

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 4 September 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors M Storey (Chair) D P Coupe, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, J McGee, L McGloin, M Saunders and J A Walker

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor Brian Hubbard

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: A Metcalfe (Press)

OFFICERS: S Bonner

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillors E Dryden, Councillor L Lewis, Councillor T Mawston, Councillor P Purvis, Councillor J Sharrocks.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Cllr Michael Saunders	Non-Pecuniary	Item 5. Cllr Saunders named on the Councillor Call for Action Submission.

1 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 JULY 2018**

The minutes of the OSB meeting held on 3 July 2018 were submitted and approved as a true record, subject to the following amendment:

Item 6 - Scrutiny Panel Progress Reports. The item currently reads:

'The Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel's initial meeting had generated media coverage and the Panel's next meeting would discuss contraceptive provision in schools.'

The item should read:

'The Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel's initial meeting had generated media coverage and the Panel's next meeting would discuss voluntary sector provision in schools.'

NOTED

2 **MINUTES - CALL IN (A172 DIXONS BANK IMPROVEMENT SCHEME) - 2 AUGUST 2018**

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

3 **COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (CCfA) - SOUTHLANDS CENTRE**

The Chair clarified the criteria for assessing the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA), as stipulated in the report circulated to OSB. The Chair also stated that the submission contained a lot of information about the Southlands Centre closure, something OSB had considered previously.

It was also clarified that the issue of the Southlands Centre closure and concerns about the site's playing fields were not part of the same remit. There was a playing field strategy being developed and that there was scope for Members to provide input.

The Chair also stated that the purpose of a CCfA was to act as a last resort, to be used after all other means of addressing an issue had been exhausted. However, as the CCfA being considered focussed on the playing fields at the Southlands Centre a CCfA was not

appropriate as no decision had been yet on this issue.

Once a decision about the playing fields had been taken, that decision could then be addressed via other avenues, such as Call-In.

ORDERED: After considering the submitted Councillor Call for Action, the decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was not to progress the matter or take any further action.

4 **SCHOOL RESERVES - SERVICE UPDATE**

The Director of Education provided OSB with an overview of school financial reserve levels and how those reserves were managed.

It was noted that schools often kept some of their allocated funding for capital works, as funding for capital projects was being reduced.

Members raised concerns about the levels of schools reserves across the town and it was confirmed that several processes had been put in place to monitor this, including schools being asked to provide regular updates on their spending.

It was stated the Council needed to do it all it could to ensure spending in schools was being carried out appropriately. It was also pointed out there was a statutory requirement to ensure sufficient school places were available but there was a pressure on the number of places in central Middlesbrough.

A Member queried if the Council worked with schools in managing budgets, and it was confirmed that schools are challenged if they are seen to have high levels of reserves. As some budgets continued to experience pressures, such as IT budgets, schools were being asked to consider their finances in longer term and not just on an annual basis.

It was queried if the Council had any involvement with contractors when capital projects were undertaken. It was clarified that for larger scale projects the Council's asset management team would be approached. It was also clarified that after such projects were completed, issues such as Health and Safety responsibility would be built into resulting contracts.

A query was raised regarding housing developments to the south of the Town and if this placed increased demand on school places. It was clarified that previous developments had not led to a net increase in children, however there was growing demand for places especially for children from Eastern European countries.

A Member asked if there was any mechanism to monitor the financial activities of non-maintained schools, such as academies. It was also asked if there was no such mechanism was there any way the Council could encourage such schools to comply with Council objectives. It was clarified that the Council had no oversight of non-maintained schools but the Council could challenge them to produce outcomes for their children. At the moment teams from the Council visited non-maintained schools to liaise with them.

It was asked what provision was in place for translation services in light of the increased number of children from Eastern Europe. It was clarified that limited funding was available for this and that some funding was still available from a successful bid made 2 years ago. Another bid was being created to assist with settling children from other countries and to provide assistance with translation services, especially Romanian.

The Chair stated that the migration assistance fund was reduced by Central Government which was detrimental to services. There were many examples, however, that showed how welcoming schools, and Middlesbrough as whole, were to children and families from other countries.

It was also noted that a town wide inclusion strategy was being worked on and that inclusion was an important issue for the Schools Management Forum.

NOTED**5 SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Scrutiny Panel Chairs provided updates on the work of their panels including:

- The Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel had looked at the Housing Delivery Vehicle and a final report would be presented at the next meeting of OSB. The panel would be looking at Middlesbrough's historic buildings with a substantial future topic being air pollution.
- The Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was continuing their investigation into Early Help and had visited several children's centres to understand how they worked. The feedback from these visits would be taken to the panel's next meeting.
- The Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was examining the issue of LGBT individuals within elderly care. The panel's report on loneliness and isolation had been accepted by Executive and the Chair of OSB thanked the panel, and its officers, for their role in producing a well received report.
- The Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was undertaking an investigation into enrichment activities for children during the school holidays. The panel were to visit the Feast of Fun festival and establish if this could be rolled out across the town.
- The Health Scrutiny Panel had submitted the referral, regarding the proposed change to respite provision at Aysgarth and Banksfield, to the Secretary of State on the 26th August. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) confirmed to the panel they had also received the referral and it could take 3 months before a response was received. The Health Scrutiny panel would continue to monitor the situation.

NOTED