

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 28 February 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors M Storey (Chair), J Kabuye (Vice-Chair), I Blades, E Clynch, J Ewan, M McClintock, M Smiles and J Young

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors P Gavigan (Executive Member for Environment)

OFFICERS: G Field and S Bonner

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors J Banks, S Dean, J Platt, J Ryles and J Walker

23/65 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

23/66 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 7 FEBRUARY 2024**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 7 February 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

23/67 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive submitted a report which identified the forthcoming issues to be considered by the Executive, as outlined in Appendix A to the report. The report provided the Overview and Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to consider whether any item contained within the Executive Forward Work Programme should be considered by the Board or referred to a scrutiny panel.

NOTED

23/68 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - ENVIRONMENT**

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Environment and Director of Environment and Community Services to the meeting and invited the Executive Member to deliver his presentation.

The Executive Member pointed out he was responsible for Environment Services and all services associated with it. Such services included Waste Services, Area Care, School Catering and Highways.

The Executive Member's priorities were to increase the cleanliness of the town and its physical environment as well as the development and implementation of the green strategy. There was also a need to implement a new waste collection arrangement, although this was subject to budgetary decisions. Other priorities included increasing recycling rates, creating new back-alley cleaning arrangements and ensuring the Environment function played an active role in the implementation of the Neighbourhood model of working.

The Executive Member invited questions from the Board.

A Member queried if the Council operated a pest control service. It was clarified it did not operate a domestic pest control service but provided a small team that operated on Council owned land.

It was asked how many bins had been purchased as part of the budget proposals concerning waste collection. New garden waste bins had been purchased as exiting green waste bins used the diamond lift system whereas all other bins used the comb lift system. If the decision was made to implement a green waste charge, there were now bins available for deployment. One of the aims of purchasing the new bins was to unify the existing vehicle lift system as

different vehicles were being used for different tasks. The 240 litre residual waste bins were purchased in the event a decision was made to implement a fortnightly collection regime. If the decision was made not to move to fortnightly collections the new bins would be rolled out anyway. The bin purchases were part of the capital programme in December 2023.

The Member further queried that if a charge for green waste collection was introduced would existing green waste still be collected. A Member's briefing would be held about this but it was clarified the Council would still collect existing green waste for free, following which the chargeable services would be launched and the green waste bins would be issued. This was scheduled to be live by April 2024. It was also clarified that support would be provided through the contact centre for residents who were not confident with online registration for green waste. It was also clarified the diamond lift green waste bins would be collected and recycled.

A Member sought clarification on additional vehicles used to collect green waste bins. The vehicles had not come at extra expense and had been bought as part of the general refresh of waste collection vehicles. Again, this was due to the lift system moving from the diamond lift system to the comb lift system. A Member asked if there was a shortage of green waste bins as residents had been told they were on order when requested. No new diamond lift green waste bins had been ordered as the type of bin would depend on decision made at Council regarding waste collection arrangements.

A question was raised about grass cutting and if the issues experienced last year had been resolved. All grass cutting machines had been repaired and more services had been put in place to address grass cutting. It was also commented that unusual weather conditions the previous spring had led to accelerated grass growth.

Given 70% of Member queries were Environment based, a Member queried if responses to those queries could be improved. There had been an increase in the number of enquiries with reduced resource and, while improvements were being worked on, it was also hoped that the merging of Environment and Community Services would also improve this situation. This would also be helped with the introduction of Neighbourhood working.

A Member commented there seemed to be an increase in the number of green sacks left on the roadside by waste operatives. There was a concern this could be replicated by residents. It was clarified that more waste operatives were now on foot rather than in vans. This, sometimes, meant bags were left for collection. However, the Director of Environment and Community Services agreed to investigate the matter.

In terms of the Council's flood plan, it was commented this was not just about where flooding may occur, and the Council needed to look at this plan due to changing weather patterns. There had been a risk-based approach for drain cleansing, however this proved to be ineffective and a system of townwide drain cleansing would be implemented going forward.

A Member queried if chargeable green waste collection was introduced there would a range bins outside every house. This could lead to confusion on collection day due to misplaced bins. It was clarified that each bin would have sticker placed on it to identify it, and waste operatives would return bins that were clearly misplaced namely outside a neighbour's house.

A Member raised concerns about some residents that lived in end terraces having to acquire alley gate keys when this should not be required. The Director explained he would investigate this for the Member.

It was asked what Middlesbrough's recycling rate was. The Council's rate stood at approximately 31% was below the government's target. There was a need to improve this, not only for the green agenda, but also for residual waste. For example, the incinerator at Haverton Hill was coming to the end of its life. However, new waste management arrangements after this point would be nearly double the existing cost which added approximately £3million to the Council's budget. There were several initiatives to improve recycling rates, including the frequency of collection and effective communication. For example, the less often residual waste was collected the more people may recycle, with the example of some Welsh Councils collecting residual waste monthly. The Council was working with WRAP to try and improve recycling rates and had received approximately £940,000 to assist with food waste collection which will be introduced from 2026.

A Member queried what the timescale was for implementation of the Green Strategy. It was clarified the town should be carbon neutral by 2040 and that the largest carbon emissions were from traffic and homes. It was therefore important to implement strategies that reduced their carbon footprint.

A discussion took place regarding clear sacks for recycling purposes. It was commented that further education was required around recycling receptacles, and it had been found that when educational visits had been made to residents recycling rates had increased.

With regards to the Council's Tree Policy, it was confirmed that trees were only removed if the tree was seen to be dead, dying diseased or dangerous. It was also clarified that trees not meeting that criteria but close to a property would be cut back.

It was also clarified that in the event a decision was made to move to fortnightly bin collections residents would have the opportunity to buy an additional bin.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Environment and the Director of Environment and Community Services for their attendance.

NOTED

23/69

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW 2023/24

The Chair welcomed the Head of Legal (People) to the meeting and invited her to deliver her presentation. The Chair also thanked all those involved in Boundary Review and appreciated the report had been created in tight timescales.

Members were presented with the final draft of the Phase Two of the Local Government Ward Boundary Review report. Members were reminded of the timescales involved, namely the deadline for submission being 11 March 2024. Members attention was drawn to Appendix two of the report which contained the Ward proposals.

It was recognised that, for some of the proposals, electorate variances remained adrift of the ideal elector to councillor ratio. However, it was also recognised there was little that could be done about this.

The proposals contained in Appendix two of the report included wards in East Middlesbrough consisting of two-four Member wards and creation of Coulby Newham South and Easterside Wards. There had also been suggestions about changes to some ward names. The Chair emphasised that some of the electorate variances remained adrift of the ideal optimum ratio. It was also commented that all suggestions had been carefully considered but not every suggestion had been included for submission. The only suggestion that had not been recommended for submission was found at Appendix three of the report.

The Chair advised OSB the proposals in the report were to be considered as whole rather than an opportunity to provide iterative amendments at this stage. This had been carried out as part of the Member workshops. He also commented that the Boundary Commission would consider the Council's proposals and respond with their draft proposals in the summer.

It was commented the workshops followed the same format as previous Boundary Reviews and used data produced as part of the Phase One submission. As most wards were within an acceptable electorate to councillor ratio, only those wards that fell significantly outside this variance were considered during the workshops.

A conversation took place about the proposals in East Middlesbrough in which Members agreed the proposals more accurately reflected the communities of East Middlesbrough.

While concern was expressed about some of the electorate to councillor variances it was reiterated that Phase Two had concentrated on community characteristics.

Members were concerned that the work involved in creating the report would not be reflected to the Boundary Commission. The Chair advised that wording would be included in the final report submitted to Council that reflected this as much as possible.

ORDERED that the report be approved and submitted to Council on 8 March for final approval before being submitted to the Boundary Commission.

23/70

SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair invited scrutiny chairs to provide their updates.

The Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel advised a presentation would be delivered concerning new a Children's Homes policy and would be receiving information about school attendance rates.

The Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel advised they had received information from the Assistant Director of South Hams Council regarding shared Planning service. The Panel also intended to receive information relating to the future of the Captain Cook Birthplace museum.

The Chair of OSB advised Members that the panel's last meeting members had received an update regarding substance misuse and was due to receive information regarding avoidable deaths at its next meeting.

NOTED

23/71

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

None.