



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Wednesday, 14 December 2011

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Barnby, Bent, Hill (In place of Butt), Parrott, Pentney and Pountney

(Also in attendance: Councillors Davies, Excell, and Pritchard)

445 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kingscote and Stringer.

446 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 16 November 2011 were considered, confirmed as a correct record by the Board, and signed by the Chairman.

447 ADHD and Ritalin

The Director of Public Health summarised a report submitted to the Board on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and methylphenidate. The Director of Public Health advised the Board that there was not verifiable evidence that any professionals in the Bay were not following the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for the diagnosis and management of ADHD. The Board was informed that there was not robust data available from other areas to provide comparative information about the number of children in the Bay diagnosed with ADHD or prescribed medication.

The Director of Public Health advised the Board of potential safeguarding concerns that may arise if vulnerable children were taken off medication that had been prescribed by professionals for the treatment of ADHD.

Members questioned the absence of data concerning the prescription of methylphenidate to children with ADHD, the numbers diagnosed with ADHD, and the possibility of comparing prevalence with other areas.

In response to members' questions, the Board was informed that NICE evidence showed medication for ADHD to be more effective in some instances than non-medication.

Members discussed the possible value in an awareness raising event in Torbay to demonstrate what options were available to people with ADHD other than medication.

Resolved: (i) that the Director of Public Health be thanked for her work in addressing the Councillor Call for Action; and

(ii) that no further action be taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in relation to ADHD and methylphenidate.

448 Police Blueprint

The Board received a presentation from Superintendent Jim Nye, Devon and Cornwall Police. This presentation outlined the challenges, changes, and performance of the police in the Bay, within the context of the national budget reduction and the police service reorganisation. The Board was advised of a recruitment freeze for all police staff posts and of changes to the policing structure within Devon and Cornwall. The Board was informed that subject to Police Authority agreement the Bay's three permanent operational bases in Torquay, Paignton, and Brixham would remain.

The Board was advised that between 2008/9 and 2010/11 there had been a downward trend in crime within the Bay but total crime for 2011/12 was up four per cent on 2010/11. The meeting was advised of the upcoming abolition of Police Authorities and the election of Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012.

In response to questions, Superintendent Nye acknowledged the challenge of retaining community confidence and relationships with partners and suggested that community engagement and neighbourhood policing could be improved.

Members questioned the increase in burglaries, and were advised that economic difficulties may contribute to some of the increase. The Board was also advised that Friday evenings were much quieter than previously and that this might be connected to people's economic difficulties. The Board was informed that an increase in domestic abuse was another possible impact of the economic difficulties. With reference to a recent police operation against burglaries, Superintendent Nye urged the public to be more security conscious.

In reply to questions, Superintendent Nye agreed that instances of anti-social behaviour were not always reported to the police. The meeting was advised of the importance of reporting anti-social behaviour, particularly as it helped identify trends to address.

Members questioned whether police reductions would mean the end to the police chairing the local missing persons group. Superintendent Nye indicated he would check and provide the information to the Board.

A member of the public, the Chairman of Watcombe and Barton Community Partnership, raised concern at the Council's decision to turn off street lights, the use of Police Community Support Officers, and the need for a Neighbourhood Beat Manager in Watcombe. Superintendent Nye indicated that the relevant sector Inspector would contact the Community Partnership chairman.

Members questioned the likely affects on crime of turning off street lights and were advised that the provision of extra darkness could be expected to increase crime. Members questioned whether a rise in burglaries had been recorded in areas where street lighting had been reduced.

Resolved: that notwithstanding budget reductions and pressures, Devon and Cornwall Police be requested to continue to chair and lead the multi-agency missing persons meetings in Torbay.

449 Budget Consultation Report

The Board considered a report providing a progress update on the consultation about the Council's budget for 2012/13. The report outlined consultation process and activities and put forward preliminary feedback and findings.

The Board was advised that throughout the consultation there had been requests for further information and that ideally more detail would have been available at an earlier stage in the process.

The Executive Lead Member for Business Planning and Governance informed the Board that the budget process had begun sooner than in previous years.

Members questioned the attendance at public consultation meetings and, with reference to the rejection of the set format by the public at a consultation meeting in Brixham, the planning of the events. In response the Board was advised that particular issues in Brixham had engaged the public.

Members asked about the use of the Council's Viewpoint Panel. In response the Board was that there were 750 active members and to date eighty-eight members had returned budget consultation questionnaires.

Members questioned the clearness of the language and meaning of some of the budget consultation questions. In response the Board was advised that some questions may have been too broad, or difficult to understand and answer.

With reference to proposed changes to adult social care, the Board asked whether the duties and requirements on NHS bodies to involve users had been achieved. In reply the Board was advised that much work had been undertaken with users and that clients' needs were being reassessed.

Members discussed possible legal challenges to the budget process and the need to demonstrate that social care needs were met. The Board was advised that to avoid successful legal challenge officers were aware it was important to show clear evidence when decisions were made.

A member of the public suggested that the choice and accessibility of venues for the public budget consultation meetings were poor, particularly compared to the previous year.

Resolved: that the Executive Head of Business Services be requested to ensure Council be provided with an evidence-based report demonstrating that the Budget proposals meet statutory social care requirements and duties.

450 Update on Overview and Scrutiny Review Panels

Overview and Scrutiny review chairs and the Overview and Scrutiny Manager provided verbal updates on the progress of the reviews; namely, Anti-Social Behaviour and Private Sector Housing; Youth Employment; and Safeguarding Children.

Members were advised that the Anti-Social Behaviour and Private Sector Housing review would be finished by the end of the municipal year.