

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 1 March 2016.

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Sharrocks (Chair), J G Cole, J Culley, E Dryden, T Higgins, J McGee, F McIntyre, J Rathmell, D Rooney and J A Walker

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor M Thompson

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors A Hellaoui and M Walters

**OFFICERS:** A Crawford and C Lunn

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors C Hobson, N Hussain and T Mawston

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

**1 MINUTES – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD – 2 FEBRUARY 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2016 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Councillor E Dryden informed the Panel that Councillor J McGee would be presenting the Health Scrutiny Panel's final report on 'Health Inequalities – Improving Levels of Breastfeeding in Middlesbrough', to the Executive on 15 March 2016.

**ORDERED:**

- (1) That the minutes be approved; and
- (2) That the information, as provided, be noted.

**2 ATTENDANCE OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES & PUBLIC HEALTH: COUNCILLOR MICK THOMPSON**

A report had been circulated to the Board which provided information regarding the scheduled attendance of Members of the Executive at the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Today's meeting was attended by Councillor M Thompson, Executive Member for Communities and Public Health.

As a preliminary, Councillor Thompson explained to Members that he felt that Scrutiny provided excellent insight to the workings of the Council, and that there was real power within Scrutiny to make a difference. Councillor Thompson explained that his portfolio encompassed a wide range of different areas and that he found the role both interesting and enjoyable.

The following points were made in particular:-

- It was conveyed to the Board that, whether dealing with Public Health, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), or educational attainment, successful action could only be achieved in a supportive environment. It was felt that strong, resilient and cohesive communities were an excellent foundation for any individual to grow, prosper and achieve their full potential.
- Reference was made to the origins of the Public Health agenda and the challenges associated with it in respect of Middlesbrough's health, crime and educational attainment statistics. It was explained to the Board that Public Health was inherited from the Primary Care Trust (PCT); a number of inherited projects were currently in the process of being

re-commissioned.

- It was highlighted that the commissioning process involved discussing potential approaches with providers as to how projects could be improved; it was felt that the authority could learn from this.
- Consideration was given to drug and alcohol dependency within the Town. It was felt that there was opportunity for improvement in respect of previous programme initiatives, and that the re-commissioning process would pave way for this and assist in moving the agenda forward.
- In response to an enquiry regarding the potential ways forward, it was explained that there was opportunity to focus upon the area of recovery, rather than solely upon treatment. Mention was made of work partnership undertaken with 'Middlesbrough Recovering Together', and a peer-mentor approach involving those in recovery from drug or alcohol dependency that they exercised. It was indicated that approximately five percent of people entering the recovery system achieved this; it was acknowledged that this needed to be focused upon.
- Reference was made to the needle exchange facility that currently operated within the Town Hall, and also to a health hub that would be opening in the Dundas Arcade, which would assist with recovery initiatives. It was acknowledged that a single approach would not improve the figures in a short space of time; a number of initiatives over the long term would be required.
- Consideration was given to the impact of drug and alcohol dependency, and reference was made to the 'toxic three' – i.e. it was not only about the consequences on the dependent individual, but also around that individual's family and the wider community.
- Reference was made to the scale of the Public Health agenda and the number of initiatives that had been borne out of that. In linking this up to the title of the Executive Member's portfolio, i.e. Communities and Public Health, it was felt that the connection between the two areas was highly pertinent in terms of ensuring success. It was felt that the most effective method revolved around peer connection – the example of breastfeeding take up rates and the influence of family members in respect this was provided –rather than single focus upon awareness campaigns. Consideration would need to be given as to how peer-to-peer connections could be formed.
- Mention was made of community hubs, which had been very successful in the Town. However, it was acknowledged that work did need to be undertaken in order to ensure that communities could continue to thrive and feel supported, particularly in terms of reduction in resources, e.g. Street Warden service. Members agreed that the community hubs were vitally important; with a suggestion being made that one way to form connections with communities would be to hold meetings and events in those venues.
- Consideration was given to disadvantaged communities and potential reasoning for poor health. Reference was made to previous study outcomes and the recognition of inequality as a key factor. It was felt that life circumstances and consequential attitudes and behaviours could result in negative habits being formed.
- Consideration was given to different income streams and the impacts associated with this, on individuals, families, wider communities and the Council's resources. Mention was made of the demonization of poorer communities, e.g. through media programmes, that was felt to have divided and widened communities.
- In response to an enquiry regarding oral health initiatives previously undertaken, it was explained that an oral health promotion was impending and would commence shortly within schools. Members felt that preventative initiatives and community projects were vital, as in some instances, children educated at school subsequently educated their parents with the information learnt. In terms of preventative work, it was acknowledged that in order for change to be embedded, individuals did need to take responsibility for their actions. Reference was made to attitudes that would potentially result in negative behaviour, littering

for example. It was felt that, as a starting point, focus upon positive aspects of an area, rather than the negative, would help to instil a positive mind set. It was felt that by involving people in community life and making them feel valued, not only would this improve their quality of life, but would benefit the local population.

- In response to an enquiry regarding an impending alcohol strategy, particularly in terms of how the Council dealt with alcohol abuse, it was felt that progress was being made with this. Reference was made to the lowering rate of alcohol-related A&E admissions, and to Licensing approaches that would assist with prevention of alcohol dependency.
- Regarding approaches to mental health support, Councillor Thompson referred to his current membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board, which was an overarching town-wide body that consisted of various partners, including the Local Authority, Cleveland Police and senior health workers. It was explained that mental health has been prioritised as an issue to be focused upon.
- It was explained to the Board that approximately 80% of 999 emergency calls had had a mental health element to them, which had been a driver for a number of projects.
- A project entitled 'Headway' would be commencing in schools shortly, which revolved around the provision of mental health support to young people. Some schools had undertaken such an initiative already, but this would be rolled out. It was indicated that the project was lottery funded, would focus upon secondary schools, and would be delivered by partners, i.e. Stockton and Middlesbrough Mind. In response to an enquiry, Councillor Thompson would confirm the position of this project in relation to primary schools; Members felt that this could offer advantages in terms of identifying issues and responding sooner. However, reference was made to an approach called 'Team around the School', whereby support was currently being provided to schools via the Stronger Families initiative, consequently primary schools will have had access to professionals this way.
- The diagnosis of mental illness within children, and the potential dangers associated with this, was considered by the Board. It was felt to be a delicate area. Mention was made of medical interventions and the different schools of thought on treatment – talking therapies, medication, etc. It was explained that previous evidence that had been gathered as part of a Health Scrutiny Panel investigation had indicated that people in Middlesbrough were described more antidepressants than anywhere else in the country; it was hoped that talking therapies had assisted in the reduction of this in the time period since the investigation. Reference was made to the support available, the quality of this, and the timescales involved in treatment. Consideration was given to the potential pressures involved in young peoples' lives, and the impacts that these could have.
- Reference was made to the reduction in services and the impacts that this has had, e.g. availability of Educational Psychologists, school holiday clubs, etc. It was felt that there were children in need of support that may not necessarily present as having a specific medical condition; the challenge was significant. It was considered to be about best aligning the funding available with the issues that were faced.
- Regarding the local population and deprivation, it was indicated that, as a Council, it was not defined by disadvantage; there were areas of high and low deprivation.
- A short discussion ensued in respect of free school meals and food provision during holidays. Reference was made to a project undertaken by a school in Newcastle several years ago, where Body Mass Index measurements were taken prior to and after the school summer holiday. The results had demonstrated cases of malnutrition. Members discussed the possibility of larger schools, or a community café, opening for this period, which had proven successful elsewhere.
- With regards to asylum seekers, it was felt that the authority had managed this well. Regular discussion had taken place with the Home Office. Reference was made to media influence and the impact of this on attitudes and opinions.

- In respect of Public Health, a Member highlighted the introduction of the NHS as a signifier that interventions do work. Reference was made to the top three causes of death in England in 1943, and their declining status in 1945.
- The Chair thanked the Executive Member for his update.

**ORDERED** that the information, as provided, be noted.

3 **SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5 – ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**ORDERED** that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 5, the Board agreed to vary the order of the business as follows: Agenda item 11, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

4 **BALANCED SCORECARDS: QUARTER THREE 2015/2016**

Members expressed concern that the information was still presented quite convolutedly.

The Head of Performance and Partnership advised the Panel that the previous report comprised a significant amount of detail. The aim of this present report was to focus upon where the issues lied in respect of the various service areas. It was recalled that the Balanced Scorecards were going to be reviewed in relation to such matters as methodology, etc. A special meeting of the Leadership Management Team (comprising service Directors and Assistant Directors) would be held on 15 March 2016, where the model of Balanced Scorecards and how those were reported would be considered. It was suggested that a further update regarding this be provided to Members at the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting; Members agreed to this.

Members were directed to the submitted report and the following points made:

- The overall performance at Quarter 3 was very similar to Quarter 2 – sat at 68%.
- Outcome Area 1: Economic Development – Road Safety

It was explained that the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents in Middlesbrough had, as per previous the two previous Quarters, increased above target. The Outcome Area had undertaken review of where those accidents had occurred; it was indicated that none of the accidents had resulted in fatality. No particular pattern for the occurrence of these accidents had been identified, e.g. no pedestrian crossing in the area; it appeared that pedestrians were using the roads without due care and attention. It was highlighted that the Outcome Area was currently reviewing existing road safety initiatives, with potential for additional funding around this being made.

In response to an enquiry, the age of children was up to 17.

- Outcome Area 1: Economic Development – Key Programmes and Projects

Reference was made to projects within the Change Programme, specifically around the review being undertaken within Cultural Services, and what alternatives the Council may have wished to advise upon. For example: regarding the transfer of leisure centres to Trust model – was there potential there for Cultural Services to assist. As discussed previously, consultants had appointed to undertake some work on that; those consultants would report back, and that information would be considered by the Executive Member as to what options they would like to take forward. In response to an enquiry, it was clarified that commissioned services would be reflected in the Balanced Scorecards.

It was explained that a slight delay in respect of the Community Transport Project had been experienced; the project plan in respect of that had been revised. It was indicated that any changes to policies around home to school transport, for example, needed to be completed in sufficient time in order for implementation at the start of the new school year. A new project board would be established to take that forward.

- Regarding the capital programme, an on-going programme to replace existing street

lighting with LED lights had slipped slightly at the end of Quarter 3. It was explained that this was due to the Christmas period and the demands imposed on staff, but it was expected that that would be back on schedule by the end of Quarter 4.

➤ Regarding Outcome 2: Supporting Communities, it was explained that the issues currently being experienced in that area revolved around people management challenges, essentially sickness. It was felt that this was largely due to the integration of services within that department over the last year. It was expected that levels should reduce by the end of this year.

In response to an enquiry, it was explained that new roles had been created in this service area. Reference was made to the recent staff survey results, where the results had shown that general staff satisfaction was relatively high across all areas. However, it was acknowledged that further analysis would need to be undertaken on some of the questions - those based around health and safety for example. Once analysed, work would be undertaken with Public Health to determine what work could be undertaken to support staff feeling stressed. Members felt that it was particularly important to keep an eye on this, as a duty of care was owed to those that the Council employed.

➤ In respect of Outcome 3: Public Health, Members were informed that since the last Quarter, performance had improved by 7%. Reference was made to paragraphs 18 and 19 of the submitted report; it was explained to Members that ways to improve the smoking cessation figures were currently being explored.

A comment was made regarding smoking cessation and the resources available to help employees with this. Reference was made to a course that a Member had previously attended that had been very effective.

In response to an enquiry made in respect of paragraph 16, it was clarified that one of the key issues within Public Health was that it encompassed a number of commissioned services and consequently had a high volume of performance measures for those. It was explained that when the Balanced Scorecard was to be reviewed, it would need to be ensured that the performance of this area accurately reflected what was expected to be seen in the Town, for example: longer life expectancy.

➤ With regards to Outcome 4: Learning and Skills, the indicator for that area was red. It was recalled that, at the last Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting, Members had been provided with details pertaining to the publication of provisional 2015 GCSE results, which then needed to proceed through the appeals process, etc. The final results were published during the last Quarter, and were shown on page 6 of the submitted report.

Discussions regarding the results had been made, with a number of factors that contributed to Key Stage 4 outcomes being identified. These were summarised at paragraph 22 of the submitted report. It was explained that there were plans in place with the Middlesbrough Achievement Partnership to deliver improvements on the performance results. Recently, the Council had appointed a new Assistant Director of Learning and Skills and a lead Director to help take this forward.

A query was raised in respect of the setting of the Balanced Scorecard targets, in particular whether they were set by national indicators being related to Middlesbrough. In response, it was explained that LMT would be reviewing the level of ambition in targeting, what measures would be taken in what quartile, etc. Further information regarding this would be provided at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. In relation to Education, particularly around attainment, there was a school effectiveness strategy that the Council had agreed a couple of years ago. The ambition there was to progress to the national average position within a 2-3 year period. To help achieve this, the national average figures were divided over the 2-3 years and annual performance levels set. Observation of the Balanced Scorecard data had shown that targets had not been achieved, and so review of this would be taking place.

Reference was made to feeder schools and the attendance of Middlesbrough children in neighbouring authority schools. Unfortunately, figures for these schools could not be incorporated into Middlesbrough's. The suggestion for potentially for taking this into account

by establishment of a separate reporting mechanism would be looked into.

➤ Regarding Outcome 5: Safeguarding and Children's Care, reference was made to a recent Ofsted inspection in December 2015 - the results of which had just been published. It was too late to incorporate the results into this report as they were unavailable at the time of writing, but the result had been 'required improvement'. Improvement plans were in development and would be monitored - appearing as a separate section in future Balanced Scorecard reports.

In terms of performance during Quarter 3, the figures for Looked after Children had increased. With regards to adoption, the Council had a statutory obligation around this. The number of adoptions had increased but not to the level of the target. Reference was made to an impending joint working initiative between local authorities that would hopefully improve this situation. Consideration was given to adoption breakdown and the real-life implications of this. In terms of the measures for next year's Balanced Scorecards, potential measures were currently being looked at.

➤ Reference was made to Outcome 6: Social Care. It was explained that the Social Care Transformation programme was currently under review as part of the overall review of the Council's Change Programme. Reference was made to a recent Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel and a report made by the Executive Director in respect of bringing programme management back in house. Further information in respect of this would be provided to the Panel in due course.

Similar to previous, there was an issue around sickness in this Outcome Area, which was currently being reviewed with HR. It was suggested that Scrutiny may be interested in looking at the outcomes of the staff survey and what those were saying in relation to stressors for staff.

A query was raised regarding the appraisals process and the current system, which was presently being reviewed. In response, it was explained that, next year, performance would be scored, whereas previously it had been based on objectives for the following year. Reference was made to Social Care; there was a discrepancy whereby one side of the service had completed all of its appraisals, and the other had not completed as many. It was explained that this formed part of the stress management system in that direction for staff would be provided. There was a full imbedding plan for that within the Middlesbrough Manager framework; further information in terms of this would be forwarded to a future Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.

➤ Regarding Outcome 7: Environment, Property and Commercial Services, it was highlighted that there were very few issues. The only point of note was that customer measures and satisfaction were currently being looked at, e.g. how people felt about the cleanliness of the Town, etc., following the austerity measures over the last couple of years. Further updates would be provided via the next Balanced Scorecard data. There was some positive feedback obtained via the recent corporate peer review on the cleanliness of the town, however, further inspections and satisfaction surveys would need to be completed over the next Quarter.

➤ Regarding Outcome 8: Finance and Investment, an issue had arisen in relation to housing benefits. This revolved around the promotion of self-service of benefit claims, either via the internet or via the terminals at Middlesbrough House. That service had become unavailable for a considerable period, up to three months, due to data security concerns with the system. As a consequence, staff had had to manually process applications. The service was back in operation again now, however, the likelihood was that the annual target would not be attained by the end of the year.

A Member raised concern regarding the delays that had occurred in respect of housing benefit and queried whether any details regarding the impact on individuals, particularly in relation to loss of homes, was available. In response, this would be looked into and information pertaining to housing benefit applications / appeals would be forwarded via the Chair.

Reference was made to paragraph 32; there were no change programme projects within the Outcome Area currently off target. Following the statement of accounts and a subsequent review by external audit, action was being taken to rectify the issues, particularly in respect of

ICT.

➤ Regarding crosscutting performance issues, paragraph 37 onwards of the submitted report, the Council had been involved in a corporate peer review. Although feedback had been received informally, a final report was currently awaited by the Local Government Association (LGA), as they had to undertake internal quality assurance. It was explained that the Council would produce an application plan in response to the issues raised within that report. It was explained that there would be issues that could not be covered in a Balanced Scorecard report, and it was therefore suggested that a separate report be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in due course.

Reference was made to paragraph 41 of the submitted report. It was explained that sickness targets were currently over at the moment, however, mention was made of staff satisfaction and a standard target of 70%. In the recent staff satisfaction survey, every outcome area had attained that. It was felt that it would be useful to provide a further update to the Board once the further Health and Safety Executive-related questions had been analysed, as they may have shown something different. It was indicated that staff surveys were completed anonymously. During discussion, it was suggested that this target could potentially be raised.

➤ In respect of Risks to Area Outcomes and the Council's Strategic Risk Register, it was explained that this had not really changed since Quarter 2, although a number of activities had taken place, for example: Ofsted report, peer review, education results; a number of the risks had been revised to reflect this going forward. When the financial settlements were published, it was indicated that financial risk may have changed in relation to that. Further information regarding this would be provided to the Board in due course.

The Chair thanked the Head of Performance and Partnership for his attendance at the meeting.

**ORDERED** that the information, as presented, be noted.

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#### **INTERIM REPORT OF HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL – TEMPORARY CHANGES TO THE BREAST RADIOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel explained that this piece of work had been undertaken by the South Tees Health Scrutiny Joint Committee.

It was explained that across the South Tees, the changes would affect approximately 4000 women (2000 women per year). This was not about screening, but was about women who had been concerned about change in their breast and then referred from their GP to James Cook University Hospital, which would only be a one stop diagnostic.

It was indicated that due to a national shortage, James Cook University Hospital had lost two Radiologists and a Radiographer, which had resulted in this very specialist service being temporarily transferred over to the University Hospital of North Tees.

It was explained that the Joint Committee, during their investigation, could have considered this to be a substantial re-configuration of the service, but this was not pursued, as this would have resulted in longer Scrutiny activity and was an urgent matter.

Reference was made to other geographical areas, such as Hull and Sunderland, where the service could not be offered due to the shortage of specialised staff.

It was highlighted that this situation needed to be monitored and had therefore been placed in the South Tees Scrutiny Work Programme. Concerns were expressed as to the potential barriers that had been put in place through the transfer of this service, with reference being made to low levels of car ownership within Middlesbrough, and the distance that needed to be travelled to the University Hospital of North Tees.

Members heard that Centre of Excellence and hub and spoke service models had been proposed as potential ways forward. Implications for resources and services following transference were considered in respect of this.

Reference was made to the changes currently taking place across the Health Care Sector.

The Board considered and approved the recommendations, as detailed in the submitted report.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel for the update.

**ORDERED** that the recommendations, as detailed in the report, be approved.

6

#### **BETTER HEALTH PROGRAMME REPORT**

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented a report regarding the Better Health Programme.

It was explained that, in essence, under the Health and Social Care Act, there was a requirement to form a new Scrutiny body where the local NHS wished to make provision for services that varied.

It was unknown at present as to whether the Better Health Programme initiative would result in substantial variation; however, to cover all eventualities, it had been proposed that a new Joint Committee be established to cover the Middlesbrough, Darlington, Durham County, Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton authority areas. The submitted report set out the background to this proposal. It was indicated that protocols and operation of the new body would need to be established.

It was highlighted that it was essential that consultation work be undertaken as, in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act and its requirements, considerable variation by the health service may be proposed.

Members considered that the recommendations and indicated that agreement should be made. It was felt that this was a well-planned approach in that longer term objectives were being considered.

The Board discussed the significant reforms that were currently taking place in respect of the health service, with reference being made to the privatisation agenda and seven-day GP working.

Reference was made to the Darzi review that had been undertaken previously, with mention being made of the implications that potential changes would have had on hospital services across Teesside.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Support Officer for the update.

**ORDERED** that the report and its recommendations be approved and submitted to the Executive.

7

#### **FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL – REOFFENDING AND REHABILITATION – HOW DOES MIDDLESBROUGH FARE**

The Chair of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's final report to the Board.

It was felt that this investigation had been both very interesting and informative, and would offer a useful reference to a varied readership.

It was a very broad ranging report, which had looked at offenders of varying age - from young offenders up to the prison population. It was explained that if the work continued over the next year, a site visit to Holme House Prison would be undertaken in order to observe how prisons were operated, and what individuals had learnt from their time inside. Mention was made of visits to other establishments that had taught the prison population how to create items such as garden furniture, which had effectively turned their lives around.

The Terms of Reference for the Panel's investigation were shown at page 27 of the report. Reference was made to point 4. It was explained that the purpose of the investigation was to establish the current picture of reoffending within Middlesbrough – not only adults, but



younger people too. The Panel had considered the reasons as to why people offended, and there were numerous.

Reference was made to page 29 and the Transforming Rehabilitation contract that was currently in place, which was valued at £9m-£13m per year. A related problem here was that adult re-offending rates in the North East were approximately one-and-a-half-times the national average. In Middlesbrough, the position had changed very little in recent years, and it was acknowledged that this needed to be addressed.

It was indicated that there had been little information produced / made available in recent years, which may have occurred due to changes within services. It was envisaged that an increased level of data would be available in February 2017.

Members were informed that a Troubled Families initiative was currently in place within the Council, which was felt to be an example of excellent offender management.

It was highlighted that a number of departments within the authority, working both independently and jointly with other organisations, were contributing to the reduction of re-offending. Reference was made to Public Health, the Community Safety Partnership, and commissioning drug and alcohol services.

A Member commented on the number of Magistrate Courts that were currently being opened for session, in comparison to previous years. It was indicated that this had reduced over time; the work of the Youth Offending Team and Probation Service was praised in relation to this.

Reference was made to a graphical illustration within the report that identified offending rates in the various Wards. Reference was made to the Street Warden service and the reduction in personnel; this was originally 78, but currently stood at 12. Concerns were expressed regarding this reduction.

Regarding youth offending, Members were directed to page 34 of the submitted report, which showed the 2014/2015 results in respect of a youth restorative intervention triage that was currently in place. The Panel had been pleased with this performance, as it appeared that the majority of the young people passing through the system had been directed away from crime, and had learned new skills through attendance at training centres and completion of other similar initiatives.

Reference was made to a community-based resettlement programme entitled 'Through the Gate', which was felt to be an extremely positive intervention programme. The operation of this initiative was outlined to the Board. It was explained that this particular programme had been established within Middlesbrough in February 2015, and therefore information was limited; however, the professionals operating the programme had indicated their satisfaction with progress made. A Member commented that a similar programme had been in operation for a number of years by homeless charities Shelter and Crisis, who had operated the initiative in and outside of prisons.

Mention was made of a number of schemes that although currently in their infancy, did appear to be working well. Firstly, a peer-mentor scheme that had been operating as a partnership between the Council and Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (DTV CRC). Although very little further information was available, it was indicated that similar initiatives had been successful in other areas. Secondly, 'community payback', and thirdly, establishment of learning environments within Community Hubs – reference was made to the acquisition of cookery skills, as an example.

Reference was made to a site visit that had been undertaken at the Probation Service offices in Thorntree. It was highlighted that this had offered a very positive experience.

A Member commented that in respect of paragraph 15 and the value of the contract, it was felt that information pertaining to the targets and measures associated with that could have been referenced in the report. Regarding homeless and receipt of advice, the Member indicated that individuals being released from prison may be more likely to be statutorily homeless, and therefore entitled to housing. Reference was made to the involvement of the Thirteen Group

in the ARC project, and it was felt that this could have been included in the report. In terms of the recommendations, it was suggested that these comments be tied in as it wanted to be ensured that people received the assistance required. The Chair advised that this had been captured as part of a previous Scrutiny investigation.

A Member referenced the work of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the excellent work that had been carried out in supporting young people in this area.

Members considered and approved the recommendations, as detailed in the submitted report.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel for her update.

**ORDERED** that the report and its recommendations be approved and submitted to the Executive.

8

### **FINAL REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL – BEREAVEMENT SERVICES**

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel presented the Board with the Panel's final report.

It was explained that the Panel considered the level of investment that was required in crematorium and bereavement services, the services currently offered in these areas, and whether there were any alternative charging policies that could be implemented.

It was explained to Members that site visits to Acklam Cemetery and Kirkleatham Cemetery had been undertaken, which had been very informative. Comparisons between the two were outlined to the Board, which covered such matters as human resources, job roles, types of services, number of services offered annually, operating methods and the efficiency of these, use of IT (including the broadcasting of funerals online), condition of equipment, and facilities available on site (e.g. café and retail outlets).

It was highlighted that this was an important aspect of the Council's income stream, and therefore in order to maximise this, it was imperative that adequate investment was made.

Reference was made to the current cost of funerals in relation to the types of services offered. It was highlighted that authorities in other localities had initiated contract work with local funeral directors to provide basic services at low costs, with contracts being offered on an annual or bi-annual basis. However, further information regarding this was currently awaited, as it had been explained to the Panel during their investigation that this was currently being challenged by larger funeral firms as it was not considered a statutory service.

Discussions with a local Funeral Director had taken place; some excellent suggestions of how the crematorium could be modernised were made. Mention was made of ways cut glass and the benefit that this could bring.

Members were directed to the recommendations made within the submitted report, which were shown at page 16. These were summarised to the Board.

Members compared Middlesbrough's bereavement services to those offered by other local authorities; suggestions were made as to what had made them successful.

Reference was made to the last meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel, where details pertaining to an unmarked plot of graves at Linthorpe Cemetery had been provided. It was explained to the Board that this was currently being looked at in order to have those marked up.

It was explained to Members that the Scrutiny Panel had considered the inclusion of the Council's funeral service in the investigation, although it was not considered appropriate to the current report as a strategy was in the process of being developed. It was explained that this would hopefully be reviewed at a later date.

Members were advised that a list of current Middlesbrough Council service charges, together

with a leaflet concerning services available in another locality, were appended to the report for information. In terms of the publicising of Middlesbrough's services, it was felt that more information could be made available via the Council's website, and increased promotion of Linthorpe Cemetery as a place to visit could be made.

Concerns were raised regarding the number of qualified staff currently available for undertaking burials. It was felt that creation of an apprenticeship scheme attached to cemeteries, especially Linthorpe, would be an excellent way forward, as reliance upon volunteers could not be expected.

A Member commented on the need to look at the production of a land policy within Middlesbrough, and the extent to which this had been explored by the Council. In response, it was explained that the Panel had looked at this, but it had not been of primary focus and therefore had not received full attention. It was indicated that when the Bereavement Strategy was revisited, this was one of the areas that would be focused upon.

Members considered and approved the recommendations, as detailed in the submitted report.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel for her update.

**ORDERED** that the report and its recommendations be approved and submitted to the Executive.

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#### **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board noted the contents of the submitted report.

**NOTED**

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#### **SCRUTINY PANELS' PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Board noted the contents of the submitted reports.

**NOTED**