

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8 NOVEMBER 2016

**FINAL REPORT OF ECONOMIC
REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT
SCRUTINY PANEL - COMMUNITY HUBS**

Please note the changes to the previous final scrutiny report format. Findings are not covered in detail in the content of the report. Minutes of scrutiny panel meetings are attached as appendices to provide an evidence base for conclusions and recommendations.

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. In recent years, in order to ensure that community resources and facilities remain viable, Middlesbrough Council has developed Community Hubs to integrate local library and former community centre facilities.
2. In view of these changes, the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel sought to examine current community hub provision, facilities and operations to determine their impact to date. The panel also considered relevant future plans and strategies.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. The terms of reference for the scrutiny panel's investigation were as follows:
 - a) To examine services, existing strategy and future plans in respect of the Council's Community Hubs.
 - b) To consider the role of Community Hubs, including levels of usage; how community engagement is achieved; and how customer satisfaction is measured.
 - c) To examine how the authority works, or could work in future, with other agencies/bodies/sectors to maximise the impact of Community Hubs.
 - d) To examine existing budget provision and staffing and the potential impact of continued Council spending reductions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. As part of an exercise to reduce the Council's budgets in 2010, a review was undertaken of the authority's property portfolio, including community centres. The resulting changes had resulted in the closure of smaller community centres, for example at Park End, Charlbury Road and Brambles Farm Community Centres.
5. Community facilities and activities were then incorporated in/transferred to the remaining larger centres, creating new community hubs. There are currently eight community hubs. At the time of the scrutiny panel's initial investigations (April 2016) three new community hubs were being developed - at Acklam, Marton and Hemlington. Five of the Community Hubs, (Grove Hill, Easterside, Thorntree, North Ormesby and Newport) are managed by Economic Development and Communities, with the other two hubs (Rainbow Leisure Centre and the Neptune) being managed by independent leisure companies.
6. Community hubs generally include:
 - Access to library books and reference materials;
 - Space for a range of services from various providers;
 - Space for community meetings and activities;
 - Space for, and signposting to, Early Years and Integrated Youth Support (IYSS) activities and support;
 - Space for and signposting to sport and leisure activities;
 - Space for and signposting to community activities and volunteering;
 - Information on local public services; and
 - Internet access, usually through the provision of free wifi.
7. Many of the hubs include services such as job clubs, children and families services and the provision of financial advice, as well as access to digital services through the internet. The creation of community hubs and their wide-ranging facilities - which are often provided in conjunction with a number of external/partner organisations - has resulted in a high level of visitors at the hubs. Details were provided of recorded footfall at each of the community hubs, when it was noted that a continuing upward trend has been identified at each hub. Total visitor numbers in recent years were as follows:

<u>2013/14</u>	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>2015/16</u>
311,000	327,000	409,000

8. Details were also submitted of the range of activities and services available at each community hub.
9. The scrutiny panel heard that a 2015 report to The Executive on the future operation of Community Hubs had recommended that:
 - All facilities would be branded and operated as Community Hubs;
 - Literacy would play a key role in all hubs;
 - Hubs would be multi-agency, with a combined offer reflecting local need;
 - The local community and wider partners would be encouraged and supported to maximise their role in managing and delivering hubs;

- The primary role of hubs would be to encourage self-help and self-sustainability for the local community.
10. In terms of the current strategy for hubs, the Council had consulted residents, Councillors and other stakeholders in the town with regard to the following in 2015:
- The quality of services provided in hubs;
 - Which services residents considered most important;
 - Level of interest in providing services or extending the current provision; and
 - Suggestions for how stakeholders could get more involved in hub management e.g. become a key holder or run sessions.
11. The scrutiny panel considered information on community hubs staffing. It was advised that most hubs have a full-time manager responsible for the day to day operation, plus a receptionist, a caretaker and cleaners. The manager is responsible for deciding what type of activities take place and ensuring that there is a balanced programme of activities.
12. Following interest expressed by Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA), arrangements were made for voluntary and community sector (VCS) bodies/organisations to attend the scrutiny panel to discuss their involvement with community hubs. The following people attended a meeting of the panel and presented information on their organisation; their views on the operation of community hubs to date; and possible future involvement of VCS organisations in the hubs.
- Mark Davis - Chief Executive, MVDA.
 - John Daniels - Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Citizens' Advice Bureau.
 - Mark Fishpool - Director, Middlesbrough Environment City.
 - Kulbir Peacock - Director, Hemlington Linx.
 - Vikki Touzel - Community Engagement Officer, Middlesbrough Healthwatch.
13. In addition to receiving information on activities at the community hubs, arrangements were made for Members to visit the hubs at North Ormesby and Newport. Members spoke to staff and viewed the facilities at each of the hubs.
14. The scrutiny panel received information in respect of income at the community hubs. This totalled approximately £76,000 in 2015-16. The panel also received a breakdown of running costs of the hubs, which totalled £535,000 for 2015-16. The bulk of the running costs relate to staffing, with a total of 13.5 posts across the eight hubs. This number includes library staff.
15. A further point that was raised by the scrutiny panel related to provision for older teenagers, particularly those aged over 16. It was explained that two factors have impacted on such provision. These are that Middlesbrough Council's youth service has been severely reduced as a result of budget pressures - the authority's Stronger Families Service no longer provides a dedicated youth service; and that older teenagers seemingly no longer want the traditional form of youth club support. Support is, however, provided in the form of IT suites/internet access, job clubs and services from community groups and partner organisations.

16. For further information in respect of the scrutiny panel's investigations and findings, please see the attached **Appendices 1-4** - minutes of panel meetings.

CONCLUSIONS

17. The scrutiny panel reached the following conclusions in respect of its investigation:

1. The ongoing financial challenges faced by Middlesbrough Council mean that methods of service delivery continually need to be reviewed and revised as resources decline. Allied to this is the need to ensure that the local authority maintains relevant and viable facilities that have a real impact on the communities that it serves. In this context, the aims of the introduction of community hubs - ie to rationalise Council building use and transform and modernise the way in which the network of libraries and community buildings supports local communities - have largely been achieved. This process is ongoing.
2. There is a wide, impressive and successful range of service-provider and stakeholder involvement and collaborative working at community hubs through provision of advice and information sessions; leisure facilities; meeting rooms; community groups; signposting to relevant external services; and support such as nursery provision. Services can differ significantly across the range of community hubs. Coupled with the provision of Council facilities such as libraries, this has resulted in a continued rise in visitor numbers across all hubs. There may be an opportunity to continue to build on these successes by further collaboration with external agencies and partners - for example by involving Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) to explore the potential for greater engagement with the voluntary and community sector.
3. Not all areas of Middlesbrough have community hubs. While residents can use any community hub in the Borough, it would appear that more needs to be done to promote awareness of this aspect – not all residents are aware of the existence of community hubs or the services that they provide. While all services and support are not available in all areas, it could be beneficial to consider how some of these - for example money advice, debt counselling and support for the elderly - could be made available in areas not covered by community hubs.
4. Budget and staffing reductions have inevitably impacted on community hubs. Services are offered by a mix of permanent staff, volunteers and organisations such as Friends Groups. There is therefore a need to continue to ensure that best use is made of all available resources. The panel also notes that not all Friends Groups or community groups are affiliated to a community hub and, where this is the case, it can be difficult for such groups to access funding or prepare funding bids.
5. The policy report on libraries and community hubs that was approved by The Executive in November 2015 illustrated residents' general satisfaction with service provision and highlighted services that residents consider should be provided. The report included an Action Plan that illustrated how the proposals contained in the report would be taken forward. It would be useful to measure progress to date against the Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Following the submitted evidence, and based on the conclusions above, the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel's recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny board and the Executive are as follows:
1. That in order to build on the involvement of external agencies and partners in community hubs; ensure awareness of all available services; promote closer working; and potentially improve cross-organisational working:
 - a) A list of all agencies, organisations and partners working at community hubs, together with details of all services available, is circulated to all parties/organisations providing such services.
 - b) Information is also provided to Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) as above and the organisation requested to circulate it to all of the member organisations on its database.
 2. That, in order to encourage take up of services and facilities, the availability of all community hubs and services to all Middlesbrough residents is actively promoted, for example via an article in the Love Middlesbrough publication and via social media. Consideration should also be given, in conjunction with relevant partner organisations, as to how or whether outreach provision can be made for community hub services such as money advice and support for the elderly into areas not covered by existing hubs.
 3. That an update on progress made in implementing the Action Plan on libraries and community hubs that was approved by the Executive in November 2015 is considered by the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel.
 4. That support is provided to Friends Groups and community groups that are not directly affiliated to a community hub to assist them in accessing sources of funding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

19. The Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following Council officers for their assistance with its work:
- M Davis - Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency.
 - J Daniels - Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Citizens' Advice Bureau.
 - M Fishpool - Director, Middlesbrough Environment City.
 - V Gibson - Operations Manager, Economic Development and Communities, Middlesbrough Council.
 - M Harvey - Community Infrastructure Manager, Economic Development and Communities, Middlesbrough Council.
 - K Peacock - Director, Hemlington Linx.
 - V Touzel - Community Engagement Officer, Middlesbrough Healthwatch.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

20. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports to, and minutes of, the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 20 April, 13 July, 10 August and 14 September 2016.
- Report to Executive - 3 November 2015.

COUNCILLOR NAWEED HUSSAIN - CHAIR OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL - 2015/16

COUNCILLOR TERESA HIGGINS - CHAIR OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL - 2016/17

The **2015-16** membership of the scrutiny panel was as follows: Councillors N Hussain (Chair), J Blyth (Vice-Chair) and R Arundale, S Biswas, T Lawton, L Lewis, M Saunders and A Shan.

The **2016-17** membership of the scrutiny panel is as follows: Councillors T Higgins (Chair), L Lewis (Vice-Chair) and R Arundale, J Blyth, R Brady, JG Cole, N Hussain, M Saunders and Z Uddin.

Contact Officer:

Alan Crawford

Democratic Services

Telephone: 01642 729707 (direct line)

Email: alan_crawford@middlesbrough.gov.uk

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION
AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

20 APRIL 2016

COMMUNITY HUBS/COMMUNITY CENTRE CLOSURES - INTRODUCTION TO NEW SCRUTINY TOPIC.

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to provide the Panel with background information in relation to the new scrutiny topic of Community Hubs/Community Centre Closures.

The Panel's Scrutiny Work Programme for 2015/16 included an examination of 'The Impact of community centre closures on children and young people'. The topic had been discussed with the Chair and officers and it had been agreed that the focus of the topic should be widened to encompass the role of Community Hubs and their impact, following the closure of many of the community centres.

In accordance with the above, Martin Harvey, the Community Infrastructure Manager was in attendance at the meeting to provide the Panel with an overview of the topic, including issues such as the background to the current position; the current operation of Community Hubs and the facilities available. It was suggested that following the presentation of information from the Community Infrastructure Manager, that Members decide which areas of the topic that the Panel should investigate.

The Community Infrastructure Manager advised that in 2010, a review of the Council's portfolio of buildings including community buildings had been undertaken as part of the Council's need to reduce budgets. At that time, there was a two tier arrangement in operation which consisted of Cleveland County Youth and Community Centres and Middlesbrough Council Community Centres. The Youth and Community Centres tended to be the larger of the buildings.

As part of the changes implemented, the Council closed a number of the smaller community centres including Park End, Charlbury Road and Brambles Farm Community Centres, and relocated the activities to the larger centres, creating Community Hubs. Library provision had been incorporated into seven of the larger Hubs and there had been significant capital investment into the larger facilities including Berwick Hills, Coulby Newham (The Rainbow Centre), Thorntree, Easterside, Newport Settlement, North Ormesby and Grove Hill. Three new locations were proposed which included Acklam, Marton and Hemlington.

The revised core offer included the following:

- Space for a range of services;
- Space for community meetings and activities;
- Space for and signposting to Early Years and Integrated Youth Support (IYSS) activities and support;
- Space for and signposting to sport and leisure activities;

- Space for and signposting to community activities and volunteering;
- Access to books and reference materials;
- Information on local public services; and
- Access to the internet.

By creating the Community Hubs and offering a wider range of facilities, the Council had improved the footfall of the Hubs. The role of the staff working in the buildings had changed from being predominantly community workers who were involved in community development, to becoming more centre-related and being based within the individual centres. The staff were still required to use their skills as community workers but they would be drawing in a range of services from a diverse range of providers.

Many of the Hubs included job clubs, children and families services and offered the facility of financial advice to residents and assistance to residents to use digital technology to contact the Council. Work was in progress to introduce self-serve terminals into the buildings. The Hubs also offered the opportunity for community groups to meet. A substantial amount of funding had been invested in supporting residents to get involved in community activities. Additional funding had assisted in ensuring that the services that were retained within the building were high quality. A commitment had been made to rebrand the three remaining branch libraries in Acklam, Marton and Hemlington to become community hubs by April 2016.

It was highlighted that viability was very important in respect of library provision and Members were advised that by offering a wider range of services, Middlesbrough Council had not needed to close a single library. The model of offering additional services in conjunction with library services was working well because a wider range of service users were utilising the hubs.

A Member commented that they had recently visited Thorntree Hub and he had been very impressed with the quality of services on offer with the limited amount of funding available. In response to a query with regard to the future of the Grove Hill library site, the Community Infrastructure Manager advised that he would make further enquires and report back to the Panel.

Information was submitted on the use of the Community Hubs by partnerships and voluntary sector groups and organisations, which covered a very broad range of activities. It was explained that all hubs tried to provide a wide variety of activities for the whole community.

It was highlighted that issues associated with such some hub usage, such as support for substance misuse, were well recognised and that all bookings were timetabled to ensure no conflict with uses such as playgroups or children's nurseries.

The officer was thanked for his attendance and for the detailed information that had been provided.

Members were requested for guidance on which areas of the scrutiny topic they wished to examine in more detail. In response it was advised that Members wished to receive information on what services/activities were available at each hub, particularly in respect of support services such as supporting people into employment.

The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that draft terms of reference for the scrutiny panel's investigation would be drawn up in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair for consideration at the panel's next meeting.

AGREED that draft terms of reference be drawn up in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair for consideration at the scrutiny panel's next meeting.

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION
AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

13 JULY 2016

COMMUNITY HUBS - FURTHER INFORMATION AND DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to agree the terms of reference and provide the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel with further information in respect of its current scrutiny topic of Community Hubs.

At the previous meeting of the Panel held on 20 April 2016, the Panel received an introduction/overview of the topic of Community Hubs. As a result of the discussions at that meeting and this meeting and discussions with the Chair, the following terms of reference were agreed:-

- a) To examine services provided by the Council's Community Hubs, including existing strategy and future plans.
- b) To consider the role of Community Hubs, including levels of usage; how community engagement is achieved; and how customer satisfaction is measured.
- c) To examine how the authority works, or could work in future, with other agencies/bodies/sectors to maximise the impact of Community Hubs.
- d) To examine existing budget provision and staffing and the potential impact of continued Council spending reductions.

The Community Infrastructure Manager, Economic Development and Communities was in attendance at the meeting to present further information in respect of point a) of the agreed terms of reference.

The Panel was advised that a report in relation to Community Hubs had been submitted to the Executive in 2015 which had recommended the following:-

- All facilities would be branded and operated as Community Hubs;
- Literacy would play a key role in all hubs;
- Hubs would be truly multi-agency, with a combined offer reflective of local need;
- The local community and wider partners would be encouraged and supported to maximise their role in managing and delivering hubs;
- The primary role of hubs would be to encourage self-help and self-sustainability.

The Community Infrastructure Manager advised that a copy of the above report could be forwarded to all Members of the Panel if required.

The Panel was advised that the number of people utilising the Community Hubs had increased each year. An electronic counter had been placed on the doors of the hubs to record the number of people passing through. Details of attendance at the hubs over the last three years was as follows: -

Attendance at Hubs

2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
311,000	327,000	409,000

Five of the Community Hubs, (Grove Hill, Easterside, Thorntree, North Ormesby and Newport) were managed by Economic Development and Communities, the other two hubs, (Rainbow Leisure Centre and the Neptune), were managed by independent Leisure Companies. All of the hubs had retained a library service, and it was highlighted that the library service in respect of the Rainbow Leisure Centre and the Neptune Centre was located in the lobby of the hubs.

It was recognised that hubs could take a stronger role in increasing literacy and some of the hubs offered early years and youth support services and activities to support families in literacy. It was proposed to invite all schools into Central Library to encourage each child to become a member of the library. A hot desk facility was available for people wanting to offer a service from the hub. A team offering advice on selective licensing was also based at one of the hubs.

As part of the facilities offered by the Community Hubs, Wi-Fi had been installed to enable customers to use the internet to gain access to on-line Government and Council services. Work was in progress to introduce self-serve terminals into the buildings. The Panel was shown a table detailing the range of different services on offer in each of the hubs and the take-up of the services. Copies of leaflets in respect of the programme of activities at Newport and North Ormesby Hubs were distributed to the Panel.

It was highlighted that the Amateur Boxing Club attracted forty service users each night and it was at no cost to the Council as it was run by a volunteer. Work clubs operated by ACTES offered support for the unemployed to gain employment. An appointment service was in operation for mornings and a drop in service for afternoons. It was very well attended. In response to a query, the Panel was advised that residents could attend any of the hubs; they did not have to live in the Ward that the hub was located. Many of the hubs also operated 'Friends of' groups and these were voluntary groups set up to support the hub. A dementia cafe had also been opened in the Acklam hub.

Three new hub locations were proposed which included Acklam, Marton and Hemlington. These new hubs were rebranded as community hubs in April 2016. The Panel was advised that the Council had commenced developing Community Hubs in 2012 as part of the review of the Council's property portfolio. As part of the review some of the existing community centres, including Park End, Charlbury Road and Brambles Farm Community Centres had closed and the activities taking place at those centres were relocated to other facilities. The crafts group located at Park End Community Centre had relocated to the North Ormesby Hub and as a result the group had grown and expanded in terms of residents and engaging with people with disabilities.

Each Hub had a receptionist who was responsible for liaising with service users. Over time, trust developed between the people operating the hubs and the clients and as a result a receptionist could sometimes recognise if a client had a health or welfare issue and signpost them to the appropriate organisation. The services offered across the hubs and the take up of the services in May 2015 were as follows:-

Advice and Information	142
Welfare	62
Foodbank	7
Signposting to Agencies	125
Health	15
Other Council Services	95
Nellbooker/CAB	91
Other	128
<u>Total</u>	<u>665</u>

In response to a query, the Community Infrastructure Manager advised that the wide range of services offered at the Community Hubs meant that there was less pressure on some of the services located in Middlesbrough House.

In response to a query with regard to whether the Council charged for the use of the hub, the Panel was advised that it depended on the activity. If the activity provided was by a commercial service, then the Council would make a charge. There was no charge for the Work Clubs as ACTES did not receive any funding to operate the facility. The Panel was advised that all of the activities offered in the hubs were advertised on the Council website and each hub had a Facebook page.

A Member queried whether the hubs operated youth club facilities. The Panel was advised that the youth service had been significantly reduced. Some of the hubs did run a youth club once a week and some of the youth service officers worked with young people as part of their work with families in crisis. Some faith organisations such as North Ormesby Trinity Church provided youth facilities which were funded by the Big Lottery. The age range of the take-up of the service was up to 19 years but very few 18 and 19 year olds attended. In response to a query with regard to the closing time of the activities provided at the hubs, the Panel was advised that it was usually 9.30pm to 10.00pm.

In terms of the current strategy for hubs, in 2015, the Council had consulted residents, Councillors and other stakeholders in the town with regard to the following:-

- The quality of the current services provided in hubs;
- Which services residents considered were important;
- Level of interest in providing services or extending the current provision; and
- Suggestions for how stakeholders could get more involved in hub management e.g. become a key holder or run more sessions).

In terms of responses to the consultation, 500 responses were received from residents and 100 responses were received from Councillors and stakeholders.

In response to a query with regard to the staffing structures at the hub, the Panel was advised that the majority of hubs had 1 full-time Manager responsible for the day to day operation of the hub, a receptionist, a caretaker and cleaners. The Manager of the hub was responsible for deciding what type of activities operated at the premises, taking into account requests from the public and stakeholders to ensure that there was a balanced programme of activities.

In terms of the future direction of Community Hubs, the Executive report from 2015 had recommended the following:-

- Enhance the relationship with schools in order to support an improvement in literacy levels;
- Meet with the Arts Council and other partners to explain the Community Hub model and its benefits;
- Consider consortia working with other local authorities to improve buying power with regards to a Library Management system (LMS);
- Look at reviewing the digital offer;
- Focus on the potential for income generation, particularly in respect of Central Library;
- Carry out mapping and data collection to establish a base-line for activity;
- Raise staff awareness of the successful Change Programme to date and encourage staff to share and celebrate the good news; and
- Consider and ensure equality of access to new provision and approaches.

It was suggested that the Panel host a future meeting at the Thorntree Community Hub to enable Members to view the activities taking place at the premises.

AGREED as follows:

1. That a copy of the report in respect of Community Hubs, submitted to the Executive in 2015 be circulated to The Panel.
2. That a future meeting of the Panel be scheduled to take place in the Thorntree Community Hub.

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION
AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

10 AUGUST 2016

COMMUNITY HUBS - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report, the purpose of which was to provide further information in respect of the Panel's current investigation in respect of Community Hubs.

A Member queried which department within the Council was responsible for community hubs. The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that Economic Regeneration had responsibility for the majority of the hubs. The Member queried whether there were any officers from Economic Regeneration present at the meeting. The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the two officers from the Economic Regeneration department who had been due to attend the meeting were both on holiday. The Member stated that in his view, there should still be a representative from Economic Regeneration present at the meeting to offer advice to the VCS and Members if required and to hear what the VCS organisations had to say.

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that he had inquired if any other officer from Economic Regeneration was able to attend the meeting and he was advised that there was nobody available. The Chair requested that it be recorded that the Panel was dissatisfied with regard to the fact that Economic Regeneration had not provided a representative from the department to attend the Panel.

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that following liaison with Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA), arrangements had been made for voluntary and community sector bodies/organisations involved with the work of MVDA to attend the meeting to discuss item 2 c) of the terms of reference - to examine how the authority works, or could work in future, with other agencies/bodies/sectors to maximise the impact of Community Hubs.

The following people had been invited to attend the meeting:

Mark Davis - Chief Executive, MVDA.

John Daniels - Chief Executive, CAB.

Mark Fishpool - Director, Middlesbrough Environment City.

Kulbir Peacock - Director, Hemlington Linx.

Vikki Touzel - Community Engagement Officer, Middlesbrough Healthwatch.

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that he had received information from Val Gibson, the Operations Manager for North Ormesby Hub in respect of the current activities and the partnerships in operation at the North Ormesby hub. A copy of the information was circulated to Panel members.

It was proposed that the scrutiny panel meeting take the form of a round table discussion to hear from the above organisations in respect of the following:-

- VCS organisations' involvement, if any, with community hubs.
- Their views on the operation of community hubs, to date.
- Possible future involvement of VCS organisations in the hubs.

The Chief Executive of MVDA advised that MVDA had been made aware that the scrutiny panel was investigating the topic of community hubs. He had suggested that local VCS organisations might like to contribute to the discussion. In accordance with the above MVDA had extended an invitation to the local VCS to attend the panel to provide information with regard to the role of their organisation, and in particular to advise of any existing links with community hubs and to explore the potential of any future links.

A number of organisations who had been unable to attend the panel meeting had submitted information to the Chief Executive of MVDA indicating that they would like to be involved in community hubs or would like to visit the hubs to find out what was currently available at the hub and look at the potential for their organisation to be involved.

It was suggested that the Panel receive a list of the hubs that were currently run by the Council and those operated by independent organisations.

Vikki Touzel, Community Engagement Officer from Middlesbrough Healthwatch advised that local Healthwatches had been set up across England and Middlesbrough Healthwatch was the local cell for Healthwatch England.

The aim of the organisation was to provide a voice for individuals and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs and to support people to find the right health and social care services for them by providing appropriate information, advice and signposting.

Middlesbrough Healthwatch currently used community hubs on a drop-in basis to engage with local people and to deliver health projects. Healthwatch currently worked with the Newport Community hub in relation to an Asylum Seeker Project. The Panel was advised that a recent project in respect of Cancer Research UK which involved two nurses being based in a community hub to pass out valuable informal advice to individuals with regard to cancer related issues had taken place in a community hub. Following the success of the project, it was anticipated that it would lead to a regional project being established.

The Panel was advised that Middlesbrough Healthwatch was funded by the Council and they worked alongside the VCS and other organisations. People could sign up for free to be members of Healthwatch. Healthwatch would be interested in finding out what facilities were available in the hubs and whether they could facilitate clinical services for the community health team.

Mark Fishpool, Director of Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) advised that MEC worked across Middlesbrough to promote healthy and sustainable living. The Panel was advised that MEC was involved in One Planet Middlesbrough, which involved creating a sustainable community by engaging a greater number of residents in actions that promoted sustainable living and behaviours to improve quality of life and address the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by people of Middlesbrough.

MEC hosted events at all five of the community hubs. Prior to the creation of community hubs, MEC worked across all the various community centres which meant that although their services were widespread, there was often a smaller turnout. The use of hubs meant that MEC were able to reach a greater section of the community in one place and because the hubs were already well-used it meant that there was a greater turn out of events hosted by MEC and better use of staff time. The organisation was mainly externally funded, so it had specified targets to meet.

MEC were involved in a number of different projects such as healthy eating, cookery and work surrounding energy efficiency e.g. better tariffs etc. The facilities at the hub were ideal and MEC worked with the staff at the hubs to encourage people to attend the different projects. It was thought that the fact that many of the projects/events were hosted by hubs in the community was viewed as an advantage when applying for funding.

Kulbir Peacock, the Director of Hemlington Linx advised that the Hemlington Linx Youth Project provided support and advice for mainly young people aged 13 - 19 but in some cases for individuals aged up to 25.

In terms of the project's involvement with hubs, over the last year it had been hit and miss because of changes in the organisation and the way in which young people were being encouraged to enjoy hubs. The Director advised that Linx would like to look at how that situation could be improved and how the organisation could engage better with young people.

Linx was based at the bungalow in Hemlington Recreation Centre but the organisation was limited by space. The bungalow was currently owned by Middlesbrough Council, but it was subject to community asset transfer. The group who were taking on responsibility for the bungalow were called Tees Valley Community Asset Preservation Trust, and they were based in Stockton. The group had taken over a number of buildings in the Stockton area and they were currently looking at Hemlington Recreation Centre. The Tees Valley Community Asset Preservation Trust had spoken to the organisations that were currently based at the premises and had reassured them that their existing terms and conditions would remain in place. The Panel was advised that Linx needed to raise funds towards their running costs.

The number of people attending the sessions at Linx ranged from 5 to 55 although the ideal number for sessions was up to 30 people. If more attended, the courtyard was used if required. A youth club operated three times a week and two evenings were used for detached work. The organisation had held meetings with the job centre and the job centre referred people to Linx for assistance. The organisation also worked with families and offered support in respect of issues such as employment, training and education, sexual health, healthy eating, alcohol and drug misuse, universal credit and other finance related issues (particularly for those who did not have access to WiFi or IT equipment), and reducing the number of pregnancies and STIs in young people.

Most of the people that the organisation worked with were from the Hemlington area, but residents from other areas were welcome. Linx had three small offices which could be used for 1 to 1s or small group work and a kitchen based in the building and one room which was used for larger group activities. Linx did sometimes have activities involving mixed age sessions but only with the permission of both the younger group and the older group.

A Member queried whether Hemlington had a youth service. The Panel was advised that Middlesbrough Council did not have a youth service. Any youth work carried out by the Council was usually through the stronger families initiative, but this meant that only specific families received assistance. Linx worked hand in hand with the Council to assist young people.

The Director of Linx advised that her organisation had been requested to look at youth provision in the town and produce a report with recommendations.

The Chair advised that there appeared to be an issue with the provision of youth services. It was suggested that the Panel requests further information in respect of existing provision in Middlesbrough with a view to referring the issue to the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel as a potential topic for scrutiny.

The Panel was advised that Linx operated a detached youth worker service where workers went out into the streets to engage with youths. The organisation had 2 dedicated part-time youth workers and their wages were paid for through funding received. In response to a query, the Panel was advised that Linx did not receive any funding from the Council.

John Daniels, Chief Executive of Middlesbrough CAB advised that CAB worked in partnership with four other organisations to provide benefit/debt advice. In terms of usage of hubs, CAB currently used Grove Hill, Hemlington, Newport, North Ormesby and Thorntree hubs. Advice was currently offered to up to 250 residents per month. There was generally a good take up of sessions and the hubs worked well in terms of access.

CAB did have a town centre office but it was an advantage to be able to provide advice sessions in the community. Often as part of an advice session a CAB officer was able to identify other problems associated with debt, e.g. poverty, mental health issues or issues around healthy eating and some of the organisations that provided support for these issues often held support sessions in the hub so it was easier to make a referral. If CAB were able to co-ordinate with other services, dependant on the range of services available, some of the hubs could operate as a one-stop facility.

The Panel was advised that Val Gibson, the Operations Manager for North Ormesby hub had assisted the CAB in sourcing additional funding for the organisation. A Member advised that they would be interested in seeing statistics with regard to the catchment area for the services offered in respect of each of the hubs. It was commented that it would be interesting to see if there was a waiting list for particular services or whether the dates/days offered in respect of some of the services were not convenient for residents. If this data was available, it could identify any gaps in provision or if additional dates for services already on offer at the hub were required.

A Member commented that CAB operated an excellent service at the Grove Hill hub. If an individual did not have an appointment, they were required to sit and wait in a queue until they were able to be seen. The Panel was advised that CAB offered a web-based appointment service. The organisation aspired to have two advisors at each advice session. At the moment it worked well at the Thorntree hub because that hub had more staff than some of the other hubs. A Member commented that it would be helpful to find out the number of staff employed at each hub.

A Member commented that the Council had a long association with the CAB. He queried how many young people were supported by the organisation. The Panel was advised that the number of young people that had received assistance from the CAB was unfortunately not as high as expected according to the age profile of Middlesbrough.

The CAB also worked with the Council's Financial Inclusion Group. In terms of advertising the services of the CAB, traditional advertising methods were used such as leaflets and posters, but the organisation were working on introducing the use of twitter and facebook to encourage more young people to use the service.

The CAB over a one year period assisted in the region of 9000 people a year, with 35% being offered debt advice, 35% being offered benefit advice and the remainder being offered support and advice on a wide range of issues. CAB also had an advocacy team. In terms of the profile of people that received assistance, the majority were older people but the BEM usage was higher than expected for the profile for Middlesbrough. In terms of usage of the service, it was possible to look at the catchment area of the people using the service and link it to the Index for Deprivation.

A Member commented that Acklam Hub had not been mentioned and he stated that there must be people in Acklam who required the service. The Chair advised that not all the hubs had been mentioned, and it would be useful to receive a breakdown of the number of people employed at each hub and the breakdown of activities. It was commented that areas where there was a higher level of deprivation and the benefit uptake was higher, tended to require the services more.

The Panel was advised that Middlesbrough College offered a very good advice service to young people. Reference was also made to Know Your Money - Keep The Change (KYM), a Big Lottery funded project based in Middlesbrough led by Erimus Housing. The project worked with local young people (aged 16-24) to improve their financial confidence. The Panel was advised that some people with disabilities were not claiming some of the benefits that they were entitled to and CAB were working with these people with regard to unclaimed benefits.

The Chief Executive of CAB advised that the organisation and its partners operated roving advice sessions and if required, one could be facilitated in the Acklam Hub for a two week period.

A Member commented that many of the hubs relied on volunteers to staff the hub rather than permanent staff. Hubs were vital to the community and it was important that they had the right level of staff and the right balance of facilities to function effectively.

It was suggested that a discussion could be held with the Chief Executive of MVDA with regard to the organisations who had indicated an interest in the scrutiny topic. Discussions could then be undertaken with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Panel with a view to meeting interested organisations.

It was noted that the Council no longer provided a dedicated youth service. It was suggested that the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel could consider this issue as a future scrutiny topic.

AGREED as follows:

1. That the submitted information be noted.
2. That information be submitted to the next meeting in respect of the outstanding Term of Reference regarding staffing and budget provision at the Community Hubs.

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ECONOMIC REGENERATION
AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

14 SEPTEMBER 2016

COMMUNITY HUBS - FURTHER INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Panel was informed that unfortunately Martin Harvey, Community Infrastructure Manager was unable to attend the meeting. The Chair and Panel Members extended condolences and deepest sympathy to Martin Harvey following his recent bereavement.

Val Gibson, Operations Manager, was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made. Members went on a tour of the North Ormesby Community Hub building and looked at the cafe, computer suite, library, children's day nursery, dance school and boxing club.

It was noted that the former school building was built in 1879 and was owned by Middlesbrough Council. Members commented on the excellent standard of cleanliness and quality of the decoration throughout the building.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that the purpose of today's meeting was to receive information in relation to term of reference (d) for the current scrutiny of Community Hubs which was: To examine existing budget provision and staffing and the potential impact of continued Council spending reductions.

The Operations Manager explained that each Hub was staffed by one full time Locality Manager, one full time Resource Worker and one full time Caretaker. The Caretakers were employed and funded by the Council's Property Services department. The library staff were employed part-time by the Library Service and therefore the Hub staff also had to manage the library two days per week. Newport Hub did not have a library.

The North Ormesby Community Hub was usually open Monday to Saturday until approximately 7.30 pm. The Dancing and Boxing Schools operated until 9.00 pm and both clubs were run by volunteers who would lock up once classes had finished. Many of the sessions in the Hubs were run by volunteers including computer classes. In addition, the Department for Work and Pensions were currently providing community outreach sessions for claimants who had been sanctioned. All the Hubs had management committees known as 'Friends of the Hubs'. The Council staff were members of the committees and helped to organise community events.

The total income for all Hubs for the previous year was approximately £76,000 which was made up as follows:

North Ormesby - £18,412
Thorntree - £12,460
Grove Hill - £5,012
Newport - £40,198

It was noted that there was quite a difference in income for the different Hubs. It was explained that the Council's Neighbourhood Safety Team had taken some office space at Grove Hill and therefore its capacity for income from rentals was reduced. The Council did not charge its own staff for rental of office space in the Hubs since it owned the buildings. The Newport Hub had two sports halls available for rent and this therefore increased its potential for income. The target income for North Ormesby in the last year was £11,500.

All income was received into the Community Infrastructure budget and was ring-fenced. The Council paid for the staffing and utilities such as water, gas and electric for all Hubs. Panel Members were keen to receive more detailed information in relation to the breakdown of income and expenditure for the Hubs.

In addition, North Ormesby Community Hub was able to access funding for community projects from the Big Local, an initiative funded by the Big Lottery of £1 million over ten years. Funding could be drawn down on a quarterly basis.

The issue of provision for young people aged sixteen upwards was raised and it was noted that there was an IT Suite available and a job club, as well as activities and services provided by community groups and voluntary services. The Council's Stronger Families Service (formerly the Youth Service) no longer provided a dedicated youth service. Members were reminded that at the last meeting it was suggested that the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel could be asked to consider this as a future scrutiny topic.

The Chair thanked the Operations Manager for her attendance at the meeting and the tour of the Hub.

AGREED as follows that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. A detailed breakdown of income and expenditure for the Hubs would be provided at the next meeting.
3. The next meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel would be held at Newport Hub, subject to the availability of a suitable room.