

COUNCIL

14 APRIL 2011

REPORT ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

Author: Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services

Summary

This report provides a summary of the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees since the last report to Council on 3 March 2011.

1. Policy and Budget Framework

1.1 The Council's constitution allows for reports on overview and scrutiny (O&S) activity to be reported to Council meetings.

2. Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2.1 22 March 2011

2.1.1. Attendance of the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council gave a presentation and responded to Members' questions on:

- Local elections in May 2011 with a combined poll for a national referendum on the Alternative Vote system for General Elections taking place at the same time
- The annual audit of the register of electors
- Members' allowance reductions
- Reduction of one post in Democratic Services and subsequent reduction in number of meetings
- The Localism Bill
- The requirement for a Health and Wellbeing Board
- Areas within Medway covered by the personal canvass
- Cross-reference between residents paying Council tax but not appearing on the electoral register

2.1.2. Quarter 3 Council Plan monitoring 2010/2011

The Committee considered the report and, given its overarching responsibility for scrutiny of performance, discussed indicators not on target for achievement at the end of quarter 3 (December 2010). These included:

- Timeliness of child protection assessments
- The number of personal budgets put in place
- Carer's assessments
- The number of people with a learning disability in employment

Officers were asked to respond to a number of queries and suggestions made during the meeting. Members were keen that future measures of success look at the difference to quality of life that council services achieve.

2.1.3. 6 month review of the Council's corporate business risk register

The Quality Assurance and Client Manager introduced the report and put forward two changes to the risk register by the risk owners as follows:

- SR21 Procurement – to be downgraded from A2 to C2 as most of the mitigating actions had been implemented
- SR23 Improvement Plan for Housing Service (HRA) – to be downgraded from C1 to E2 to reflect that the majority of actions identified in an inspection had been completed.

2.1.4. Housing Asset Management Strategy and Business Plan

A number of amendments to the Housing Asset Management Strategy were suggested and officers were requested to take note of them. In particular, Members requested the involvement of a representative from each political group on the Housing Asset Management Board. Officers were also requested to consider a number of other suggestions from Members.

Members requested that the Business Plan is reported to the Committee for consideration once finalised together with a review of the Housing Asset Management Strategy.

2.1.5. Housing Services Tenants' Incentive Reward Scheme

The Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services introduced the report and gave examples of different schemes in operation elsewhere and the criteria that was applied. One suggestion from tenants was for a handyman service to be available as part of the reward scheme. The Committee welcomed the scheme and felt that good tenants should be recognised. Officers were requested to draft a Tenants' Reward Scheme in consultation with the Tenants' Scrutiny Panel and residents.

3. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3.1 1 March 2011

3.1.1. Countering bullying

Representatives from a wide range of organisations, partners and schools connected with countering bullying took part in the theme of the meeting to explain their roles and the work currently being undertaken in Medway to prevent bullying.

The Members of the countering bullying task group fed back on their findings and then the Committee asked officers and external representatives present a number of questions particularly in relation to

- Support in mainstream schools
- Education and communication with young people and signposting to various organisations
- Involvement of GPs in relation to bullying and emotional well-being issues
- How the local authority can support partners with their work in countering bullying

As a result of the discussion a number of recommendations were made to Cabinet which are summarised as follows:

- Revisions to Medway's Anti-bullying and Harrassment Policy and Guidelines
- To encourage schools to work in partnership with the council in relation to accessing anti-bullying support and guidance and to allocate time and resources in adopting methods of good practice in relation to countering bullying, such as having a countering bullying champion
- To suggest that officers consider ways of promoting the use of technology to broadcast the message around countering bullying.

3.1.2. Work programme

Discussion took place about the cancellation of the meeting scheduled for 5 April 2011 and it was agreed that if Professor Munro's final report was released before the local elections a briefing note would be sent to the Committee.

Further briefings would be provided on safeguarding and Members' role as corporate parents after the local elections.

The Director of Children and Adults, in consultation with the Chairman and spokespersons of the Committee, was given authority to consider the consultation on the NHS National Review of Paediatric Cardiac Surgical Services in England and forward any comments to the South East Coast Health Overview and Scrutiny network.

It was agreed to disband the Child Protection Monitoring Group but to continue the scrutiny of safeguarding children along the following lines:

- Holding the Medway Safeguarding Children Board to account twice a year;
- Holding the Portfolio Holders for Children's Services (lead member) and Children's Social Care to account once a year;
- Scrutinising performance monitoring for all areas within children's services, including safeguarding, on a quarterly basis;
- The Committee can at any time request a full report on the issue to Committee;
- The Committee can at any time request a briefing note on the issue to be sent to the Committee

3.1.3. Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care in attendance

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care gave a presentation and responded to Members' questions in relation to:

- Increased workloads of social care staff
- Restructuring of the Integrated Area Teams and measuring the effectiveness of the restructure
- Increases in staff in Children's Social Care Services
- Family Group Conferences
- Recent unannounced inspection by Ofsted
- Ofsted's rating of Medway's adoption and fostering services, the Old Vicarage and Aut Even
- The art show produced by Medway's looked after children at the Brook Theatre
- Clarification that administrative support staff had been increased
- Concern that staff would be encouraged to join neighbouring authorities
- Resilience in place if partner support was reduced
- Managing transition for young people to adult services
- Statistics measured against referrals made
- How benefit changes would affect looked after children leaving the authority's care
- How courts are challenged in relation to length of time for court proceedings

3.1.4. Quarter 3 Council Plan Monitoring

The Director of Children and Adults introduced the report and responded to Members' questions mainly relating to:

- Concerns about figures relating to road traffic fatalities involving children and young people and the possibility of adding a report on this issue
- Concerns relating to key stage 2 figures and how schools will be supported and challenged to achieve good results against raising floor targets
- Support provided to childminders to ensure quality of care

- Testing for under age purchasing of alcohol
- Reductions in unemployment among young people

4. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1. 15 March 2011

4.1.1. Transition from Children's to Adult Services for children with a disability

Partners, officers, service users and their families and a guest speaker from an organisation called In Control attended the meeting to discuss the transition from children's to adult services for children with a disability.

The Commissioning Manager, Aiming High for disabled children introduced the report and a representative from In Control, a national charity that supports independent living, gave a presentation detailing where the use of personal budgets had transformed the lives of young people in different parts of the country.

Shoutout, a self-advocacy group for adults with learning disabilities in Medway then introduced a DVD produced by the group expressing views on the Transition Strategy being developed in Medway.

Members asked for the following points to be taken into account in the development of the Transition Strategy by the Strategy Steering Group and Aiming High for Disabled Children's Strategy Partnership Group:

- Young people need to be fully involved in their review as part of their transition
- It is important to provide assistance to those who have already gone through transition
- The differing eligibility criteria across the country regarding to adult social care causes difficulties for young people moving from one local authority area to another
- It was felt that the Council, along with other large employers in Medway, should be encouraged to lead the way in offering employment to young people with disabilities
- The importance of young people only needing to tell their story once was stressed
- The importance of transparency in recording the uptake of personal budgets was emphasised.
- It was also stated that it was important young disabled people gained meaningful and suitable employment

The Director of Children and Adults also undertook to provide a briefing for Members on the Green Paper 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability'

4.1.2. Safeguarding vulnerable adults

An independent consultant gave a presentation on his findings in respect of safeguarding of vulnerable adults in Medway. He outlined the main

areas for development and challenges and responded to Members' questions.

The Committee suggested to officers that they proceed with the implementation of the recommendations in the report along with the comments made at the meeting. These included:

- a request that training for Customer First staff on safeguarding vulnerable adults should be extended to include basic level skills for those answering the main Council telephone numbers to ensure that staff were clear which calls to refer on and which to answer;
- The Director of Children and Adults undertook to make arrangements for Customer First staff to be used in the event of IT failure, as they would be unable to use an online script.

The Director of Children and Adults was requested to pass on the Committee's thanks to staff involved in the safeguarding of vulnerable adults in Medway as they had been commended in the report.

The Acting Chief Executive of NHS Medway undertook to provide a briefing note to the Committee on advice given to GPs around the safeguarding of vulnerable adults in the light of the Data Protection Act.

A further report will be brought to the Committee in a year's time.

4.1.3. Council Plan monitoring third quarter

Members expressed their concern that the data they were reviewing was three months out of date and it was felt that the Committee should be notified earlier about missed targets.

The Committee noted that the new performance management data should be more helpful in this regard.

4.1.4. Work programme

Members were informed that there were two additional items for the next meeting, which were an update on phlebotomy and a report on the proposed merger between Medway Maritime Hospital and Darent Valley Hospital.

The carer's support task group undertook to report back in the autumn and an update on the setting up of the GP consortia and transition arrangements was requested by briefing note from the Acting Chief Executive of NHS Medway.

5. Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5.1 17 March 2011

5.1.1. Attendance of the Leader

The Leader of the Council gave a presentation and responded to Members' questions on:

- Medway Renaissance team
- Regeneration projects in Gillingham, Rochester, Strood and Chatham
- Replacement of signage for the Esplanade in Strood
- Retention of Strood market
- Railway stations in Medway
- Gillingham station – request to include artwork/historic information boards and twinning with sister cities in Japan as part of refurbishment
- Funding for the new bus facility and completion date
- Review of the various 'Boards' set up to oversee the regeneration projects
- Permanent berth for the Medway Queen paddle steamer at Gillingham marina
- Praise for the work of the Medway Ambassadors

5.1.2. Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement gave a presentation and responded to Members' questions on:

- Partnerships
- Environmental enforcement
- Operation Cubit
- Trading Standards
- Food enforcement
- Health and safety
- Environmental protection
- CCTV
- Use of new mobile phone application to record environmental issues
- Emergency planning
- SOS bus
- Leaflets warning of possible prosecution for fly tipping
- Use of the Community Payback scheme
- Luton Arches, Gillingham – on-going problems with pigeons

5.1.3. Member's item: adoption of roads on new development sites

Councillor Godwin introduced the item and explained an on-going issue in his ward where a national house builder had completed a

development over 10 years ago but the roads had still not been developed to the appropriate standard required by the local authority to adopt them for future maintenance. He asked what could be done to resolve the issue.

At the conclusion of the debate the Committee agreed to

- write to local MPs to request help lobbying the government to amend planning legislation to allow local authorities to include the adoption of new roads as a planning condition.
- send a letter to the Local Government Association to enquire whether there were other local authorities with the same problem
- request officers to raise the issue at the next annual Forum between the council and developers
- request officers to investigate whether the adoption of new roads falls within the planning test for a legal s106 notice and to use this wherever possible on any new development.

5.1.4. Third Quarter Council Plan Monitoring 2010/2011

A correction was made to the data relating to NI 192 (percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting), which changed the indicator from red to green.

Members noted the performance and outcomes achieved against priorities and requested further information in relation to the Dog Fouling Act, a list of alleygates installed and the locations of the Playbuilder scheme completions in September 2010.

5.1.5. Petitions

The petition responses and appropriate officer action were noted.

Background papers

None

Contacts for further details:

Julie Keith	Head of Democratic Services Telephone: 01634 332760 Email: julie.keith@medway.gov.uk
Rosie Gunstone	Democratic Services Officer Telephone: 01634 332715 Email: rosie.gunstone@medway.gov.uk
Teri Reynolds	Democratic Services Officer Telephone: 01634 332104 Email: teri.reynolds@medway.gov.uk
Caroline Salisbury	Democratic Services Officer Telephone: 01634 332013 Email: caroline.salisbury@medway.gov.uk