council's website by means of the Egenda system.

Specific reference was made to the timescales involved with the implementation of recent SEN reforms from the perspective of both the Executive and Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

NOTED

3 **EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK - VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR AND MIDDLESBROUGH VOLUNTARY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

As part of the scrutiny process and in a report of the Executive Office Manager it was reported that the Executive had considered a Final Report of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Voluntary and Community Sector and Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency.

The Executive had considered and supported the Service Responses as outlined in Appendices A and B of the report submitted.

NOTED

4 **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN MIDDLESBROUGH 2013 - OFSTED INSPECTION 2014**

Further to the meeting of the Board held on 4 March 2014 the Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report which referred to areas of clarification and further information sought from Member's arising from a report of the Director of Transformation on Council Performance and

Risk Quarter Three 2013/2014 in so far as it related to attainment, extracts from which were given in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report submitted. Members had also referred to the recent Ofsted Inspection of the Local Authority. A copy of the relevant Ofsted Inspector's letter was provided at Appendix 3 to the report submitted.

Information contained within the Quarter Three report included reference to the final academic attainment results that had been published in December 2013.

A new early years assessment model and new headline indicator had been introduced for the 2013 results set. The national average for the new measure was reported as 52% and the North East Average as 45%. It had been noted that the local performance was low within the bottom quartile.

It had been reported that the number of primary schools below the 60% threshold had reduced from five to two.

Middlesbrough had moved up the national state school league table for the headline GCSE measure 5 A*-C grades include English and Maths to 143/151 and had narrowed the gap from 12% to 8.5% nationally. The year on year trend had shown a 2.7% improvement from 47.6% to 50.3%. It had been noted, however, that the gap between Middlesbrough's GCSE headline pass rate and the Tees Valley average had widened from 6% to 7% year on year.

The Assistant Director for School Partnership gave a detailed presentation which included statistical information on educational attainment 2013 and an indication of measures to tackle current issues. Further information was also provided in relation to the Ofsted inspection.

An updated Appendix 1 was circulated at the meeting which provided more detailed information and a further breakdown of percentage figures regarding KS 2 pupils which demonstrated that overall, pupils achieving Level 4 + in reading, writing and maths was above the national average which was seen as a positive sign although it was noted that it ranked 75 out of 152.

The Board's attention was drawn to the Early Years Foundation Stage figures which showed that the gap had widened in 2012 and was still significant. The importance for continued efforts to address the increasing needs of young children was acknowledged. Although the percentage of pupils achieving KS1 Level 2+ reading had been static over a period of four years there had been an upward trend and the gap widened with the national average. Ofsted had commented on the good progress with regard to KS2 but because of the low figures in respect of KS1 it was less impressive.

Reference was made to comparative local authorities with similar deprivation but nevertheless had achieved better levels of attainment. It was acknowledged that it was important to gain an understanding of the reasons for this and lessons learnt from the action taken elsewhere and interventions put in place. It was recognised that there numerous potential factors which impinged on the levels of attainment including poor parenting skills, poor nutrition, mental health and social wellbeing issues, speech and language delay resulting in the need for speech and language therapies, increases in special education needs and other measures. Further data was being sought in this regard and discussions pursued in order to promote appropriate intervention strategies.

A concern was expressed regarding the challenge in undertaking a role of responsibility with regard to Academies without resources which had previously been available and direct influence as councillors were no longer on their governing bodies a matter which was to be pursued with the DfE.

Reference was made to work being undertaken by a Steering Group/Task and Finish Group to examine the barriers to achieving better attainment and using limited resources in an innovative way to address current problems.

Members acknowledged the impact of the review of support staff and loss of skilled experienced staff directly involved with schools a situation which was also being experienced

with other local authorities in the Tees Valley and encountered elsewhere in the UK.

Specific mention was made of the percentage figures which highlighted the need for improved attainment at KS1 (all subjects) and KS 2 (reading). It was noted that measures were needed to improve the number of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C (including English and Maths).

The Board was advised of the key areas of focus which included:

- (a) Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership (MAP) to ensure a strategic approach to attainment.
- (b) Improving the quality of teaching and school leadership through Middlesbrough Schools' Teaching Alliance (MSTA).
- (c) KS1 attainment (all subjects) and KS2 reading.
- (d) Transition between primary and secondary.
- (e) Collaboration between secondary schools to share and spread good practice; groups for English, Maths, Science and Attendance.
- (f) GCSE English and Maths (including forecasting).
- (g) Increase expectations of pupils with special educational needs and provide specialist support for inclusion.
- (h) Use of data for improvement, identifying earlier the children who are starting to struggle.
- (i) Attendance and behaviour.
- (j) Addressing barriers to attainment for example, mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, poor nutrition, speech and language delays and pupil mobility.

The Board's attention was drawn to the Ofsted inspection of Local Authority School Improvement Functions which had been undertaken between 27 and 31 January 2014 to assess the Authority's effectiveness in securing improvement. Middlesbrough had been selected because key performance indicators had been below national average, including educational attainment, pupil attendance, and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). An indication was given of the extent of the process involving a number of briefings and interviews with LA senior staff and elected Members, relevant staff, LA schools, academies, Middlesbrough Schools' Teaching Alliance, Governors, Chair and Vice-Chair of Schools Management Forum and other stakeholders.

It was noted that there were only two judgements for the inspections: effective or ineffective. Middlesbrough had been judged to be ineffective with the emphasis being placed on key performance indicators and that the Authority was not strong enough against national averages to be able to prove effectiveness. It was noted that eight local authorities had been inspected so far all of which with the exception of two had been judged ineffective.

The Board was advised that whilst there had been gradual improvement historically it was acknowledged that it had been at a slower pace than other authorities.

The six key recommendations by Ofsted for urgent action were reported as:

- (i) Establish closer relationships between primary and secondary schools, in order to improve transition between phases, to arrest the decline in students' performance during KS 3 and 4 and to raise the attainment of 16 year olds.
- (ii) Ensure that school improvement services make rigorous use of data and information; so that they have a clearer understanding of the specific challenges faced by individual schools and can target resources and personnel more effectively.
- (iii) Build on the emerging partnerships between schools, colleges and the business community by producing a coherent strategy to increase the number of school leavers in education, employment or training.
- (iv) Establish clearer systems for monitoring the quality of school governance across the authority, in order to strengthen this aspect of school leadership.
- (v) Improve the quality of the local authority's plans so that they have clear and measureable

targets that can be used systematically to monitor progress, assess impact and judge the value for money resulting from the investments made by the council and its partners.

(vi) Ensure that elected members have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in education, so that they can hold schools and school improvement services fully to account and provide strong leadership.

It was confirmed that a post inspection action plan would be presented to address the areas for improvement which had to be submitted to Ofsted by 11 April 2014 and that the MAP would be working with the Authority on implementing the action plan. It was noted that arrangements had been made for Authority representatives to meet David Laws, Minister of State for Schools to discuss outcome and plans for improvement. Confirmation was given that the Council would be re-inspected within nine to 12 months.

The Board and the Executive Member for Children's Services emphasised the importance for regular briefings with all Members to ensure that they were kept informed of the overall situation across the Town on available data.

ORDERED as follows:-

1. That the representatives be thanked for the information provided which was noted.
2. That further progress reports be submitted to the Board on the issues raised.

5 **20 MPH SPEED LIMITS**

The Chair of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation of the topic of 20 mph speed limits in Middlesbrough.

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

1. That further, long-term, monitoring and evaluation is undertaken to measure the effectiveness of the introduction of 20 mph speed limits across residential areas of Middlesbrough.
2. That if, or where, persistent problems of speeding in 20 mph areas do occur, consideration should be given to the most appropriate means of addressing this-such as the use of mobile speed signs; additional 20 mph repeater signs and/or road markings; the use of community speedwatch; further monitoring; requesting the involvement of the police for enforcement purposes; or introducing physical traffic calming measures.
3. That Cleveland's Police and Crime Commissioner is requested to clarify the position concerning the role and responsibility of the police in enforcement in respect of 20 mph speed limits.

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

6 **ALLOTMENTS**

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation of the topic of allotments in Middlesbrough.

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

1. That subject to the Council's legal responsibilities in terms of allotments provision being clarified, the possibility of determining whether any external organisations or bodies would be prepared to operate some or all of the Authority's allotments service in return for the receipt of rental income is explored.

2. That, depending on the outcome of Recommendation 1 above, allotment holders are encouraged/supported in moving towards self- management of sites. Where sites do become self - managed, systems should be put in place to provide the required support to enable the transition to take place and to ensure probity and accountability.

3. That if/where the Authority retains responsibility for some allotments sites:

(a) Consideration is given to increasing rents to increase income.

(b) A decision is taken as to what services continue to be provided to tenants (e.g. water, pest-control, refuse removal) and whether such services should be chargeable in future.

(c) Consideration is given to the future use of unlettable plots and how these can be best managed. This could include examining alternative land use/disposal or continuing to promote rent-free periods for tenants wishing to take on such plots.

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

7 **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES CAPACITY**

A Final Report of the Health Scrutiny Panel which outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation of the topic of Mental Health Services Capacity had been circulated.

ORDERED that in the absence of the Chair and Vice- Chair consideration of the Final Report be deferred to the meeting of the Board scheduled for 29 April.

8 **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - INCOME GENERATION**

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel outlined the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following a scrutiny investigation of the topic of income generation in Environmental Services.

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

1. That, subject to undertaking appropriate risk management exercises and cost benefit analyses in each case, new trading opportunities are actively sought to maximise external income for Middlesbrough Council's trading services.

2. That dialogue is opened with Social Care and Health Services to explore the possibility of service users personal budgets to engage Council services for small-scale repairs, gardening and cleaning.

3. That, in order to facilitate the recruitment of staff to cover short term projects or contracts and to improve opportunities to generate additional income, Council employment procedures and policies are reviewed. Subject to meeting required standards concerning pay and conditions, this should include better use of short-term contracts, fixed term contracts and agency staff, as appropriate.

4. That, where possible, and to assist with service and budget planning, external service users are encouraged to sign future service level agreements for periods of longer than one year.

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

9 **SCRUTINY PANELS - PROGRESS REPORTS**

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

NOTED

10 **CALL-IN**

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

NOTED