

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 12 March 2020.

PRESENT: Councillors J Thompson (Chair); M Storey (Vice Chair); Councillors Cooke, Coupe, Lewis (As Substitute), Mawston and Rooney (As Substitute) Saunders and Uddin.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Cllr C Dodds.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: J. Cain (Local Democracy Reporter)

OFFICERS: S. Bonner, A. Hoy, D. Johnson, T. Parkinson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillors; Garvey, Hellaoui, Higgins, McIntyre, Platt, and McTigue.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made at this point in the meeting.

1 MINUTES - OSB - 13 FEBRUARY 2020

The minutes of the OSB meeting held on 13 February were submitted and accepted as a true record.

2 MAYOR'S UPDATE

The Mayor, accompanied by the Chief Executive, provided OSB with an overview of the Council's priorities as laid out in the Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

As part of the presentation the following points were made:

- The Strategic Plan 2020-2023 was split into three main areas; People, Place and Business each of which had three separate sub-sections.
- The People Section was broken down into the sub-sections; tackling crime and anti-social behaviour; ensuring Middlesbrough had the best schools and to become a leader on environmental issues.
- The Place Section was broken down into; transforming the Town Centre; to build more Town Centre homes and to make Middlesbrough look and feel amazing.
- The Business section was broken down into; winning investment and creating jobs; introducing a new era of transparency and openness and creating a positive perception of the Town nationally.

A Member queried if there could be an expansion of the neighbourhood Street Warden provision as there was currently only one operating in the south of the town. The Mayor confirmed that while he was confident the Street Wardens had been in different areas in the South of the Town he would approach the Service Area to explore if this could be expanded.

A Member queried, in relation to crime, if the Mayor had witnessed any improvement in Cleveland Police since the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) report and since taking office in May 2020. The Mayor confirmed that he had spoken to, and met with, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and there had been a commitment to increase the number of officers working in the community. The Chief Executive also confirmed that he had regular meetings with Cleveland Police's Chief Constable and that there had been an increase in community police presence and there had been a drop in anti-social behaviour and crime in the town. When comparing such decreases with the same time period in the previous year, it could be argued that the introduction of the additional Street Wardens, and other measures such as the PSPO, was having a noticeable effect. The Mayor recognised the

work the Police were playing in efforts to reduce crime.

A Member queried if Middlesbrough becoming a sub-regional centre could be part of the Mayor's priorities. The Mayor clarified that, for him, official titles such as sub-regional lead, were not that important and that if all of his priorities were carried out this would happen by default anyway. The Member commented that titles sometimes had a role to play, especially for distant stakeholders, such government departments. The Chief Executive also commented that titles could play an important role, with many external stakeholders seeing Middlesbrough as the economic and urban centre of the Tees Valley. However, many residents of the Town do not see this as being important. It was also commented that there were always ongoing discussions about how the town views itself.

A Member welcomed the Mayor's initiative of being Transparent in terms of decision making. They also queried, in relation to the Council's Investment Prospectus, what progress had been made against its goals of £650 million of investment, 5,000 jobs and 5,000 homes. It was confirmed that the Investment Prospectus was a live document and that more than £250 million of investment had been attracted to the town and more than 1,000 jobs had been created. All other objectives were being worked on. It was also confirmed that Investment Prospectus 2 would be launched later in the year which would follow the standard authorisation process and receive Executive approval. It was further confirmed that the metrics used for measuring Investment Prospectus 2's objectives would be determined by Council Directorates, in the same way as other Council strategic documents.

The Mayor clarified that, with regard to investment, this could be an ambiguous term. For example, a large company opening and operating a £50 million business is seen as investment, while the sale of land for development may not be seen as investment.

A Member posed a question about the Mayor's Capital programme which comprised three sub questions: Town Centre housing and what that would look like; Traffic Management issues, as they related to other capital programmes, and Town Centre Office development. With regards to Town Centre development, the Mayor clarified that homes in the Town Centre should suit a wide range of people to ensure that the Town Centre is economically vibrant. However, the development initially would need to be focused on the affordable market. With regard to Traffic Management issues the Mayor recognised that this was an issue for Middlesbrough, but was not a significant one, relatively speaking. With regard to office development in the Town Centre, there were still no confirmed tenants for the buildings, however advanced conversations were ongoing.

A Member queried if the Council could move into one of the office blocks, as originally planned, and it was clarified that there was a need to secure external tenants, perhaps one floor at a time, in order to ensure the office blocks were an asset to offer.

In relation to selective landlord licensing which had been successful in North Ormesby in helping to reduce anti-social behaviour, a Member queried if the Mayor would seek to roll the scheme out across the town. The Mayor confirmed that while the project was doing some good work he did dispute the validity of some of the results. He did recognise the value in the teams carrying out the work and was open minded on the matter.

A query was raised regarding the development of Boho X and if the Mayor would declare any pecuniary interests in the project and recuse himself from any further proceedings if appropriate. The Mayor confirmed that, where appropriate, he would declare any interests on the Council's Register of Interests.

A Member commented that the Mayor had campaigned to employ a further 30 to 40 Street Wardens, and they queried what numbers were currently deployed around the Town. It was clarified that at the beginning of the initiative Street Warden numbers were 12. However, there were a number of enforcement staff with responsibilities similar to Street Wardens and it was intended some of these roles could be combined. Through a combination of this and additional staff made possible through funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority, there were now 58.

It was queried if budget cuts could affect this number and it was clarified there were no intentions to do this in the next three years, however should the funding be stopped this could result in the loss of 28 Street Wardens. It was also confirmed that the lack of community policing in East Middlesbrough would be taken up with the Chief Constable.

A Member commented that in Homes of Multiple Occupancy there was evidence of people of different needs being housed together inappropriately, especially with regards to drug use. This could lead to an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour. As there was currently no regulation around this issue in Middlesbrough, the Member queried if the Mayor would look at this with a view of getting people into more appropriate housing. It was agreed this issue would be taken up with the appropriate Service Department to see if could be progressed.

A Member commented that everyday racism existed in the UK and that, as Middlesbrough had the highest proportion of BME residents in the North East, why the Council was not more proactive in its celebrations of ethnic diversity. The Mayor commented that Middlesbrough was a very tolerant place and welcomed people from all ethnic background. While he recognised this was an important issue he was keen not make this a tick-box exercise, and did not see a need to highlight the issue. A Member commented that while the town was a tolerant place more needed to be done to drive the issue of community cohesion.

It was commented that as part of the Strategic Plan there was already community cohesion work underway and that this work was tailored to specific localities. A Member commented that using vehicles such the Mela could be useful in helping to publicise community cohesion.

A Member commented that that Health Scrutiny Panel had recently visited CGL on Marton Road and heard that the Public Health department had submitted a capital programme bid of £200,000 for the provision of more residential places for people with substance misuse and alcohol issues. This grant would allow for a detox facility which was currently only available in Liverpool. Increasing the capacity of the service would allow buy-in from other areas which would likely outweigh the cost spent on the service, and would therefore be self-funding. The Member queried why this was not considered as part of the capital budget allocation and could this be considered going forward. The Mayor and Chief Executive clarified they would provide a written answer to the Member.

A Member queried if housing developments by Thirteen would be incorporating environmentally friendly measures in their housing developments. The Mayor confirmed that he would work with the Member and Thirteen to ensure this was the case.

A Member queried if the town centre housing development would be financed solely by private means. The Mayor confirmed such developments would utilise a blend of private finance and Council funds, such as S.106 money. Approaching it in this way would likely attract additional investment into the town.

A discussion took place regarding future town centre acquisition and it was confirmed this was a sound financial investment for the Council given the way the deal was structured. In relation to the Student Village it was confirmed that all of the properties on the site had recently been secured but that timescales of the development were still in flux.

The Mayor confirmed that 15,000 trees would be planted by the Summer, and he was asking each member for optimal places for trees to be planted in their Wards. A member queried if additional budget had been made available for additional maintenance that trees brought. It was confirmed that the Director of the Service would look at this.

A Member queried the levels of Council borrowing and that it needed to be prudent about what it invested in. It was clarified that the cost of borrowing had reduced, by more than 1% and that it was important to look at the income it created.

The Chief Executive submitted a report which identified the forthcoming issues to be considered by the Executive as outlined in Appendix A to the report.

The report provided the Overview and Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to consider whether any item contained within the Executive Forward Work Programme should be considered by the Board or referred to a Scrutiny Panel.

ORDERED: That the information provided be noted.

4

SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel advised the Board that at its last meeting two presentations were received, the first concerning the development of Boho X and its location on Gosford Street. The second concerned the town's heritage, which included not only buildings but also historical sites, such as the four red telephone boxes situated outside the Town Hall. The Panel also intended to carry out a site visit to Teesside Crematorium on 31st March as part of a short review looking into the impact of the opening of Stockton Council's Crematorium on Middlesbrough. The Chair of the Panel also thanked Councillor Branson for his report, and continuing work, examining transport issues.

A Member commented that previous discussions around the crematorium service had included the creation of a Council funeral service which could be offered at a lower cost which may have encouraged residents to use Teesside Crematorium.

At the Chair's request, the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel met on Monday March 9th to receive an update on supporting Kinship Carers. The Director of Children's Services, Sue Butcher, provided an update which included looking at a previous action plan from 2017 and its associated updates. Using the update as a reference point, the Panel queried progress of recommendations already made and the direction of travel going forward. Overall, the Panel found there was still a great deal of work to be done but progress was being made. The Vice Chair of the Panel, Cllr Dodds, will be able to answer any questions members of the Board may have.

The Vice Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel advised the Board that the previous meeting had provided a good update on the ongoing situation surrounding opioids in the town. The Board was advised that prescription drugs also contributed to opioid addiction. A Member queried what the most popular drug in Middlesbrough was and it was confirmed that Pregabalin. It was also confirmed that Heroin use in Middlesbrough was lower than that of drugs such as Pregabalin.