

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 28 April 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Walker (Chair), Councillors E Dryden, T Mawston, F McIntyre, P Sanderson, M Thompson and J A Walker

OFFICERS: A Crawford, P Duffy, A Humble and M Padfield

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors J G Cole, C Hobson and P Purvis.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations at this point in the meeting.

1 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 AND 31 MARCH 2015

The Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 3 and 31 March 2015 were approved as correct records.

It was noted that the meeting on 31 March had been abandoned, as it was inquorate.

2 SECOND CAPITAL MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Board considered a report by the Executive Director for Commercial and Corporate Services which presented an update on the Council's Capital Programme, 2013/2014 to 2016/2017, as at 31 January 2015.

The report identified the changes to the capital programme since it was last reported to the Executive in the First Capital Monitoring and Review on 4 November 2014. The Executive agreed to a further 23 projects, totalling £13.9 million, being added to the capital programme on 20 January 2015, following a review.

The report also detailed the re-profiling of expenditure between financial years and provided an update on the ten largest projects across the Council's capital programme.

A Member referred to the scheme for the Captain Cook statue and queried whether it should read £25,000, instead of £250,000. The Executive Director said he would check this and get back to Members.

The Chair mentioned the process in respect of considering small-scale Members Projects. Reference was made to the need to ensure that feedback was provided to Members in respect of schemes that they had suggested.

ORDERED that the following be noted:-

- a) The projected outturn for 2014/2015 of £64.1 million.
- b) The increase in the overall capital programme of £26.6 million.
- c) The net re-profiling of £12.9 million.
- d) The impact on the 2014/2015 revenue budget of a one-off saving of £420,000, resulting from the re-profiling of the 2014/2015 capital expenditure.
- e) The capital programme for the period to 2017/2018, as outlined in Appendix D to the report.

3 INTERIM REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL – SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel presented the interim findings of the Panel's work in respect of Safeguarding and Looked After Children. The topic would continue to be investigated in 2015/2016.

The Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following aspects, in particular:-

- Middlesbrough had, historically, experienced higher numbers of looked after children.
- The aim was to reduce the number of looked after children.
- The position compared to the Council's statistical neighbours had improved, but further work was required.
- Children were only taken into care when this was absolutely necessary.
- The Council had a good team in place dealing with these issues.
- The "Returning Children to Middlesbrough" Pilot Project aimed to reduce the number of looked after children cared for out of area.
- There is not necessarily a link between poverty and deprivation, as was often assumed.

A fellow Member of the Panel commented that the work of the Transformation Programme Board - that had been established to set up and oversee a programme to safely reduce the rates of looked after children - would need to be scrutinised by the Panel.

There was some discussion about the negative perception of the town that had been identified amongst some staff. A Member commented that it should be possible for staff to separate the cohort of people they were working with from their view of the town. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board mentioned that this could be a possible future topic for scrutiny.

In response to a question as to how information on drug use is used, the Chair of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel said that the effects of how misuse can affect children had been examined and, increasingly, work was being undertaken to look beyond the individual receiving treatment and at the effect on the whole of that family. In this regard, a lot of work had been undertaken with the Risk and Reduction Team.

ORDERED:

- a) That the information received to date by the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel be noted.
- b) That it be acknowledged that the topic will be revisited in 2015/2016 to gather further information and evidence, prior to submitting a final report to the Executive, which will include conclusions and recommendations.
- c) That recognition of the contribution made to the work of the investigation by former Councillor, Maelor Williams, who passed away in March 2015, be included in the report.

4 **INTERIM REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL - MIDDLEHAVEN**

Members considered a report on the interim findings of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel's investigation of the topic of Middlehaven.

A Member of the Panel commented that it had been particularly interesting to hear from the Principal of Middlesbrough College and the owner of The Brasserie at Hudson Quay as to the factors that had led them to locating in Middlehaven.

The fact that much of the vacant land was now under the control of the Council should assist future development in the area.

The Chair asked if the Press Office had circulated a Press Release containing information on progress. The Scrutiny Support Officer said he would check this.

ORDERED that it be noted that this scrutiny topic will be revisited in 2015/2016 in order to complete a final report, including conclusions and recommendations.

5 **FINAL REPORT OF THE SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL – SAFEGUARDING ADULTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE**

The Chair of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's findings arising from its review of Safeguarding Adults in Residential Care.

He highlighted the following aspects, in particular:-

- The review had focussed on safeguarding issues within care homes. Some elements of care were not as closely regulated – for instance, the care that is provided by family members.
- The evidence that had been received from front line staff had been especially useful.
- Evidence had been presented that showed robust procedures were in place.
- The number of cases reported was high, but this was seen as positive, in that it is important to report things such as medication being administered later than scheduled – even though this was not abuse.
- People might be reluctant to report concerns if they were reliant on those people for providing their care.
- There were many examples of good practice in the care sector, but perhaps the Council could do more to encourage good practice to ensure that the best levels of care were being delivered.
- There was evidence of a person-centred approach, which the Council wanted to continue to encourage.

There was some discussion about people providing evidence to scrutiny not always being aware if the press were present. The Chair felt that, at the start of each meeting, people attending to provide evidence should be informed if the press were present.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board suggested that the wording in recommendation c), which referred to “recognising abuse”, be amended to “recognising the potential signs of abuse”. The Chair of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel said that he was happy to agree to this suggestion.

ORDERED that the report be approved and the following recommendations be made to the Executive:-

- a) That the Health Scrutiny Panel, with the involvement of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board, investigates the issue of elderly people leaving hospital and the quality of information provided on discharge.
- b) That the Local Authority implement a high-profile publicity campaign. The purpose of the campaign being to raise awareness of abuse and neglect - helping people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety, wellbeing or welfare of an adult.
- c) That the Local Authority puts measures in place to ensure that all care home residents receive relevant information about recognising the potential signs of abuse, their rights and how to express their concerns. Improving awareness will enable adults at risk to protect themselves from abuse and ensure their safety.
- d) That the Local Authority invests in sustained joint training, with the care home sector, to convey Care Act guidance in respect of safeguarding policy, procedures and professional practices.
- e) That, by consulting Making Safeguarding Personal Guidance, the Local Authority works

with the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board to explore and identify new ways to develop an outcomes focused, person-centred approach to safeguarding.

- f) That the Local Authority produces a good safeguarding practice guide for care homes detailing those measures outlined at conclusion i) in the report. As care home staff are well placed to identify people at risk, the guide should also be used to:
- Raise awareness.
 - Empower staff.
 - Recognise, address and report abuse and neglect.
 - Take appropriate action to prevent abuse and neglect from occurring.

6

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORTS

a) Customer Contact

The Chair presented the interim findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group following its examination of customer contact between the public and Middlesbrough Council.

The Chair stated that the study had sought to partly examine how the public contacts Middlesbrough Council in respect of environmental service requests but, mainly, on what services should be available to the public in the future.

One of the areas that had been looked at was electronic means of reporting issues - both in terms of how the system works now and how it might work in the future.

ORDERED that the following conclusions and recommendations be fed into future consideration of this topic:-

Conclusions

- a) It is important to ensure that all ways in which customers contact Middlesbrough Council ensure customer satisfaction through a high standard service that delivers the right outcome at the earliest opportunity. While the task and finish group's work concentrated on environmental issues, which represents only a small part of customer contact, Council systems should ensure that this principle applies across all service areas.
- b) While moves towards electronic communication and online reporting through My Middlesbrough are to be welcomed as a way of improving service provision, these must not preclude groups of customers who do not have access to, or are unable or unwilling to use, such methods. Methods of contacting the authority must ensure that all sections of the public/customers are included.
- c) The My Middlesbrough website allows only a limited number of environmental issues to be reported. For example, it is not possible to report general litter, uneven footpaths or broken glass on a footpath. Also, the existing online reporting system means that it can be difficult to identify what areas of land are in Council ownership and, therefore, difficult to determine local authority responsibility.
- d) Existing reporting systems do not include electronic feedback to customers to advise on progress. This is an issue that should be addressed.
- e) The introduction of mobile technology reporting systems for operatives in Area Care/Streetscene, would provide an opportunity to improve service provision.
- f) There is an opportunity to review and improve arrangements for dealing with referrals that are made from the Customer Contact Centre to Streetscene in respect of environmental issues. At the present time, there are gaps in the knowledge of contact centre staff. Better information provision at the first point of contact could mean a swifter resolution of issues raised.
- g) There is an opportunity to review/streamline the existing Members' One Stop reporting system, which can be lengthy and onerous.

- h) The recorded message that customers hear when telephoning the Customer Contact Centre can be lengthy and off-putting to callers – the possibility of connecting callers immediately, when there is no queue, will be investigated.
- i) Service in respect of customer contact could be improved by widening service provision at Council community hubs and libraries.

Recommendations

- a) That services available through the My Middlesbrough website are expanded and improved.
 - b) That systems are developed that automatically inform customers of progress.
 - c) That an electronic reporting system is introduced that facilitates easier identification of relevant areas of land by Council customers, including mobile phone users, and to include whether land is owned by Middlesbrough Council. (It was noted that work is already underway on this).
 - d) That, once improvements have been made, digital/electronic communication is promoted as the default method of customers contacting Middlesbrough Council.
 - e) That alternative methods of communication also continue to be easily available for customers who have no access to, or do not feel able to use, electronic communication.
 - f) That the introduction of mobile reporting technology by operatives in Area Care/Streetscene is examined as a priority.
 - g) That the process for dealing with environmental issues at the Council's Customer Contact Centre is reviewed. This should include:
 - reviewing/updating existing scripts;
 - examining whether it could be beneficial to co-locate the contact centre and relevant streetscene staff; and
 - providing further training to contact centre staff on environmental issues.
 - h) That the number of different telephone numbers available to the public is examined with a view to reducing them.
 - i) That Council community hubs and libraries are provided with the necessary equipment, and staff the appropriate training, to operate as customer contact points.
 - j) That the Council's One Stop Shop system of Member reporting is reviewed, with a view to reducing the amount of processes involved.
 - k) That the recorded message that greets all callers should not be of a length that deters people from contacting the Council, or is too costly for mobile phone users.
 - l) That the process for dealing with blue badge applications is reviewed alongside the Stockton Council model, with a view to making it simpler for the public.
 - m) That the issue of customer contact in the wider sense (e.g. benefits) is considered.
 - n) That, where appropriate, customers be involved in reviewing and improving customer contact, in accordance with these recommendations.
- b) Volunteering**
The Chair presented the interim findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, following its examination of volunteering in Middlesbrough Council.

The Chair mentioned that there had been some concern that volunteers could be replacing Middlesbrough Council staff in some instances. This was not the case.

A Member said he would be interested to know the areas that comprised community regeneration - the area with the largest number of volunteers. The Scrutiny Support Officer said that he would ascertain this information for Members.

ORDERED:

- a) That the Board place on record its thanks to volunteers who help support Council services and the staff who work with them.
- b) That this be considered as a possible future scrutiny topic, to include broader areas, potentially.

7 **QUESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY**

Members considered a document produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny entitled "What Rotherham and Mid-Staffordshire tell us about scrutiny, and where it's lacking".

The Chair suggested that aspects of the document could be included in the Council's Training Programme for Scrutiny Members.

A Member commented that the document highlighted the need for evidence to be triangulated from officers; front line staff and Members seeing situations for themselves.

The Chair was confident that Councillors in Middlesbrough were not blocked from receiving information by officers. Also, Members did not just rely on reports from officers – they often sought out information themselves as with, for example, the investigation into Middlehaven.

ORDERED that the document from the Centre for Public Scrutiny be noted and that relevant aspects of it be included in training for Members involved in the scrutiny function.

8 **DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - PARKING REFORM: TACKLING UNFAIR PRACTICES**

The Board considered a report which informed it of a Government consultation on parking, following the Board's 2014 examination of enforcement in privately operated car parks and on private land.

ORDERED that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board responds, on behalf of the Council, to the Government consultation on parking reform, in line with the previous recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

9 **FEEDBACK FROM EXECUTIVE - 17 MARCH 2015**

A report was submitted by the Head of Democratic Services which asked the Board to receive the decisions of the Executive on the final reports on Early Help, Assistive Technology and Wi Fi Town. NOTED.

10 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered a report by the Head of Democratic Services which provided them with the opportunity to consider whether any Item within the Executive Forward Work Programme (a copy of which was appended to the report) should be considered by the Board or referred to a Scrutiny Panel. NOTED.

11 **SCRUTINY PANELS PROGRESS REPORTS**

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

12

COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair confirmed that this was the last meeting of the Panel this Municipal Year. She thanked Members for their contribution to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, including Councillor Sanderson, who would not be standing in the forthcoming elections.

The Chair also expressed her appreciation to the Scrutiny Support Officers and the Governance Team for their work.