

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 26 July 2023.

PRESENT: Councillors M Storey (Chair), J Kabuye (Vice-Chair), I Blades, D Davison, S Dean, J Ewan, M McClintock, J Platt, M Smiles and J Walker

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor P Storey (Executive Member for Education and Culture)

OFFICERS: S Bonner, A Wilson, R Horniman and R Brown

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors J Banks, E Clynych and J Ryles

23/1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/ Nature of Interest
Cllr M McClintock	Non-Pecuniary	Item 8 - Executive Forward Work Programme (Disposal of Nunthorpe Grange Farm). Ward Councillor.
Cllr M Smiles	Non-Pecuniary	Item 8 - Executive Forward Work Programme (Disposal of Nunthorpe Grange Farm). Ward Councillor.

23/2 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 28 MARCH 2023**

The minutes of the OSB meeting held on 28 March 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

23/3 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 18 APRIL 2023**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18 April 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

23/4 **MINUTES - AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL - 23 FEBRUARY 2023**

The minutes of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 23 February 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

Members were advised that, following OSB's decision on 18 April 2023 to change the structure of the Council's Scrutiny Panels, OSB would carry out reviews that previously fell within the remit of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel.

ORDERED that the Homelessness review started under the Ad hoc Scrutiny Panel be continued by OSB. A work plan for the review to be submitted to the next meeting of OSB.

23/5 **MINUTES- CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - 23 MARCH 2023**

Members were advised that following OSB's decision of 18 April 2023 the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel had been retired. As such OSB were required to consider the minutes from the final meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

The minutes of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 23 March 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

At this point in the meeting the Chair thanked the previous Chair of OSB, Councillor Mick Saunders, for his stewardship of the Board over the previous four years.

NOTED

**** SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 5 - ORDER OF BUSINESS**

ORDERED: that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 5, the Committee agreed to vary the order of business to consider agenda item 11, Any Other Business, as the next item of business.

23/6 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

A proposed schedule of meeting dates for the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year was submitted for Members' consideration.

The Chair advised that to ensure all Members of OSB could attend future meetings, OSB would commence at 4.30pm.

ORDERED: that the proposed meeting dates for 2023/2024 be approved.

23/7 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - DEPUTY MAYOR AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Education and Culture and invited her to deliver her presentations.

The Executive Member stated she had three presentations to deliver each covering a different part of her portfolio. Within the Education and Partnerships element of her portfolio there were several opportunities that could be capitalised on, which included creating a constructive dialogue with schools to understand local need. This also applied to special schools to address SEND needs.

There was also a need to support and challenge schools on their exclusion policies, as well as promoting inclusion and improving outcomes for young people in the town.

The Council had an opportunity to maximise Family Hubs which could be used to engage with families and work with them to break down access barriers. The Hubs could also be useful in acting as a link between Health and Education priorities.

Youth Justice was another important opportunity which included driving the delivery of the Youth Justice Plan and strengthening partnerships that could support delivery of shared agendas.

The Executive Member proceeded to outline the priorities within her portfolio area. These included supporting schools to improve the attendance for all children particularly the most vulnerable; increasing the number of SEND children and young people in mainstream settings; and improving parenting support and the home learning experience to support children's learning and development.

A key priority was the establishment of the permanent Outwood Riverside School.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for the first part of her presentation and invited questions from the Board.

A Member queried how the Council would ensure a permanent school for Outwood Riverside. It was clarified this would primarily be achieved by working with the Department for Education (DfE). When questioned about the timescales involved the Executive Member confirmed it was important the Secretary of State expedited the process. This was due to the permanent school's start date being 2026.

A Member commented the Council was not directly responsible for all Primary and Secondary schools in Middlesbrough. The Member queried how the Council could contribute to improving Ofsted ratings. The Executive Member responded that reducing the number of exclusions was a high priority as this would help both young people and schools themselves.

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Members queried how many students were occupying the temporary Outwood Riverside site at Russell Street. It was confirmed 445 students were occupying the current site. The Chair commented that despite the difficult circumstances the school received positive Ofsted ratings and the teaching staff at Outwood Riverside should be congratulated for this.

Regarding how an increase in SEND provision would work the Executive Member advised there was a need for mainstream schools to offer SEND provision. The rationale for this included the number of excluded children excluded with additional needs. Therefore, by encouraging mainstream schools to increase their SEND provision it was hoped the number of exclusions could be reduced. It was also confirmed there was some funding available for young people with additional needs. However, more young people were being diagnosed with additional needs and, as such, service provision bottleneck was being experienced. Analysis in Middlesbrough had shown the best solution was to meet additional needs in the classroom, complemented by a SEND base which would remain within the mainstream setting and then ultimately a special school.

A Member raised the matter of Music Education but was advised this would be covered later in the meeting.

It was asked how the Council was dealing with high exclusion rates. It was commented the exclusion rates remained high and that a conference for all Chief Executives of local school trusts was being held in October 2023. It was commented the Council's Inclusion Strategy was making an impact in certain places, but exclusions remained too high. It was also confirmed the Council had bid for approximately £1 million of workforce development funding to help support schools on this matter.

It was noted existing special schools were working collaboratively with mainstream schools to provide expertise where possible.

The Chair commented he was pleased to see the introduction of Family Hubs. He went on to say one of the worst elements of the austerity agenda was the closure of Sure Start centres as such centres provided a wraparound service. It was queried what the Family Hubs would offer and if any distinction could be made between them and Sure Start centres. The Executive Member clarified the Family Hubs would adopt a similar approach to what was offered by Sure Start but they would also act as a first step for families requiring early intervention.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for her presentation to that point in the meeting and invited her to continue.

The Executive Member proceeded to discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with the cultural element of her portfolio. OSB was advised Cultural Services comprised several elements. It provided sector leadership, leading on cultural partnerships, cultural funding bids and liaison with the Arts Council. The Council had several cultural venues including the Town Hall, Middlesbrough Theatre, Newham Grange and the Dorman Museum. This was in addition to Stewart and Albert parks.

Cultural Services were also responsible for several high-profile events and functions including the Orange Pip Market; Mela; Teesside Archives and various arts and music projects.

Cultural priorities for the Executive Member included extended use of the Town Hall, the creation of an independent quarter and making Middlesbrough the heart of artistic and community creativity.

It was queried if there were specific plans to improve the safety of all parks as some, including Pallister Park, seemed to have been neglected when compared to others. It was recognised extra funding was needed to ensure all open spaces in the town were fit-for-purpose and safe for all ages.

It was queried how use of the Town Hall could be extended, and what cost implications there could be. The Executive Member confirmed that ideally the Town Hall should be used all the time and was currently being used by music groups. It was felt that while there was an events schedule for the Town Hall it may be beneficial for a day-time schedule that could be shared with Councillors.

A Member commented there were approximately 600 students learning classical instruments during the school day for no charge. Those arrangements were put in place following financial contributions from the Council, Schools and charities. When asked if this arrangement would continue the Executive Member confirmed she was in discussions with relevant stakeholders, including Teesside Music Service, to try and secure a long-term future for this provision.

The Chair queried if there was any scope to expand the use of the Fire Station and Court Room venue, which had been the recipient of lottery heritage funding. It was confirmed those areas were used but improvements could be made to improve their popularity. The Executive Member agreed to provide attendance figures for the Court Room and Fire Station venues.

The Chair also suggested that the Carriageway Café could be operated as a bar, as it was currently not in use. It was confirmed this was being considered which could potentially include a mobile bar that could be taken to events such as the Orange Pip market.

From an inclusion perspective, it was queried if there was a plan to increase participation by people from BAME backgrounds in cultural events. While there were prospective plans in place these were subject to funding. The Director of Regeneration commented the Town Hall had set up a steering group as it was a National Portfolio Organisation. It was commented that inclusion was a strand of activity that needed a plan as the Arts Council had challenged the Council on this issue.

The Director was also keen to seek suggestions from OSB about how the Town Hall could be used to attract the widest possible range of customer.

It was confirmed that tours of the Town Hall still took place. A discussion took place regarding the Town Hall as a venue and how it should be utilised more.

The Chair invited the Executive Member to deliver the final part of her presentation.

The Executive Member advised OSB that part of her portfolio included developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy. Developing the Strategy involved a multi-departmental approach including Public Health, Education and Environment. Each department was able to contribute to the Anti-Poverty Strategy via the Live Well Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as well as Family Hubs and Locality Working.

The Executive Member's priorities for the Strategy included continued work with the Middlesbrough Truth Poverty Commission, to give Middlesbrough a voice on the Northeast Child Poverty Commission, and to work with the Institute on Public Policy Research on their poverty analysis.

A Member queried how Middlesbrough compared to other areas regarding poverty. It was clarified the town and certain wards, such as North Ormesby and Central, were deeply affected by poverty and particularly child poverty. It was also clarified the Anti-Poverty Strategy was at an early stage with lots of information gathering taking place.

The Chair commented there was a link between austerity and poverty and queried what joined-up work was taking place to combat poverty in Middlesbrough. It was clarified that key stakeholders were being contacted, including the MVDA, to understand what work needed to be carried out. It was also commented that other Councils faced similar problems as Middlesbrough who were developing similar anti-poverty strategies.

The Executive Member also clarified the Middlesbrough Poverty Truth Commission was part of LocalMotion, a new organisation that would act as the voice for the poorest in the town. When fully structured the organisation would include a range of stakeholders including representatives from the Council and the charity sector.

Given that poverty was a cross-cutting issue, the Chair suggested that all Council report templates be updated to demonstrate how decisions have an impact on poverty in the town.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Education and Culture for her presentations.

ORDERED that:

1. Visitor statistics for the Fire Station and Court Room in the Town Hall be provided to OSB;
2. All Council reports include how decisions impact poverty in Middlesbrough;
3. The presentations delivered be circulated to OSB; and
4. The information presented be noted.

23/8

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.

OSB agreed the Forward Plan be submitted to them electronically on a weekly basis. The Chair advised members that any questions about the Forward Plan could be raised with him in the first instance.

ORDERED that:

1. The Executive Forward Plan be circulated to OSB on a weekly basis; and
2. The information presented in the report be noted.

23/9

MIDDLESBROUGH BOUNDARY REVIEW 2023

The Chair welcomed the Head of Legal Services (People) and invited her to deliver her presentation.

OSB was advised the Local Government Boundary Commission looked at electoral arrangements for a local authority. This included the number of Councillors, polling places and so on.

One of the reasons Middlesbrough was undergoing the review was due to electoral inequality. This was the result of population changes since the previous review with the review examining if the number of electors per Councillor was still relevant. There were some wards that had experienced significant population changes, including Stainton and Thornton.

A Member queried how population variation affected the review. The Head of Legal Services explained that population variance was not an exact science and the review considered different factors in the area. At this point in the meeting, it was agreed the presentation slides would be sent to OSB.

It was explained the Boundary Review was split into two phases. The first phase was a data gathering exercise and included statistical data including the number of Councillors and a geocoded electoral register. This process was at a preliminary stage and needed to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by the end of October 2023.

OSB's role in the Boundary Review was also explained to Members. One of the first tasks for OSB would be to consider the report containing the result of the data gathering exercise. The report would consider several factors including the role of a Councillor in Middlesbrough, the Council's committee structure and electorate projections.

Members were also advised there was a guidance document about the review that had been circulated following an all-Member briefing. The Head of Legal Services agreed to circulate this to OSB following the meeting.

It was suggested that phase two of the Boundary Review could cause the most issues, and it would be this phase where OSB needed to actively engage with the process. Members were advised that any recommendations would come into force in 2027.

The first draft of the phase one submission would be brought to OSB on 20 September with the final draft being submitted at the 18 October meeting.

A Member queried what work was being done to increase the number of residents on the electoral register. It was confirmed a lot of work had been undertaken in the lead up to the local elections as well as the annual canvass. It was also discussed that non-registration was a significant problem in some parts of the town, though this was a national issue.

The Head of Legal Services was asked if the Council's budgetary constraints played a factor in the review process. It was explained the Council's budgetary position was not a consideration for the Boundary Commission. However, until the data had been gathered and analysed it was impossible to know how the results of the review would impact on the Council's financial position.

It was discussed if the final proposal would contain a defined proposal or several different proposals.

The Chair commented the recommendations of the previous Boundary Review were based on the Council's input but there was also political group input.

It was also queried if the recommendations would be in place for 10 years. It was clarified that while this was the norm, the time period between reviews was not set in stone as other factors could trigger further reviews. It was also commented that using only electoral register data may leave gaps in the resulting proposal. It was clarified that some data was census driven.

The Chair commented that one of the driving factors behind the review was the population variance in the Stainton and Thornton Ward since the last review. It was also commented that, at first glance, the data suggested an additional Councillor may be required. However, it would be for the outcome of the review to determine this as there were other factors that contributed to the final recommendations.

The Chair also commented that for Parliamentary Boundary reviews there was an ideal number of electors per constituency and queried if a similar number was required for local government boundary reviews. The Head of Legal Services was not aware of such a figure but would find this information and advise the Board accordingly. The Chair also emphasised an earlier point that the electorate was not the same as the population and this needed to be considered in any discussions that took place.

A member queried if levels of deprivation or need would be a contributory factor when determining levels of representation. It was confirmed information about deprivation levels would be added to the report that was brought back to OSB.

The Chair thanked the Head of Legal Services for her presentation.

ORDERED that:

1. The slides presented be circulated to OSB;
2. The Boundary Review guidance for Members be circulated to OSB;
3. That a distinction be made between population and electorate statistics in the report brought back to OSB; and
4. The information presented be noted.

23/10

SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair advised OSB that Scrutiny Panel Chairs were expected to attend all meetings where possible in order to deliver their respective Scrutiny Chair's updates. In the event Scrutiny Chairs could not attend, the relevant Vice Chair would be expected to attend on their behalf to deliver the update.

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel advised OSB that the Panel had met in July and received an overview of the Service Area by officers. The Chair commented the Panel was surprised at the breadth of services offered by Adult Social Care and Health Integration. At its next meeting on September 12 the Panel would be setting its work programme with many suggested review topics coming from Councillors. One topic was social housing, of which there was a shortage, particularly for older people. The Panel was keen to explore how older people could be independent in their own homes for longer.

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As Vice Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel, the Chair of OSB advised Members the Health Scrutiny Panel had met on 15 June and received the South Tees Trust's Quality Accounts. The Trust had been rated "Good" in a lot of areas by the CQC which was a significant improvement on its previous rating. The Panel had also met on 10th July where representatives of the Foundations Trust were in attendance to discuss the notice that had been served on the Foundations Practice and what impact this would have on residents, especially those with substance misuse issues. While it was concerning the service would be lost, it was confirmed there were provisions in place to fill the service gap. The Panel also received a wide-ranging overview of services from Public Health and the Integrated Care Board.

The Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel advised Members the Panel had met on 19 July where it had received a service update from the Director of Regeneration. The Panel learned the Regeneration department covered a wide range of services including Planning and Economic Growth, as well as creative partnerships. The Panel had not agreed on topics as these would be discussed at the Panel's next meeting. The Panel had agreed to discuss the Local Plan and what would be contained in it.

NOTED