

CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel was held on 25 June 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors R Arundale, C Dodds, L Garvey, J Goodchild, L Lewis, C McIntyre, J Rostron, J Thompson and M L Smiles(Also in attendance)

OFFICERS: A Adam, S Blood and J Robinson

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No Declarations of interest were made.

19/1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR PRO TEM

As the previous Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Lewis acted as the Chair Pro Tem of the Panel.

The Panel were advised that in the event of a tied vote, the Pro Tem Chair would have the casting vote.

AGREED that Councillor Lewis be appointed Pro Tem for the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

19/2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor McIntyre was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED that Councillor McIntyre was appointed as Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

19/3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Smith was nominated, seconded, and appointed as Vice Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED that Councillor Smith was appointed as Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

19/4 MINUTES- 15 APRIL 2019

The minutes of the meeting on 15 April 2019 were read and accepted as a true record.

19/5 OVERVIEW OF SERVICE AREA

The Director of Culture, Communities and Communications provided a presentation to the panel in relation to the service area, which was made up of five service areas:

1. Stronger Communities (Marion Walker- Head of Stronger Communities)
2. Culture (Charlotte Nicol- Head of Culture)
3. North East Migration Partnership (Janine Hartley - Head of North East Migration)

4. Marketing and Communications (Kim Flynn- Head of Marketing and Communications)
5. Middlesbrough Community Learning - (Chris Kemp- Community Learning Service Manager- retires July 2019)

The Director outlined that his directorate is one of the most varied, in that it tells the story of Middlesbrough:

PAST- is told through the museums and archives

PRESENT- working with the local community

FUTURE- working with Middlesbrough Community Learning to develop employability/ through the North East Migration Partnership (NEMP) to build confidence in the community.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Service objective: Working in partnership with communities and other providers to protect the vulnerable and to empower people and groups to improve their own lives and their neighbourhoods

The Director advised that within Stronger Communities there were 7 main areas and within these areas, outlined some of the highlights.

Infrastructure and engagement- there were currently 12 libraries and HUBS in Middlesbrough, 3 were very much a library whilst the others were more integrated and rationalised within the HUBS and it was hoped that there would be further alignment in years to come. The Archives centre also fell within this area, however caused some concern due to the current state of the building. The Achieves had achieved accreditation status, however there was a proviso that the building would need significant improvement/move of the achieves if this status was to remain. The panel were advised that there was a bid being developed for the heritage lottery scheme and consideration was being made into relocation of some of the material.

Community Safety- a huge area for Middlesbrough. Within community safety at present there were 2 significant areas, firstly Neighbourhood officers and secondly Selective landlord licensing.

In respect to Neighbourhood officers, the street wardens had been reduced from 96 down to 12, however the Mayor was currently having discussions with the Tees Valley Combined Authority to negotiate funding for a possible 40 more street wardens to combat anti-social behaviour within the Town.

A member queried the relationship the Council have with Thirteen group and their role within community safety. In response, the Director outlined that they were working with the Council on the TS1 Town Centre team, but most predominantly leading on the Hemlington Pilot to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase public confidence through wide scale clean up's and activities.

Both projects were seen as highlights of Stronger communities, the development of the Town Centre Team to tackle crime had brought together partners, although shop lifting was still considered a huge issue which needed addressing.

The panel were also advised that that Council have a contract with Thirteen who provide accommodation to the Homeless in Middlesbrough., as the Council has a duty to provide accommodation under the Homeless Reduction Act.

Selective Landlord Licencing had been extremely successful in North Ormesby and as a consequence of the review undertaken by the scrutiny panel, the Council considered and has now rolling out the scheme in Newport. Selective Landlord Licensing does however come with strong opposition from landlords who, depending on the number of properties, have to license each property at a set cost.

The panel saw huge merit in Selective Landlord Licensing as it gave the Council powers to inspect properties which were in disrepair and request improvements. Selective Landlord Licensing also ensured all landlords carried out referencing on their tenants. The Panel have

always been complimentary of the scheme and although would like to see the scheme rolled out town wide, are aware this would not be possible due to the legislation and criteria. A panel member commented that a letter has been sent to the Secretary of State regarding the set up costs for Selective Landlord Licensing and a response had been received. Both letters would be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

Welfare rights- huge implications for the residents of Middlesbrough with the introduction of Universal Credit.

Homelessness and Domestic Abuse Services- the Panel were advised that the service was currently being recommissioned to centralise and streamline services. It was considered necessary due to Middlesbrough having the highest recorded rate of domestic abuse in Teesside.

Licensing and Taxi's and Premises-a review of taxi licensing fees had been undertaken following the introduction of the digital application scheme. There was some concern that taxi firms were going elsewhere for their license, including Wolverhampton. The Council were aware of this and were in discussions with other authorities.

Archives Services for Middlesbrough and Cleveland- central in Middlesbrough, although as outlined, the building was in disrepair and needed significant investment.

Community engagement and community cohesion- the panel were advised that although staffing has reduced, there was significant work being undertaken within specific areas. Highlights within this area have been the controlled migration fund, where there has been significant research and community engagement to ensure we have settled communities. The fund was currently operating in Newpoert, North Ormesby and Thorntree and Brambles Farm.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Service objectives - raising the profile and enhance the brand and reputation of Middlesbrough Council and the town as a great place to live, learn, work, visit and invest; drive the Council's implementation of a customer focussed approach and change in customer behaviours through proactive use of marketing strategies; promoting services and encouraging participation, providing and co-ordinating communication to engage staff, and developing relationships with key partners, influencing and inputting into local and regional marketing and communication planning and campaigns.

The panel were made aware of the services delivered by the marketing and communications departments, these being:

1. Press Office
2. Digital Team- website
3. Marketing Tem, promoting Middlesbrough as a place and the Council's Service
4. Internal Communications
5. Love Middlesbrough and
6. Place Branding

In terms of highlights within this service, the Place branding was agreed in December 2018 and was currently being implemented. The Big weekend took place in May as well as Take That which brought thousands of visitors to Middlesbrough. Town banners has also been in place in May and the Place Branding Board had been established with external partners being able to use the branding from June 2019.

The Panel noted that the Marketing and Communications Strategy had been drafted but there was a delay on timescales for this to be agreed by Executive.

There had been some extremely successful service marketing plans, in respect to Fostering, the Town Hall and Newham Grange Farm. The farm has recently had some refurbishment and was coming very popular.

It was finally commented that a new Internal Communications Strategy had been introduced and a re-designed destination website "Love Middlesbrough".

A member raised a previous comment by the panel with regard to the tourist information being reinstated. The Director advised that there was no plans to do this, however there was a need to push more events taking place in the town hall. There was currently an issue with the mailing lists under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY

"To Make a positive impact on all our learners lives"

The Director outlined that there had been a change in the service focus to employability and all outcomes now related to getting people into employment. The Adult Education Budgets had devolved into the Combined Authority for 2019/20 academic year, it was commented that there was likely to be no change in the way the service was delivered.

The services delivered were as follows:

- Community learning
- ESOL and Digital classes in the Town Centre and community settings
- Externally funded Employability Programmes - Youth Employment Initiative (15 to 30 year olds) and Routes to Work (30 years and over)
- Apprenticeships for the Council
- Work experience and volunteering programmes for those further away from the job market.

In terms of the highlights for the service, the Routes to work project had had a slow start but was now getting the best results in the Tess Valley in getting people over 30 into work.

The Opportunity Middlesbrough Strategy was launched in 2018, which provides pathways into work through opportunities with the Council and focuses on those further away from employment. It includes:

- 50 futures- a focused work experience programme, which has recently had its first participant finish his training and gain employment.
- Improved volunteering opportunities with the Council including volunteering weeks
- Enhanced Apprenticeship Programme

In terms of the apprenticeship programme, the Council were recently reviewing the process of potentially reviewing salaries and potential job evaluated grades for apprentice staff. There was a concern that apprentices were not completing their training and therefore new initiatives were being explored.

The Director finally outlined that the service was due Ofsted in 2019, and their self-assessment was rated outstanding. The recent scrutiny report on Middlesbrough Community Learning had been finalised and would be circulated to members for comment and presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 16 July 2019. The report was strong evidence for Ofsted.

NORTH EAST MIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

"The North East Migration Partnership (NEMP) works with national government, local government, voluntary sector, and other partners to ensure that the North East can benefit for migration by coordinating the managing various refugee and asylum seeker programmes".

The final service delivered by the Directorate was the North East Migration Partnership (NEMP), the services provided were as follows:

- overseeing Asylum seeker dispersal in the North East
- Undertaking projects to ensure effective integration of Asylum Seekers
- providing a conduit between North East Local Authorities and the Home Office

- Informing future asylum seeker policies and Strategies and sharing best practice and data collection
- Ensure the North East's Voice is heard at a national level.

In terms of highlights, the Director advised that the New Asylum Seeker Contract would be starting in September 2019. There would be a move to a new provider- MEARS (Previously G4S). There was possibly a new housing provider (previously Jomast), this could mean Mears sourcing 300 new properties in Middlesbrough, however this provides opportunities for better partnership working.

The Director outlined that there were lengthy discussions on dispersals between the local authorities, local government association and the Home Office who meet regularly to improve the equity of dispersal nationally. A Memorandum of understanding had been agreed and work was being progressing on equity and data sharing.

The final highlight within this service was the development of the Place Based Project. The panel learnt that the project maps the journey of Asylum seekers entering the country and brings together the agencies involved to better understanding the pathway involved. This work would feed into national work being undertaken and to a better understanding the costs of Asylum seekers to the local authority.

The Chair thanked the Director for his informative presentation.

The panel discussed the day and time of the meetings and it was agreed that the meetings would take place on Thursday afternoon at 1pm.

The next meeting of the panel would take place at the end of July and would consider the work programme for the municipal year 2019/20.