

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 **Thursday 18 December 2014 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Batey, R Bell, A Bonner, D Boyes, K Corrigan, R Crute, B Graham, D Hall, A Hopgood, P Lawton, J Lethbridge, L Pounder, M Simmons, R Todd and J Turnbull

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Henig, T Nearney, C Potts, A Shield, S Wilson and Revd K Phipps

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Head of Planning and Performance referred to Item 6 of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2014 and advised that Councillor S Wilson had been provided with the information on the new family test criteria on the 19 November 2014.

Referring to Item 8 of the minutes, the Committee Services Manager informed the Board that the issues raised, had been considered by the Constitution Working Group and the Executive agreed that they would discuss this further with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Children's Centre Review Consultation Process

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided background information relating to the presentation on the Children's Centre Review consultation process. A presentation was given by the Head of Children's Services (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

The Head of Children's Services reported that the public consultation ran for 12 weeks from 31 July to 23 October 2014, which was extended due to school holidays. The two proposals consulted on were the community delivery model, putting services closer to families and the 15 from 43 Children's Centres it was proposed to retain.

In response to a question from Councillor A Bonner regarding evaluating responses from those that presently do not use the Children's Centres, the Head of Children's Services advised that the feedback would differentiate and reflect between users and non users.

Councillor R Bell commented that he would be interested to see the feedback regarding access in rural areas. The Head of Children's Services advised that they were aware of the rural issues and when they present the analysis, emphasis would be given on transport and outreach.

The Head of Children's Services responded to a question from Councillor D Boyes regarding the methodology and if equal weight would be given to responses, she advised that they would be ranked by a traffic light system and the decision would be pragmatic and balanced with the strength of public feeling.

Councillor Lethbridge commented that Woodhouse Close had multiple deprivation issues and asked for assurances on the future of that building and what services would be there. The Head of Children's Services advised that information on this would be available shortly. She pointed out that other Authorities were closing centres whereas Durham were finding suitable uses for buildings and services would still be provided.

Councillor A Hopgood agreed that the consultation had been extremely robust and commented that she was awaiting feedback to compare the outcome of the consultation to the original report.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

6 Update on the Delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 4

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update on the progress made at the end of September 2014 on the delivery of the 2014/15 to 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 4) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Policy and Communications reported that the Council remains in a strong position to meet the current financial challenges and the approach of early planning and

robustly managing the implementation of the changes ensures that the council remains ahead of the savings target requirements.

The Council has delivered £18.8m of savings for 2014/15 (82% of the £23m target) which amounts to almost £133m of savings made since 2011.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report and the progress being made in delivering the MTFP4 be noted.

7 Quarter 2 2014/15 Performance Management

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs) and reported other significant performance issues for the second quarter of 2014/15. A presentation was given by the Head of Planning and Performance (for copy of report and slides, see file of minutes).

In response to a question from Councillor R Bell regarding the definition of victim based crime, the Head of Planning and Performance advised that a document with the definitions would be provided.

Referring to the overall crime levels, Councillor D Boyes expressed disappointment that the figures had risen, however acknowledged the improvement in fast tracking anti social behaviour incidents and alcohol related crimes.

Councillor A Hopgood added that there had been improvements in reporting crime with the introduction of the 101 non-emergency number, resulting in the increase of instances being reported by people who previously would not call the 999 emergency number.

Referring to fly tipping concerns, Councillor D Boyes suggested that the situation would be alleviated if the fee for removal was abolished. The Chairman advised that it was the remit of the Cabinet portfolio holder to look into further actions on this.

Councillor A Hopgood added that an officer group were looking into fly tipping issues and suggested that they explore the costs associated with retrieving the collection fee and the cost of clearing the discarded items.

In response to a query from Councillor D Hall regarding the 'looked after children' figures, the Head of Planning and Performance advised that the service has an early help strategy in place which was designed to help families early to prevent children being taken into care.

Referring to the increase in people killed or injured in road traffic accidents, Councillor A Batey suggested more should be done in schools to educate young people on speed awareness, especially teenagers in order for them to become safer drivers. The Chairman advised that a Safer and Stronger working group would be looking at the issue.

Councillor A Hopgood highlighted that the Authority were performing well with regards to rent arrears and working closer with families, however, was concerned that the appraisal figures were under-performing. The Chairman advised that the Head of Human Resources would be attending the next meeting of Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be able to answer any queries.

Councillor J Lethbridge commented that misuse of IT was causing major issues for the police in relation to social media and has connections with antisocial behaviour and self-harm. The Chairman highlighted that the Durham Police are the only outstanding force in the region for investigation and have seen crime levels reduce. They have achieved results and continue to keep neighbourhood policing at the forefront.

Members discussed the unemployment rate and factors around youth unemployment, education, skills development and creating opportunities. The Chairman advised that extensive work had been carried out by the Economy and Enterprise Committee to address the issues.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

8 Notice of Key Decisions

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

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

- 2015/16 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget and MTFP 5 and Council Plan and Service Plans had been added for consideration in January and February;
- Atom Bank Scheme and Bishop Auckland Regeneration Framework Review had been added to the plan for February;
- Housing Stock Transfer Update had been moved to February, with a completion update being reported in May;
- Framework for the Future Provision of Fixed Play Sites had been removed from the notice with the date to be confirmed due to consultation with members.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Committee Services Manager advised that the purdah period would commence from the 30 March 2015, and advice was being provided to services on how it affected reporting at committees.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

9 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that provided an update of overview and scrutiny activity between October and December 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

The Chairman agreed that in order to keep members informed, the next item of business could be reported.

10 Review of Current Policy on 20mph Speed Limits

The Chairman advised that Cabinet considered a report on the Review of Current Policy on 20mph Speed Limits and informed the Board that a scrutiny review group would be set up through the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Committee and asked that members get involved in the review process.