DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a Meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 16 September 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:
Councillors P Stradling, H Bennett, B Graham, J Hillary, A Hopgood, T Nearney, M Nicholls, J Turnbull and S Wilson

Faith Community Representative:
Mrs M Elliott

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Adam, A Batey, R Bell, J Blakey, D Boyes, K Corrigan, P Lawton, J Lethbridge, C Potts, J Robinson and A Shield.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on the 17 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Referring to points raised from the minutes of the meeting held on the 17 June 2016, the Head of Planning and Performance provided the following updates:-

- Item 7 paragraph 2 regarding fuel poverty figures, discussions had taken place with the Housing Regeneration Project Manager and Housing Manager. National data had not been released resulting in data lags which would be monitored. Councillor Graham advised that an update on fuel poverty was to be presented to Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 18 November and Councillor Hopgood was welcome to attend the meeting.
- Item 7 paragraph 3 regarding savings on land fill tax, the matter had been referred to the Head of Projects and Business Services and Councillor Martin received a comprehensive response. The next waste update was to be presented to Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 7 October and he was welcome to attend the meeting.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Implications for Durham County Council of the Government's Policy Programme

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided an update on the implications of the Government's policy programme, major policy developments and announcements and provided an analysis of the implications for the Council and County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Public Relations and Policy Manager highlighted the most significant announcements since the last report to Members which relate to the following:

- European Union exit next steps;
- Budget 2016;
- Queen's speech;
- Education White Paper;
- National funding formula for schools;
- Devolution;
- Planning and housing;
- Adoption;
- Health and social care funding;
- Benefit Cap;
- Modern crime strategy;
- Parliamentary boundary changes review;
- Local Government Transparency Code.

The Corporate Public Relations and Policy Manager advised that matters had progressed significantly since the Cabinet report was produced. The government announced that £3.5b in public sector spending savings need to be found by 2020. The proposal regarding welfare spending cuts of £4.4b had been dropped and the government would confirm in the autumn statement on the 23 November how the gap would be met.

It was reported that the Education White Paper highlighted the quality of education across the county. The intention was to move towards an academy system with state schools becoming academies and the role of local authority moving away from provision. The Board were informed that a consultation paper titled Schools that work for everyone was published on the 12 September and runs to December 2016.

The Board were informed that a decision was made on the 17 May 2016 by the North East Combined Authority to move to the next stage of the process. A number of authorities felt that the European funding programme was not sufficient and only had assurances up to the autumn statement. The Secretary of State has put a hold on legislation with the possibility of a new legislation programme following government elections next year.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the national funding formulas (NFF) for schools and highlighted some would be significantly worse off than others. She asked if there were plans in place to prepare for the situation. The Corporate Public Relations Manager advised that an officer working group was looking at NFF which was a two stage consultation process. The financial consequences would not be known until government considered feedback from the first phase of consultation. An update would be reported to the Board.

Resolved:
That the information contained in the report and the actions taken to anticipate and respond to the government's reforms be noted.

6 Update on the Delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 6

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided an update on the progress made at the end of June 2016 on the delivery of the 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP6) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance reported that the MTFP6 was agreed by Council in February 2016 and for 2016/17 the savings target was just over £28million, which forms part of the overall savings target for the period from 2011/12 to 2019/20 of around £250million.

It was reported by the end of June 2016, over 80% of the savings target for MTFP6 had already been met with £22.5million of savings having been achieved. The total savings delivered since April 2011 was over £180million and the identification of proposals for future savings was becoming increasingly challenging.

Resolved:
That the information contained in the report and the progress made in delivering the MTFP6 be noted.

7 County Durham Partnership Update

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided an update on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP) including key issues from the Board, the five thematic partnerships and all Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). The report also included updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the County (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Partnerships and Local Councils Officer highlighted priorities and key areas of focus carried out within the County Partnership in recent months.

The Chairman commented that AAPs were working and advised that Mid Durham AAP had secured lottery funding for a new community centre which was now complete. Councillor Hillary added that Great Aycliffe were in discussions with Durham County Council to purchase HR advice, support and a procurement agreement.

Councillor Hopgood commented on the difference the Mini Police were making in communities and congratulated them on winning the Problem-oriented Partnership (POP) award recently. She added that PC Craig Johnson was taking the project countywide and now included dozens of schools across County Durham and was attracting national interest.

Councillor Nearney acknowledged the exceptional work that AAPs were doing. He felt that more quantative data for communicating changing priorities would be beneficial. He referred to the regeneration of AAP areas and suggested that it would be more efficient to publish criteria as there was potential for overlap. The Principal Partnerships and Local Councils Officer advised that she would feed comments back to the Head of Partnership and Community Engagement.

Councillor Graham referred to the Kynren Programme and the presentation delivered to AAPs was well received. She was interested to know the effect the programme has had on the local economy and the knock on effect for surrounding areas. The Chairman advised that an evaluation report would be produced in due course.

Resolved:
That the information contained in the report be noted.

8 Quarter 1 2016/17 Performance Management Report

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs), Council Plan and service plan actions and report other performance issues for the first quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, covering the period April to June 2016. A presentation was given by the Head of Planning and Performance (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

There was discussion on crime figures, with the Police and Crime Commissioner publishing a press release on changes in recording which would be circulated to the Board.

In response to a query from Councillor Hillary regarding Child protection figures and the theme to achieve 100% of reviews completed within required timescales. The Head of Planning and Performance assured that appropriate action would be taken to address any areas of underperformance and advised that it was important to monitor that it was not the same families being affected.

The Chairman advised that he had spoken with the Interim Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service regarding social worker caseloads, training and backup. He was keen for Scrutiny to do further work on the issue and suggested that a member seminar be arranged and an induction package for new members be produced in order for all members to understand their responsibility as corporate parents.

Councillor Nearney was concerned with the drop in the number of people successfully completing alcohol treatment. He advised that Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had looked at the issue previously and assured that alcohol treatment was taken very seriously and would be looked at again.

A typographical error was highlighted in paragraph 44 (iii) of the report which should have read ‘non opiate use’.

Councillor S Wilson referred to drug treatments and requested data on the levels of recreational and serious use.

Councillor Hopgood referred to affordable housing and questioned the viability of affordable house prices as some housing sites were in the region of £300,000. She asked that council policy be looked at to include off site development sites in order for affordable housing to be priced more appropriately. The Chairman would refer the matter to the Head of Planning and Assets.

Councillor Hillary was pleased that staff appraisal figures were moving in the right direction and the sickness absence figures were encouraging.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the increase in fly-tipping incidents and questioned whether the reason was related to the new way in which permits were obtained for vans and trailers. She advised that every single item had to be itemised as well as the quantity of each item and felt that the system should be simpler, not more difficult. Councillor Graham commented that the number of fly-tipping instances reduced when CCTV cameras were installed and that the increase in incidents from the last quarter was mainly in relation to white goods and fridges as they have little value to scrap collectors. The Chairman advised that the matter would be monitored and waste permit concerns would be referred to the Head of Projects and Business Services.

Resolved:

i) That the performance of the council at quarter one and the actions to remedy under performance be noted;
ii) That the changes to the Council Plan outlined in the report be noted.

9 Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Plan (7)

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided an update on the proposed approach to scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 – 2019/20 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance reported that a report went to Cabinet in July 2016 that set out the details on the development of the 2017/18 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP7) and Council Plan/Service Plans 2017/18 to 2019/20.

It was proposed that a Special Joint meeting of Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board was to be held on 27 September 2016 to discuss the MTFP7 where members would be able to identify any queries or areas requiring supplementary information.

The Head of Planning and Performance asked that any queries be submitted prior to the special meeting on the 27 September in order to have the response at the meeting.

Resolved:

i) That the detailed scrutiny of the MTFP be referred to the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as per the terms of reference of that committee;
ii) That a Special Joint Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be held on 27 September 2016 to discuss the information in the July Cabinet Report.

10 Notice of Key Decisions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that provided a list of key decisions that were scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy see file of minutes).

The Senior Committee Services Officer reported that since the last update there had been the following movement in items being considered at Cabinet:-

i) Review of the Durham Key Options Letting Policy - moved from September and would be considered at Cabinet in October 2016;
ii) Council Tax Base 2017/18 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on Collection Fund – new to the plan for November 2016;
iii) 2017/18 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget MFTF7, Council Plans and Service Plans – new to the plan for December 2016.

Resolved:
That the information contained in the report be noted.

11 Information update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that provided an update of overview and scrutiny activity from the June to September 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chairman informed the Board that a site visit to Northumberland County Council had been arranged for Thursday 22 September to look at their CRM system. He asked if any members would like to attend to contact the Scrutiny Team.

Resolved:
That the information contained in the report be noted.