

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 26th July 2017

Grenfell Tower – local response

As a consequence of the tragic, and completely avoidable, events at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017, Middlesbrough Council has been working with Thirteen Group, Cleveland Fire Authority, and others to compile a database of all tall buildings in Middlesbrough – and check whether any are clad in ACM (Aluminium Composite Material).

At my instigation, this working arrangement has been formalised as a Task and Finish Group comprising of Middlesbrough Council, Thirteen, Coast and Country, and the Cleveland Fire Service.

Although the government recommendation was to check all buildings over 18m high, we have decided to explore all buildings over 4 storeys, comprising of public and private buildings, to establish the nature of external materials used, and what fire safety measures are in place.

All high rise tower blocks owned by Thirteen have underwent necessary checks and have been confirmed as not being clad in ACM. Fire and safety regulations have been assessed, and tenants have been – or are in the process of being – spoken to on an individual, face-to-face basis. Any issues are being resolved as this process goes on. We will continue to work with Thirteen, other Residential Social Landlords (RSLs), and all private developers.

Concerns have also been raised by residents regarding the extensive programme of external wall insulation that was undertaken on a significant number of terraced properties in Middlesbrough. This is a different product from ACM, and the materials and construction methods use pose a low risk. This is supported by the views of Cleveland Fire Brigade.

Economic Development and Housing Growth

1. Housing Strategy and delivering housing growth and renewal

Our recently launched Investment Prospectus sets out Middlesbrough Council's plans to transform our town and its economy. This will be done by attracting new business and investment, leading on bold and ambitious programmes to drive job creation and new opportunities for Middlesbrough.

Housing is very much at the heart of our plans and, in line with Mayor Dave Budd's 2025 Vision, our ambition is to ensure we have quality housing for all means, whether ownership or rental.

Our draft Housing Strategy, 2017-2020, sets out our housing priorities and the actions that will allow us to achieve our ambitions. It is currently out for consultation – ending 28

July – and provides a means for us to translate the Mayor’s Vision into the housing priorities for Middlesbrough. This strategy enables us to build further upon its successes in achieving high levels of housing growth over the past number of years – the biggest house-building programme in Middlesbrough’s history – and make us well placed to secure quality homes for all regardless of affordability.

The Strategy has three key objectives:

- a. meet the housing needs and aspirations of a growing population;
- b. improve the life opportunities of residents in areas of poor quality housing and deprivation – creating a positive framework for us to drive forward improvements and key projects in North Ormesby and the Gresham area;
- c. address the pressures of an ageing population and support vulnerable people to live independent lives for as long as possible.

In terms of housing delivery, there continues to be a strong growth in new dwellings and we are significantly exceeding targets.

Between April 2016 and March 2017 a total of 544 dwellings were built, representing a third consecutive year of delivery in excess of our requirements. A total of 2,059 new dwellings have been built over the past three years against a requirement of 1,230, and over 60% have been built in Council Tax bands D and above – increasing income to the Council through Council Tax and New Homes Bonus. This is a demonstration of the strength of the local housing market.

We have also prepared a draft development guidance for land at Marton Avenue, a site predominantly consisting of land identified for development in the 2014 Housing Local Plan. The guidance seeks to achieve 72 three to four-bedroom homes, including twelve self-build plots, and sets out requirements for design, layout and other development expectations. A maximum of 8 will be accessed via Marton Avenue and the rest via Alan Peacock Way. Public consultation took place for four weeks, ending on 28 June. This included a meeting with the Marton Residents Association. A total of six responses were received including the local ward councillors and the residents association. These comments have been largely supportive, but concerns have been raised about traffic levels. Once adopted, the guidance will be used in the consideration of any future planning application.

Housebuilding is only one aspect of our overall strategy; housing renewal is forms a key element. An innovative scheme to bring some of North Ormesby’s empty homes back into use – and improve the quality of the rental market there – is also helping unemployed residents learn new skills to access employment opportunities. There is a clear social regeneration element here, with housing renewal, and increasing employment and training opportunities of local people wrapped into one package.

Middlesbrough Council is working partnership with Thirteen and the North Ormesby Community Land Trust to deliver a £1million “Empty Homes” project, with the aim to unlock the potential of empty homes, support regeneration and the sustainability of the area. Ten properties are being renovated, with more planned over the year.

The training element will be delivered by Hartlepool NDC: Opening Doors, Community Campus, and East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust, and will give local young people the opportunity to pick up construction skills and qualifications as they work on the sites.

2. Hemlington Grange

The former Hemlington Hospital site is starting to be developed, with work being carried out on the new Cleveland Police 'Community Safety Hub' and Taylor Wimpey and Persimmons starting preparatory work – site access and drainage – on the Wellberry site. Both developments are an example of continued investment and job creation in our area.

With the current police headquarters being outdated, and in need of significant investment to bring the building up to standard, the 'Community Safety Hub', which is due for completion in May 2018, will provide a cost effective and cutting-edge home for modern day specialist policing. In a boost to our local steel industries, Police and Crime Commissioner Barry Coppinger has stated that all steel used in this development will be made here in the Tees Valley.

In terms of house building, a new signalised junction is being installed on the B1365, and the sales and marketing suite has been constructed, to be open in Summer 2017. This is the first phase development that will see the whole of the former hospital site developed over the next 10 to 15 years. Once fully complete the site will accommodate 1200 homes. Taylor Wimpey opened their sales outlet on Saturday 1 July and have sold two properties off plan – once again showing the need and desirability of new housing in Middlesbrough.

3. Supporting and growing Middlesbrough businesses – Tees Valley Business Compass

Middlesbrough Council, led by Mayor Dave Budd, is ambitious for Middlesbrough and its future prosperity. We are keen to see business and investment come to Middlesbrough, and to see home grown businesses flourish. That is why we've been working closely with the Tees Valley Business Compass service since its launch earlier this year, ensuring that Middlesbrough businesses get wide coverage and promotion, and accessibility to the range of support services that will help them to grow.

A joint number of events have been held, and the Compass is invited to all of our Invest in Middlesbrough events so it can be on hand to support business in terms of finance and other support. One example of this is the bid writing workshop Middlesbrough Council held in partnership with NEPO on 8 June. The Compass was on hand to offer support and advice.

In terms of business engagement, Middlesbrough SMEs have outstripped those of the other local authorities – with 97 SMEs engaged over the last two quarters in comparison to 66 from Stockton, 32 from Darlington, 20 from Hartlepool and 15 from Redcar. This is evidence that Middlesbrough is very much a hub for local entrepreneurship, and that Middlesbrough Council is at the forefront of promoting, and ensuring they get the best help on offer to grow and succeed.

Transport & Infrastructure

4. Connecting our communities – The Parkway Community Bus

Thanks to the cross party efforts of local councillors – Cllr Branson, Cllr Brunton, Cllr McGloin, and Cllr Coupe – coupled with the financial assistance of the Parkway Shopping Centre in Coulby Newham and support from Middlesbrough Council, a new free bus service is being launched on 17 July to trial until March 2018. This will provide a link from Stainton Village and the surrounding areas to the Parkway.

The Parkway shuttle bus will run two morning and two afternoon services, and is a great starting point to increase connectivity between those more isolated areas. As this is a trial, it is important that we all spread the word and ensure passenger numbers help secure the future of these routes.

We are all very grateful to the Parkway Centre for making this possible in terms of financial backing, and for the work put in by Councillors Branson, Brunton, McGloin and Coupe, to secure the backing of a major local business.

Making our bus services work for everyone is a much more pressing, and realistic, objective than, say, buying an airport. In the longer term, I would like to see the Tees Valley Combined Authority consider the use of new powers from London that would allow them to control and decide bus routes, timetables, and even fares. This would increase connectivity across the entire Tees Valley.

5. Keeping Our Economy Moving – Tees Valley Road Network schemes

All five local authorities are working collaboratively to improve our highway infrastructure, helping traffic flow into the and out of the Tees Valley, and boosting our combined local economy.

The Tees Valley Combined Authority secured £750,000 of development funding in November 2016 in order to develop outline business cases for two major highway infrastructure improvement schemes – the Tees Valley East-West Connections, and a new Tees Crossing.

The Tees Valley East-West Connections comprises a number of improvements to the existing A66 Corridor, including a new Darlington Northern Bypass, to improve connectivity between the A1 (M) and Teesport. Within Middlesbrough, the proposed improvements are focused on a major upgrade to the A66/A171 Cargo Fleet Roundabout to improve its capacity – and, therefore, reduce journey times and delays during the morning and evening peak periods. This, in turn, will allow the junction to handle the future traffic growth associated with planned residential and commercial developments in both Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland.

The New Tees Crossing will take some of the pressure off the existing A19 Tees Viaduct, which carries well over 100,000 vehicles on an average weekday, thereby improving the resilience of this key north-south corridor and catering for future traffic growth as the Tees Valley economy grows. Development work is currently underway to assess the viability of two potential options – a new bridge running parallel to the A19 Tees Viaduct and a new bridge immediately upstream of Newport Bridge. The general principle in each case is that the existing viaduct will carry longer-distance traffic, with the new crossing catering primarily for local journeys. Work to develop a third option, involving a new river crossing located further to the east, is being progressed separately.

As both of the potential infrastructure improvement schemes will have a major impact on traffic movements across the Tees Valley area, a Public Information Exercise has been carried out to raise awareness of the proposals and seek support for them. An official launch was held at the Riverside Stadium on Tuesday 11th July, to which key stakeholders including business leaders and transport providers were invited. This will be closely followed by a series of public engagement events in each of the five Boroughs, where officers from the partner organisations will be on hand to advise on the current proposals.

The feedback received from the Public Information Exercise will be summarised and included within the Outline Business Cases for the two schemes, which are due to be submitted to the Department for Transport in November 2017. The intention is for the preferred options within each business case to be funded by Highways England through their Route Investment Strategy – that is, as part of the national road building programme – given the strategic importance of both schemes to the future growth of the regional and national economy.

6. A1085 Longlands Road/Ormesby Road/King’s Road Junction, North Ormesby – Traffic Signal Upgrade Scheme

Work is due to start on site during July 2017 to introduce this scheme which, when complete, will increase the capacity and improve the resilience of one of the busiest junctions in the Borough.

The scheme comprises complete replacement of the existing traffic signal infrastructure, which has reached the end of its useful life, together with the introduction of specialist software designed to maximise the capacity of the junction, thereby tackling the peak period congestion that occurs on a regular basis. An uninterruptable power supply will also be introduced to ensure that the signals continue to operate in the event of a power cut.

Careful consideration is being given to the temporary traffic management arrangements required whilst the works are underway. The works have been scheduled to coincide with the school summer holidays, when peak period traffic flows are traditionally lighter, and the Council will work closely with the successful contractor to ensure that disruption to traffic is kept to a minimum. An extensive publicity campaign will also be carried out beforehand to ensure that drivers are aware of the forthcoming works and advise them to use an alternative route if possible whilst they are underway.

7. Road Safety Initiatives

A Road Safety Partnership event was held at NETA Training Academy in Stockton, many of the young apprentices already drive on our regions roads and are in the high risk age group for collisions of 17-24 year olds.

The event was held on 14th June and included:

- Extrication and rescue demonstration – Cleveland Fire Brigade
- Cleveland Police Camera Safety Unit
- Drink Drive case study – Cleveland Police
- Driving simulator sessions – Middlesbrough Council Road Safety
- Brake reaction tests – Middlesbrough Council Road Safety

The sessions highlighted the risks to young drivers in an interactive way allowing students to see the consequences but also to help them learn how to reduce the risk to themselves and others.

Sixty reception class pupils at Beech Grove Primary received vital road safety education on Tuesday 20th June. An interactive story based session gave pupils the opportunity to learn how to use a pedestrian crossing, how to choose a safe place to cross the road and also included a demonstration of a car with bean bag dummies crashing to show how important it is to fasten your seatbelt.

Road Safety Advice was one of the elements of Macmillan Academy's year 10 safety day on 23rd June. The students became 'Crash Investigation Officers', after reading witness statements and Police accounts and studying the facts of the case the students were asked to 'investigate' the facts and come to a conclusion as to the causation factors. Although not yet able to drive yet, year 10 students are already being influenced in their attitudes to Road Safety by their peers and others and so the session is designed to question their assumptions about their own attitudes and behaviours and that of others.