

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 12 February 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Stradling, E Adam, A Batey, H Bennett, R Crute, B Graham, K Henig, J Hillary, A Hopgood, J Lethbridge, T Nearney, M Nicholls, L Pounder, M Simmons, J Turnbull and J Lindsay (substitute for S Wilson)

Also Present:

N Martin and M Wilkes

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bell, D Boyes, K Corrigan, S Forster, P Lawton, C Potts and S Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor J Lindsay, substitute for Councillor S Wilson.

3 Minutes

Minutes of the meetings held on the 10 December and 17 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Referring to the recommendation from the minutes of the meeting held on the 10 December 2015, the Head of Planning and Performance advised that a further update report on progress made against the implementation timetable of the new DLI collection management arrangements was scheduled for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on the 22 March 2016.

Referring to points raised from the minutes of the meeting held on the 17 December 2015, the Head of Planning and Performance provided the following updates:-

- Item 6 paragraph 2 – information had been provided to Councillor Crute. With the introduction of Universal Credit, there would be some changes in the way statistics would be reported. Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny would be kept fully informed;
- Item 6 paragraph 3 – a meeting had been arranged for the 9 March 2016 with Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs to review the work programme;

- Item 6 paragraph 4 – a breakdown on the type of offences committed had been provided to Councillor Batey;
- Item 6 paragraph 5 – the Employability Manager spoke to Councillor Hopgood directly regarding external funding to support the apprenticeship scheme;
- Item 7 paragraph 6 – a response had been received from the Legal Manager, Governance and Elections regarding the Protocol for Cabinet questions and would be forwarded to Councillor Hopgood following the meeting;
- Item 8 paragraph 3 - the Chairman asked that Councillor Hopgood put her concerns regarding the Notice of Key Decisions in writing and would be raised at the Constitution Working Group.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman advised that the order of business be amended to allow item 7 on the Agenda to be considered first.

5 County Durham Partnership Update

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive 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.

Councillor Nearney referred to Bishop Paul Butler's speech regarding AAPs in the House of Lords and asked that appreciation to members of staff involved in achieving national recognition be placed on record.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

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

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive 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:

- Budget 2015;
- Queen's speech;
- Summer budget 2015;
- Northern Powerhouse and devolution;
- Productivity Plan;
- Youth Employment Initiative;
- European Union membership;
- Welfare reform and tax credit changes;
- Counter terrorism;
- Spending Review 2015.

Councillor Adam referred to the social housing changes and the pay to stay proposals and asked how the council would be monitoring the impact in the future. The Corporate Public Relations and Policy Manager advised that the poverty action group would be looking at local implications and would report to Cabinet as the information comes through.

Referring to paragraph 38 of the report regarding devolution deals, and bidding rounds for more enterprise zones, Councillor Nearney asked if there was any indication on what would be available. The Chairman commented that there were many work streams looking at details relating to the settlement, discussions regarding enterprise zones had not taken place at this stage of the process. Councillor Crute added that there was limited incentive on Enterprise Zones and referred to national figures. He advised that situation would be monitored closely.

Councillor Hopgood asked if the council's view was to support staying or leaving the European Union and if plans were in place if the outcome of the Referendum was to leave the EU. The Chairman responded that this was a question for the leadership to consider. Councillor Hopgood further enquired, linked to paragraph 139 of the report, what would be the impact if every school became an academy; the Chairman asked that this be taken back through the relevant scrutiny committee for consideration.

Councillor K Henig enquired if there was any further detail regarding fracking in the County. Councillor Martin indicated that he had been advised that County Durham was not a frackable area.

In response to comments from Councillor Lethbridge regarding flooding issues, the Chairman advised that there had been a special Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny meeting on the 8 February 2016 to discuss flooding risk management.

Councillor Wilkes referred to paragraph 142 of the report and expressed concern regarding schemes being delayed due to the European funding still not being released. Councillor Crute added that there had been delays in receiving the structural fund costing millions with the exchange rate. The Chairman replied that the detail on delivery would be reported to Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee and he would feedback progress.

Resolved:

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

7 Update on Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2016/17

The Board considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that advised of the detailed report of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20 (MTFP(6)) and Revenue and Capital Budget 2016/17 had been delayed due to the Council not yet receiving its final grant settlement figures (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that the final settlement figures were received on the 8 February and full details of MTFP (6) and the revenue and capital budgets for 2016/17 would be considered at a Special Cabinet meeting on the 17 February 2016. Arrangements had therefore been made for a Special Joint Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, and Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the 19 February 2016.

Resolved:

That a detailed MTFP (6) and 2016/17 Budget report be circulated when available, before a special OSMB/Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee meeting on 19 February 2016, to enable scrutiny of the MTFP.

8 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 the next notice of key decisions was due to be published on the 16 February 2016 and since the last update there had been the following movement in items being considered at Cabinet:-

- New to the plan for Cabinet in May 2016 - Office Accommodation Final Business Case.

The Chairman advised that the accommodation working group had visited North Tyneside and Redcar Council Offices in January for a tour of the facilities and the next stage was to consult with architects to evaluate members' requirements.

In response to a query from Councillor Wilkes regarding the date that the County Durham Plan was to be considered by Cabinet, the Head of Planning and Performance clarified that the date change should have been identified as a change to the plan.

Councillor Hopgood asked if Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny were looking into the detail of the County Durham Plan and not just monitoring progress. The Chairman advised that all aspects were being considered by planners and more evidence was being added to the plan. He requested that further information be provided to the next Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

9 Update in relation to Petitions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that provided an update on the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of minutes).

The Senior Committee Services Officer reported that since the last update, 2 e-petitions had been submitted, of these, 1 did not qualify under the Council's Petition Scheme, however information had been passed to the relevant Service, and 1 e-petition on free busses for Durham was live on the council's website. She added that 3 new paper petitions had been received, and 6 had completed the process.

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

10 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 from December 2015 to February 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.