

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 20 January 2015.

PRESENT: Councillors N J Walker (Chair); J G Cole, E Dryden, P Purvis, P Sanderson, P Sharrocks, M Thompson, J A Walker and M B Williams

OFFICERS: B Carr and A Crawford

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor C Hobson, Councillor T Mawston, Councillor F McIntyre.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point of the meeting.

1 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 6 JANUARY 2015 & 9 JANUARY 2015

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 6 January 2015 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 9 January 2015 were taken as read and approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the following comment under the contribution from the Member of Parliament for Middlesbrough:

It was highlighted however that infrastructure should be in place before any new development in the town commenced.

2 MAYOR'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board advised Members that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the findings of the Special Overview and Scrutiny Board involving the town's stakeholders, held on 9 January 2015 to examine the Elected Mayor's strategic priorities and direction of travel.

At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21 October 2014, the Elected Mayor had outlined his strategic priorities and his perspective on the Council's future direction of travel. As a result, the Board had scheduled a special meeting for 9 January 2015, to examine these issues in detail. As the issues affected the town as a whole, the Board had decided to involve the Council's key partners and stakeholders who were invited to comment and ask questions on the issues raised by the Elected Mayor and to indicate how the issues affected their individual organisations.

At the meeting held on 9 January 2015:

- The Elected Mayor further outlined his strategic priorities and his perspective on the Council's future direction of travel;
- The Council's partners/stakeholders were invited to ask questions and comment on the above, in particular the potential impact on them/their organisation.
- The Elected Mayor referred to the position concerning the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant and whether the grant should be accepted in order to provide the authority with additional funding for 2015-16. The Mayor advised that he is to recommend to Council that the grant is refused and Council Tax is increased. This was because it had been estimated that accepting the grant, and the resulting reduction in Council Tax income, would lead to a funding shortfall for the authority of approximately £18m over the next 10 years.

Following the meeting on 9 January, a further meeting involving Board members only was scheduled for 20 January 2015 and the Chair advised that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2015 would be used to inform debate and discussion on the above. Having heard from all parties at the previous meeting, the second meeting would allow the Overview and Scrutiny Board to reach a consensus view on the Mayor's strategic priorities before reporting

on its findings to the Executive.

Having considered and discussed the feedback from the Council's partners and stakeholders obtained at the meeting held on 9 January 2015, the Board raised the following Issues:

- The Impact of budget cuts on Neighbourhood Policing;
- The availability of Welfare Rights advice throughout the town;
- Erimus and the challenges facing the organisation to attract tenants and reduce voids;
- Attracting people to Middlesbrough (Is Middlesbrough a Thriving Town?);
- The Skills Agenda - are education providers providing the qualifications and training to match the requirements of future employers;
- South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group property portfolio - the impact on the town;
- Young people with mental health problems and the agencies involved in the issue;
- The introduction of an alcohol minimum pricing policy;
- Developing joint working practices/pooling resources with other local authorities/key partners/stakeholders;
- Inclusion of young people with mental health problems and issues of suicide and self-harm within the Mayor's strategic priorities;
- Inclusion of financially vulnerable within Mayor's strategic priorities;
- The support of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in respect of the Council's refusal of the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant.

It was suggested that the Board's findings to be reflected in its final report, should be broken down as follows:

- Conclusions/Recommendations in respect of the Mayor's Strategic Priorities/the Council's budget, including the position regarding the Council Tax Freeze Grant;
- Conclusions/Recommendations in respect of other (non-budget related) issues; and
- Possible future scrutiny topics.

AGREED that a draft final report on the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in respect of the Mayor's Strategic Priorities, and issues arising from the meeting with partners/stakeholders, be submitted to the next meeting of the Board.