

CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel was held on 21 January 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors Lewis (Chair); Goodchild (Vice Chair); Councillors Arundale, Brady, Branson and Dean.

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: J Cain (Local Democracy Reporter)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: M. Davies (Chief Executive of MVDA)

OFFICERS: A. Allen, S. Bonner, M. Harvey, L. Kelly and M. Walker.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillors Biswas, Davison and Uddin.

1 **MINUTES - CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - 17 DECEMBER 2018**

The Minutes were submitted and accepted as a true record.

2 **COUNCIL'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE VSC**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Culture and Communities, the Chief Executive of the Middlesbrough Voluntary and Development Agency and the Council's Community Infrastructure Manager.

The Director of Culture and Communities presented 'Partnership Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector' to the panel.

The following points were made during the presentation:

- The intention was to focus on the partnership between the MVDA and the Council.
- It was important to update the panel on actions since the 2017 Executive report, 'Strengthening the Relationship with the VCS' as well as looking to future initiatives such as the Social Regeneration Strategy.
- The Executive report on 2017, 'Strengthening the Relationship with the VCS' contained numerous recommendations that were all being progressed.
- With regard to improving knowledge and communication, there had been several themed sessions between the Council the MVDA to move this forward.
- Middlesbrough, and the Tees Valley as a whole, did not receive its fair share of grant funding and could be seen as a 'cold spot' in this regard.

A Member queried the use of youth facilities and how they can secure additional funding, for example through the Links organisation. It was confirmed that many options existed and that specifics could be discussed outside the meeting. It was also confirmed that, via the Social Regeneration Agenda, there were funds available for such community projects. The Social Regeneration Agenda would be launched in March 2019.

The Community Infrastructure Manager advised that there had been several successful bids for grants, for example with Sport England. Such successes were attributed to the work undertaken with joint working between the Council Voluntary organisations.

It was also confirmed that the Council still provided significant grant programmes, despite budgetary pressures, and this was something the Council should be proud of.

A Member commented that, in order to set an example, every Councillor should register as a volunteer. Officers confirmed that a similar scheme was being set up for Council employees, in which the Council would free up time for employees to contribute to community projects which could benefit the community greatly.

The Director of Culture and Communities commented that a key message from consultation carried out as part the Social Regeneration Agenda, concerned social isolation and its impact. It was important that community projects helped to target such individuals to reduce this impact.

A Member queried the lack of funding for Tees Valley authorities and it was confirmed that there were approximately 800 voluntary organisations in Middlesbrough, which was expected for the size of the town. These organisations joined other groups across the North East and Cumbria as part of the Funders Network, where funding priorities could be better understood.

Analysis had been undertaken by funders to understand funding destinations over the past three years, and it was discovered that Middlesbrough, and the Tees Valley, did not receive an equitable amount of funding. Reasons for this were attributed to the quality of funding bids and also to the time commitment organisations had to complete such bids.

A discussion took place about the Ageing Better programme and how, as a strategic programme, there were ongoing conversations about how to continue the work when the programme's funding expired.

The Community Infrastructure Manager advised the panel about Community Hubs and the work the voluntary sector played in them. The following points were raised as part of the presentation.

- There was a network of Community Facilities around the town.
- There were eight larger facilities and two libraries operating out of Leisure Centres, namely the Neptune Centre and the Rainbow Centre.
- It was emphasised that the Community Hubs were heavily relied upon and depended on the voluntary sector a great deal.
- There was a substantial amount of activity taking place in the Community Hubs by Voluntary organisations.
- Each week across, the network, there were more than 80 groups involved in delivering activities, which were primarily small volunteer led groups.
- This equated to approximately 200 hrs of provision, which was a significant contribution to the volunteer programme. Voluntary and Community sector activity also constituted more than 60% of Community Hub provision.
- Over a 48 week period, more than 10,000 hrs were provided by Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

The Director of Culture and Communities updated Members on the Social Regeneration Strategy and the following points were made:

- MVDA carried out the Community Conversation to gauge community opinion into how the initiative should look.
- The Social Regeneration Strategy would be launched on 11 March and would have a launch event.
- The Social Regeneration Strategy would be a partnership approach, whereby the Council would work with the VCS.
- The Strategy was also focussed on having a different kind of conversation with the Community and would aim to build capacity, and how resources could be used more effectively.
- Approximately £65million of Council spending was on Communities, but it was normally officers that decided how that money was spent.
- The Social Regeneration Strategy would be asking communities about how they would like to see resources allocated and would empower communities to do this.

A Member commented that capacity building should be reviewed frequently to reflect changes in communities. It was confirmed that the consultation sought input from communities to establish where resource allocation would be most useful.

A Member commented that while the Social Regeneration Strategy may target areas of deprivation, more affluent areas also required intervention and assistance from this strategy. It was confirmed that the strategy would target those areas that needed assistance, not just those with higher levels of deprivation.

The Director of Culture and Communities also made the following points as part of his presentation.

- With regard to the different themes in the strategy, 'Strengthening our local economy and employment opportunities', was exemplified using the 50 Futures Initiative which was the Council's Work Experience Scheme aiming to get people into work who may not always have had that opportunity.
- There was also the aim of improving the perception of Middlesbrough and making communities proud of themselves. This would tie in with the Community Awards.
- Through the Place Brand, this message would be broadcast outside Middlesbrough.
- The VCS was important to partnership working with the Council, and how communications were improved. Such improvements would help establish what communities wanted in their locality.
- Elected Members also played a vital role in this process, as they had extensive understanding of their local communities.

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SELECTIVE LANDLORD LICENSING - AN UPDATE

The Head of Stronger Communities and the Selective Licensing Manager provided the Panel with an update on the Selective Landlord Licensing action plan. Members were pleased with the progress carried out and thanked the officers for their efforts.