

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on 5 November 2020.

PRESENT: Councillors J Thompson (Chair), M Storey (Vice-Chair), C Cooke, D Coupe, C Dodds (as Substitute for L Garvey), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, T Mawston, C McIntyre, J McTigue, M Saunders and J Platt and Z Uddin.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor A High – Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children’s Social Care
Councillor S Hill – Chair of the Children and Young People’s Learning Scrutiny Panel
Councillor C Hobson – Executive Member for Finance and Governance.

OFFICERS: M Adams, S Bonner, C Breheny, R Brown, S Butcher, G Cooper, C Lunn, T Parkinson and S Reynolds.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor L Garvey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

20/36 MINUTES - OSB - 1 OCTOBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 1 October 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/37 EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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.

NOTED**20/38 MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The Chief Executive and Director of Public Health provided a verbal update to the Board regarding the Council’s response to COVID-19. The following points were made:

- Since the last update was provided to the Board, the number of positive cases had increased, which currently sat around the mid-300s per 100,000 of the population.
- There had been a change in the nature of the virus within Middlesbrough, with an increase in the number of hospital admissions being seen. It was indicated that three weeks ago, there were approximately 30 patients in James Cook University Hospital (JCUH) with COVID-19 - there was now approximately 100 patients. Of those, around 14 were critical.
- Due to capacity issues within the hospital, Council officers had been working with JCUH to provide 25 COVID-19-secure residential care beds within the Borough. Where appropriate, this allowed for patients with COVID-19, who had a need for residential care, to be discharged from hospital safely, as it avoided the need for them to enter the general care home population. Further modelling work was currently taking place with JCUH to ascertain the maximum number of beds that would be needed and how long those beds would be required for.
- The majority of discussion undertaken over the previous few weeks had focused around the Government’s decision to place Middlesbrough under further restrictions, and the Authority’s financial ask around those once imposed. Those restrictions were superseded by the introduction of the new ‘Tier System’ and the move by the Government to place Middlesbrough and other Local Authorities into Tier 3. This

- planned move was then superseded by the national lockdown announcement, which had now commenced.
- In terms of decisions being taken, one particular decision taken over the previous few weeks concerned the provision of free school meals over the half-term period. The work undertaken by officers in terms of implementing this was acknowledged; all eligible parents had received cash payments of £15.00 within 48 hours. A voucher scheme had been considered, but owing to time restrictions would not have been feasible. Work was currently taking place to ascertain what support could be provided to eligible families over the Christmas holiday period.
 - In terms of the current national lockdown, it was explained that a thorough understanding around the impact on Council services was needed. A decision relating to this had been ratified on 4 November 2020 and a press release would be issued shortly.
 - It was indicated that the Dorman Museum, Archives, Newham Grange Leisure Farm, Middlesbrough Theatre, Town Hall (performances), Christmas Markets, Leisure Centres (Middlesbrough Sports Village, Neptune Centre and Rainbow Centre) and the Chapel of Rest at Acklam Cemetery would all close, which was in line with Government guidance.
 - A number of functions would also be required to change in light of the current restrictions, including:
 1. Restricted use of The Live Well Centre (although substance misuse and sexual health services would continue);
 2. Virtual working would be undertaken to support care homes, as well as carry-out the functions of a range of services including the Health Development Team, Stop Smoking Service, Trading Standards, Environmental Protection, Environmental Health and Licensing. With regards to Licensing, visits and inspections would only be completed where absolutely necessary. In respect of Selective Landlord Licensing, housing standards inspections remained suspended, although complaints could still be raised;
 3. North Ormesby Market would be restricted to the sale of food and other items deemed as 'essential' by the Government;
 4. In terms of Libraries and Community Hubs, three of these would be kept open, i.e. My Place, Newport Community Hub and Library, and North Ormesby Community Hub and Library. Educational or care activities were delivered from these; all of the groups that met in other Community Hubs would be able to meet in these three venues too, provided that social distancing guidelines were met;
 5. In terms of community support, arrangements were in place through the Help Boro Hub to provide support to lonely and isolated older people over the winter period. It was highlighted that Government guidance in terms of shielding had changed quite significantly from the first wave of the pandemic, and therefore support was to be provided after all other avenues had been exhausted. For example: there was not an expectation for the Council to provide food parcels, but there was an expectation that assistance would be provided to help people access priority slots. For loneliness and isolation, it was indicated that the Council had telephone support and linkages with organisations such as Ageing Better Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough MIND, where such support would be put in place;
 6. In terms of enforcement, the Council had linkages with Cleveland Police; the Council's Street Wardens would be acting as COVID-19 marshals. In instances where premises were found not to be operating in line with current restrictions, contact would be made with the Public Protection Team (which had been strengthened to include three additional FTE resource) for action to be taken against those premises. If non-compliance referred to the public, contact would be made with Cleveland Police; and
 7. Demand upon the Help Boro Hub was not expected to be as high as through the first wave of the pandemic, but contact would be made with the clinically extremely vulnerable group via a letter from the Government. The Council would then make contact with all of those people (circa. 7500) to ascertain what support was required.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions of both the Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health. The following issues were raised:

- A Member referred to Selective Landlord Licensing and queried whether it would be possible, because assessments could not currently be carried out and this was a time restricted project, for an extension to be granted to the project to achieve a true reflection of the work being carried out. In response, it was indicated that this suggestion could be looked at.
- A Member made reference to free school meals and queried whether consideration had been given to opening up the school kitchens over the Christmas holidays, and potentially into next year as required, to ensure that children received a healthy meal. In response, it was explained that this had been considered and was actually something that did happen during the first wave of the pandemic. However, very few children had attended to obtain a packed lunch or hot meal. It was indicated that work would be undertaken with schools with a view to establish a scheme that would promote children being fed and being fed as healthily as possible.
- A Member made reference to Tier 3, which was preceded by the main lockdown, and queried the possibility of reverting back to Tier 3 restrictions once lockdown had been eased, and what financial assistance would be provided to help the Authority if this were the case. In response, it was felt that unless there was a significant change across the Tees Valley whilst the national lockdown was in place, Middlesbrough would enter Tier 3, which was being planned for. The national lockdown was currently expected to be in place until 2 December 2020. In terms of financials associated with the 'Tier System', it was explained that finance was available, but was complicated because money was provided by various sources. There was an allowance of £8 per head of population that was granted to any Local Authority entering Tier 3 restrictions (£3 per head if entering Tier 2). Further funding could also be provided, which would then allow for businesses to qualify for furlough, etc. It was highlighted that, at this point in time, officers were not concerned about COVID-related finance; support provided to date had been acceptable. The most significant issue at the moment referred to national contact tracing. It was felt that contact tracing needed to be managed and controlled locally in order to effectively reduce the rate of transmission. Financial resource had been set aside for this, but additional national resource would also be required. This was currently being discussed by Government and all of the Public Health Directors from across the Tees Valley Authorities.
- A Member referred to The Live Well Centre and sought clarification on the term 'restricted'. In response, it was explained that all of the face-to-face contact in The Live Well Centre would not be available, other than in exceptional circumstances for substance misuse and sexual health consultations.
- A Member supported the notion of local control and management of contact tracing, referencing the excellent work undertaken by Middlesbrough Council to date in responding to the pandemic. In response, it was felt that there was a good body of evidence that local arrangements worked far better than national arrangements due to local knowledge being utilised.
- A Member queried the reasoning as to why local test and trace was being prevented (e.g. government restriction, availability of resources, etc.). In response, it was explained that seven/eight weeks ago, a level of contact tracing was being carried out within the town with staff ascertaining where the virus had been passed on. This then allowed for work to be undertaken with the respective premises. It was explained that for officers to undertake the work anticipated for local tracing, a budget of £1m would be required. Financial resource was not of concern as this could be allocated from funds granted - what was required was agreement to be made for access to the national system so that the information could be obtained and acted on as soon as possible. Nationally, about 70% of people were contacted with a positive test: this figure was lower in Middlesbrough, but it was felt that local tracing could help improve that, but direct access to the system itself was required. Immediate notification on the system would allow contact to be made with people on the same day and remove any potential delay. Essentially, access to the system was the key issue, not finance or human resource. The Director of Public Health explained that there were also issues with the national system, with some people being contacted multiple times. The system needed to be completely overhauled and looked at across the North East with the local offer being defined, and those were the discussions currently taking place.

- A Member referred to the £8 amount per head for Tier 3 and queried whether this was based on the Electoral Register. In response, it was explained that this was based on the most up-to-date population statistics that were available; currently just over 140,000. Tier 2 at £3 per head would provide just over £420,000 in funding, whereas Tier 3 would provide £2m in funding.
- A Member referred to the opening of three of the Community Hubs and commented that all were in the same area. It was queried whether there was the option to open one in another area of the town, such as South Middlesbrough, to try and even out the spread of where people were going. In response, it was indicated that if this were a longer term lockdown, this was something that would potentially be looked at, but at the moment it was a projected four-weeks, and day care services needed to be moved. It was unknown as to what difficulties people may have had or what equipment would need to be moved. It was felt that if the lockdown period was extended, this could potentially be looked at. The Government guidance had only very recently been received, with decisions on what action to be taken being made in a matter of hours. It was indicated that, as more time was afforded, more considered decisions would be taken.
- A Member referred to staff absence and sickness in schools due to COVID-19, and indicated that some schools had utilised COVID-19 funding to hire staff to manage catch-up sessions for children who had fallen behind because of the original lockdown. Some schools were considering whether they should move the staff hired for the catch-up lessons to back-fill the staffing issues they had due to COVID-19, or whether they should hire supply teachers to undertake the work. The role of the Council in supporting schools in this regard was queried. In response, it was explained that there was a difference between maintained schools and Academies; financial support would be difficult as the Council needed to exercise caution as to what potential funding would be provided (over-estimating this would result in additional direct costs to the Council), and what further requirements may be needed (e.g. for care homes and COVID-19 secure beds). It was indicated that work was currently taking place to identify potential funding via the Department for Education (DfE). The Director of Education and Partnerships advised that there had been an immense effort from schools to date to deal with staffing and financial pressures. The DfE had released a COVID-19 fund for schools to access, but it was explained that this was aimed at the first wave of the pandemic, and had not necessarily acknowledged the on-going pressures of the second. The Local Authority was not in a position to provide that funding due to budget processing. There was no specific fund available that would provide for supply teaching. It was highlighted that the Local Authority was acting on behalf of schools to lobby across the North East, with the Regional Schools Commissioner and with the DfE to flag that additional financial support was necessary because the schools' difficulties had continued beyond when the funding was aimed at.
- A Member queried how many Council staff had received a positive test. In response, it was explained that this had been less than ten. It was indicated that there would be a larger number of people self-isolating, the figures of which were currently being compiled. Scenario planning would need to be undertaken in relation to this as, depending upon how long the situation continued, certain functions may have needed to be considered differently in terms of their operating model because of staff absence.
- A Member referred to shielding guidance and queried whether the number of Council staff members shielding would impact on service delivery. In response, it was explained that the number was relatively small and not envisaged to pose a particular problem in terms of the Council's ability to deliver services.
- A Member referred to the free school meals scheme and queried the financials involved in this. In response, it was explained that the figure for provision was circa. £120,000, with an additional £10,000 also being made available. The £120,000 allowed for payment of £15.00 for the 7000+ eligible children, but there was also an awareness that there were families who perhaps did not qualify for free school meals who would also struggle. In light of this, provision had also been made through food banks and crisis arrangements to support those families too. All funding was provided via the Government's COVID-19 grant, and therefore there was no cost to the Council for this.

- A Member referred to those individuals required to self-isolate and queried the likely timeframe for the availability of testing kits for Council workers, key workers, etc., in order to remove the requirement for self-isolation. In response, it was explained that there were some arrangements for rapid testing in place through JCUH, with slots being made available to care workers, for example. Although some rapid testing was available, such as for school staff, this was not on the scale needed. The Director of Public Health advised that some 'lateral flow' tests that returned a result in 20 minutes were currently awaited, which would support care home visiting and staff that visited vulnerable people in their own homes or in sheltered housing, etc. Consideration was given to the prospect of false negative results (the standard test had around a 25-30% chance of delivering a false negative result), and the implications for this in terms of COVID-19 positive individuals returning to work environments. The advice to contacts during the first wave was therefore to self-isolate. Work was on-going, both regionally and in terms of linkage into the mass national testing programme.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and Director of Public Health for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

AGREED that the information provided be noted, and the agreed action be undertaken.

20/39

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE: DEPUTY MAYOR AND LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Social Care, Councillor A High, was in attendance at the meeting to update the Board on his aims and aspirations, progress made to date, and to highlight any emerging issues relating to his portfolio. The following points were made:

- Ofsted Inspection

In November/December 2019, Ofsted had carried out a full review of Children's Services across the Local Authority. This produced a final outcome that was received in January 2020, which deemed all services as inadequate. In response, an immediate 12-week assurance plan was implemented to enable the Local Authority and the services to move forward. Concurrent to this, there was a change to the associated Executive Member portfolio, with Councillor High assuming this portfolio at that time.

Shortly after Councillor High's appointment, in March 2020 the Department for Education (DfE) appointed a Commissioner to enter into the Local Authority. The Commissioner's role was to undertake a 12-week external review on behalf of the DfE, and report findings back to the Minister of Education. The findings of that review, which supported Middlesbrough Council's retention of its Children's Services, were published in May 2020. The report, which was in favour of the work completed and highlighted some positive elements of the Local Authority moving forward, was accepted by the Minister of Education in June 2020.

Members heard that following submission and acceptance of the inspection report, whilst it was accepted that Middlesbrough Council should retain Children's Services, a 12-month period to evidence ongoing progress within the services needed to follow. Reference was made to the onset of COVID-19 and the necessity to ensure that this oversight work remained very tight. At the point the report was accepted, the Commissioner was appointed as an overseeing Commissioner for the service, in order to deliver some external scrutiny and direction in relation to moving forward.

The Board was advised that an Ofsted monitoring visit was undertaken in September 2020. The focus of that visit was to examine the 'front door' area of the service, i.e. the point of entry for young people entering Middlesbrough's services. The findings of that visit, which were officially received in October 2020 indicated that the Local Authority was showing progress in the direction of travel within Children's Services. In addition to this monitoring visit, a further intermediate review was currently awaited from the Commissioner, which would examine the Local Authority's position of services.

In terms of next steps, the Commissioner's intermediate report would be submitted to the Minister of Education, with the Minister providing further advice and direction as to the continued progression of work. Supplementary to this, annual engagement process work with Ofsted would be commencing in December 2020. A focus visit by Ofsted was anticipated at some point between November 2020 and March 2021, which would provide a detailed view of the Local Authority's current position in terms of how Children's Services were being delivered and progress against the improvement plan being made. Beyond those key pieces of work, the Commissioner would be looking to return for further involvement around May 2021, although on-going dialogue with the Commissioner was being undertaken.

- There had been a significant strategic and managerial change/shift within Children's Services, which included the appointment of a new Director of Children's Services and the appointment of a new Director of Children's Social Care.
- Reference was made to the financial resource required in order to achieve the desired progress and change, which amounted to £3.3m.
- In terms of operational elements, an Improvement Board comprising an impartial external Chair and representatives from key organisations and statutory and non-statutory providers (including the Commissioner, the DfE, Local Government Association (LGA), Police, Health and Education) was established in order to provide detailed scrutiny, expertise, professional direction and challenge. The Board established a three-year improvement plan, which had been well received by Ofsted, who acknowledged this as a key tool in assisting the Local Authority in not only moving forward, but managing and monitoring how it did so.
- There had been an increase in training opportunities from the LGA in relation to Corporate Parenting, which looked at a number of key areas of responsibility. It was highlighted that all Elected Members were Corporate Parents and therefore general training to cover the role and associated responsibilities had been offered. In addition, training for those with a specialist interest, such as Chairs and Committee Members, had been provided, and detailed guidance and advice had been made available.
- Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, it was highlighted that this had provided further challenge to the service area at a time when significant challenge to retain and improve services was already being faced. Despite this, however, Middlesbrough Council and all of Children's Services were commended by Ofsted for the work shown throughout the pandemic. It was felt that this response demonstrated the commitment and determination of the teams and staff who had been working proactively to address a lot of the issues raised. Staff had accepted that change was needed, stepped up to the challenge and delivered exceptional work through very testing times.
- In terms of aspirations, the Executive Member explained that he was passionate about Middlesbrough and championing young people, and wished to see great improvement in terms of Children's Services and the support provided. It was indicated that further progress was required in terms of service provision for young people; reference was made to financial resource and £250,000 of funding that would be invested in youth services in Middlesbrough. This investment was essential and would provide targeted intervention, universal services and transitional support. It was explained that this was only the beginning for driving change to young people's services; it was not the answer, but would hopefully be strengthened by further opportunities to assist the young people of Middlesbrough going forward.
- The range of services delivered within the portfolio area were wide ranging, which included: early help; linking in with education; and examining how Elected Members worked to provide the Corporate Parenting approach. In essence, any aspect of work relating to children and young people's services fell within the Executive Member's remit.
- In addition to Children's Services, the Executive Member explained that he had been tasked by the Mayor to take a direct interest in troubled adult services. Middlesbrough was one of the most deprived areas in the UK, which caused issues such as welfare, substance misuse and domestic abuse. In terms of support services, it was indicated to the Board that services had been on-going and running for a number of years with little change, and there was a clear need to bring about some connectivity to the services provided. Drawing on his professional experience,

the Executive Member had worked with officers on a process to redirect, reset and bring about a new commissioned model. One of the key areas within that model was central care coordination of those services, which allowed the Local Authority to understand, in greater detail, the specialist providers delivering services, and ensured that the best value for both a service and for the people of Middlesbrough could be achieved. These services had been going through a very detailed procurement process (in excess of £4.5m worth of services had been drawn together), which would be available from April 2021. The Executive Member explained that he had proactively been working to push internal and external funding to the troubled adults services area. It was clarified that this particular area sat within the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health's remit, but contribution was being made to this project because of professional experience and the skill set that could be provided.

- Reference was made to a 'pothole purge' project currently taking place. The Board heard that this sat within the Executive Member for Environment's portfolio, but support was being provided by the Deputy Mayor to ensure that it was delivered right across Middlesbrough. It was explained that work had been undertaken to identify a significant amount of finance to systematically work through all Wards to bring about long-term road improvements and repairs, not just temporary fixes. The progress made to date had been very well received; three Wards were currently outstanding. Over 10,000 defects had been tended to, with 1000 tonnes of tarmac being laid; it was felt that the project would help facilitate remedial works in the future. Consideration was currently being given to the next phase of what needed to be done to bring about more improvements to the roads of Middlesbrough. This was not a one-off project, but the start of a bigger project. Over the winter period, the programme would focus on defects and repairs, and then into 2021, a new approach would be undertaken to provide for further improvements to the roads across Middlesbrough.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions and the following issues were raised:

- A Member referred to the pothole repairs project and commented that he had hoped that this had not impacted the usual road improvement schemes. In response, assurance was provided that, as the teams had been working through the Wards, any of the work that had been on the broader and wider road scheme system had been picked up as part of this Ward work. Additional finance and resource had been assigned to achieve this. It was pointed out that the work had been very well received to date, but this was just the start of the approach. Consequently, if there were any defects in any of the Wards already visited, Members were encouraged to submit these as per the usual procedures, where they would be tended to as soon as possible.
- A Member referred to issues associated with overcoming drug addiction, in particular those related to housing. It was felt that temporary housing in Middlesbrough was seemingly spread across two areas (Newport and North Ormesby), with people being housed quite inappropriately at times. Reference was made to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), with occupancy consisting of a mix between people in recovery and others who were not. Acceptance of individuals to, and eviction from, HMOs was raised, as well as the perceived engineering of specific localities to become places of large rehabilitation, as opposed to communities. It was queried what steps were being taken to address housing issues. In response, it was explained that services were being provided for individuals to recover right across Middlesbrough; the issue was that not all adults complied with what was required, and sometimes this behaviour lead to eviction. One of the biggest issues faced concerned private landlords quickly accepting occupants, realising there were issues and then responding with eviction as soon as possible. The Local Authority could not control the behaviour of individuals, however, the Board was assured that none of the individuals at the point of coming out of housing were left isolated. Where the actions of an individual fell afoul of what was expected, they would be supported and managed effectively and appropriately. The reporting of individuals to the appropriate organisation/service/authority was imperative in order to ensure that the appropriate support could be provided to them, of which they must have been willing to access.

- A Member commended all of the hard work undertaken and progress achieved to date in respect of Children's Services. In response, these comments were supported; it was added that service improvement was very much in the early stages, but the momentum had shifted and the conversations, scrutiny, approach and challenge, which were all needed to set about long-term change and improvement, were highly welcomed.
- Regarding pothole repairs, a Member commented on the very good work undertaken to date, but there were some defects on one of Middlesbrough's major roads. In response, it was indicated that the next point of the project would cover larger/major A roads. The issue was around traffic management and disruption, but those roads needed to be the focus going forward.
- A Member made reference to children being moved to areas outside of Middlesbrough, and queried the current position of this in terms of bringing children back. In response, the Director of Children's Services provided details regarding the operational direction associated with this work. It was explained that increased focus needed to be given towards preventing children leaving Middlesbrough, and preventing children entering the Local Authority's care from the outset. It was indicated that in some cases entering the Local Authority's care was unavoidable, but there was preventative action that could be taken. Details were provided in respect of the 'Future for Families' project, also known as 'No Wrong Door', which Middlesbrough Council had been supported through by North Yorkshire County Council. This initiative focused on prevention and particularly pro-active work with young teenagers. A hub was available to provide some respite care; the project offered a multi-disciplinary team (comprising life coaches, data analysts, researchers and hands-on practitioners) to support young people. In addition to 'Future for Families', an Innovate Team was, amongst other activities, looking to bring young people from external residential placements back to Middlesbrough. 'Future for Families' provided foster caring support, which could help facilitate the process, and therefore the two initiatives were working very closely together to bring children back into Middlesbrough, with considerable success. To date, 'Future for Families' had received 39 referrals and were working with young people at risk of entering care without prevention work. Five children had returned back from external residential placements to Middlesbrough. Reference was made to previous performance and the Ofsted inspection, which indicated that children were remaining in care for too long, without appropriate plans being made. This had been accepted and it was clear that children needed to be on a plan or moved on as soon as possible. It was acknowledged that there were still significant improvements to be made, but 'Future for Families' and the Innovate Team were beginning to make a difference.
- A Member referred to pothole repairs and queried which three wards had not yet been remedied. In response, these were identified as Park End and Beckfield, Stainton and Thornton, and Trimdon.
- A Member made reference to the 2019 Ofsted report and the comments made in respect of Corporate Parenting. It was indicated that in responding to these, three training sessions had been scheduled for Corporate Parents, but attendance had been low. It was queried what action could be undertaken to encourage Elected Members to attend future training sessions. In response, it was agreed that this was a collective responsibility; the LGA training provided the starting point and would be offered in a recurring manner to make it accessible to others. It was acknowledged that attendance at some events could be difficult for those Elected Members in full-time employment, but the importance of attending training had been explicitly detailed in previous correspondence. It was explained that a direct approach would be made to Political Group Leaders in order to promote training opportunities and encourage attendance. It was felt that everyone needed to be skilled and comfortable in the Corporate Parenting role, and hoped that all Members would have accessed LGA training within 12-18 months. The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Constitution and Members Development Committee oversaw the Members' Development Programme, which ran throughout the year. Although the Committee could make recommendations to Full Council as to what training was required, there was nothing in law to state that a Councillor must attend. This could be made a part of Standing Orders, as per the requirements of the Licensing Committee and the Planning and Development Committee, but the Constitution and

Members' Development Committee would need to put that forward to Full Council for consideration.

- A Member commented on discussions that she was currently having with officers from Children's Services in relation to providing support to children to avoid them missing out on experiences such as holidays and sporting activities.
- A Member made reference to troubled adult services, the work undertaken by smaller local organisations to support these individuals, and the procurement exercise being undertaken in appointing services/providers for service availability from April 2021. In response to a query regarding the awarding of contracts, it was explained that the Local Authority would be going through a formal procurement process and procedure. Although specific discussion could not be entered into, it was explained that once the decision had been made, any organisation was within their right to challenge the Local Authority if they felt they had not received a fair or opportune approach or chance to bid, to raise this through the appropriate channels. It was indicated that it was about understanding the difference between specialist/local delivery and expert delivery. If possible, the Local Authority would look to support local organisations, but that came with criteria.
- A Member referred to a property in his Ward that the Council had invested in to provide temporary overnight stays for children who had been in danger or faced significant issues within the home. It was felt that this was an excellent use of Council resources and queried whether there were any plans to roll this out further. In response, it was explained that further details would be provided in due course outside of the meeting, but commented that young people should be looked after in Middlesbrough if possible, and that the Local Authority needed to ensure the best possible facilities to safely manage those young people, which was something proactively undertaken.
- A Member queried whether there had been a decrease in drugs-related deaths in Middlesbrough. In response it was indicated that this was not the case; current figures would show an increase. It was commented that there was quite a strong crossover between drugs-related deaths and suicide. This information was collected and analysed by Public Health, with work taking place to address the issues across the town. Statistics would be provided to the Member.
- A Member referred to children being sent outside of Middlesbrough and queried whether there were certain reasons for this, such as safety. In response, the Director of Children's Services explained that sometimes there were reasons why children may have needed to leave Middlesbrough, e.g. for a specific need that only a specific establishment could meet, or for respite. The Director was of the view that children should have been placed somewhere that they knew, rather than somewhere that they did not know, as this may have put them at increased risk. There were sometimes reasons for placing children outside of Middlesbrough for a short period of time, but further work was needed to ensure that they were returned. A Member supported the view of returning as many children as possible back to Middlesbrough in order to ensure their wellbeing.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Services, the Director of Children's Services, and the Director of Education and Partnerships for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

AGREED that the information provided be noted, and the agreed action be undertaken.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Head of Democratic Services advised that there had been occasions where, owing to political balance, Chairs of the individual Scrutiny Panels were not entitled to a seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Reference was made to the historical composition of the Council whereby an overall majority meant that the Scrutiny Chair's positions were mainly fulfilled by one Political Group. Since the elections in May 2019, the political balance had changed significantly, which had affected how Chairs were appointed. In addition, following the last election, Scrutiny Chairs were appointed at each Panel's meeting.

In terms of offering a solution to ensure that Scrutiny Chairs could have a place on the Overview and Scrutiny Board, to enable them to feed back their final reports and advise the Board of what work their Panels were undertaking, options had been explored. The first regarded a potential change to the numbers on the Board to allow for an increased allocation of places to the different political parties. However, that still would not have guaranteed a Chair's place on the Board if the political balance were to change again.

It was explained that following discussion with the Chair of the Board, a further suggestion put forward revolved around all of the Chairs of the individual Scrutiny Panels, together with the Chair, becoming Ex-Officio Members, which meant that Members would no longer be subject to political balance. By definition, Ex-Officio meant that those individuals had a place on that Committee as a privilege by virtue of their position, so as a Panel Chair they would be entitled to a place on the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The political balance would not affect the Chair's right to a place on the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

As there was currently one Scrutiny Panel Chair that did not have automatic entitlement to sit on the Board, to expedite the process, this suggestion was taken forward to the Constitution and Members' Development Committee to review the Overview and Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference, and put forward this Ex-Officio solution. The Committee agreed to put those proposals forward to Full Council for agreement. However, it was highlighted that if Members did have any other suggestions, to please forward these to the Head of Democratic Services. Where the Chair did not have an entitlement to a seat, they would be invited as a Co-opted Member to temporarily resolve the issue currently presented.

NOTED

20/41

FINAL REPORT - ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL - PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR OLDER PEOPLE (AGED 65-PLUS)

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's Final Report in relation to Physical Activity for Older People (Aged 65-Plus). An introduction to the report was provided, and attention drawn to the conclusions and recommendations contained within the report.

The recommendations to be submitted to the Executive were:

1. That local physical activity initiatives be developed to promote the health benefits for older people, e.g. 'Month of Walking'. These should be publicised through a combination of on-and-off-line methods. Although the exact number of activities should be determined by the service area, the Panel recommends at least four per year (quarterly), with the first four being established by Spring/Summer 2021. Such initiatives should measure participation levels to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
2. That a resources guide be created for individuals and groups that shows walking routes and details planned walk schedules. This should be made available in Council buildings and on the Council's website. This guide should be created and made available by Spring/Summer 2021. Creating this guide could encourage existing walking groups to adopt a joined-up approach to enhance the experience further for participants.
3. That a feasibility study be undertaken, with voluntary and community sector organisations, into the creation of a single resource showing activities available to older people in Middlesbrough. If viable, the resource should be created and made available by the end of 2021.
4. That Everyone Active undertakes an analysis of its membership to determine the level of demand for gym use, and the feasibility of introducing a membership tier, for over 65s. This should be completed by Spring 2021.
5. That a feasibility study be undertaken to establish if transport could be provided to over 65s to increase participation in physical activities. The feasibility study should include all key stakeholders, such as licensed providers and voluntary agencies, and be completed by Summer/Autumn 2021.
6. That, regarding dementia awareness, a further (online) training session be arranged

- for Elected Members by March 2021. In addition, an online training session/module should be established and placed on Middlesbrough Learns by Autumn/Winter 2021.
7. That explorative analysis be undertaken by Spring/Summer 2021 to establish interest levels amongst older Carers for subsidised gym membership. Should the analysis show this to be popular, subsidised gym membership should be offered when developing care packages going forward.
 8. That a forum be established that brings together the 26 care home Activities Coordinators, Adult Social Care and Public Health South Tees representatives to share best practice; and report back to the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration on a quarterly-basis. This Forum should be established by Spring/Summer 2021.
 9. That, where possible, and with immediate effect, future contracts with care providers should incorporate best practice principles for physical activity for older people.
 10. That a map of all toilet facilities in the town centre be created to assist older people in mapping out their shopping visits. This should be displayed prominently throughout the town centre. The map should be implemented by Spring/Summer 2021.
 11. That a list of taxi providers offering accessible taxis for older people be provided to Elected Members, and details shared via the 'Love Middlesbrough' magazine.
 12. That, where possible, Adult Social Care and Public Health South Tees contribute to discussions and other initiatives regarding 'whole system change', to ensure that older people can participate in physical activity wherever possible.

During discussion, a Member referred to Appendix 3 and queried how extensively the report had been circulated, and whether any feedback had been provided by Public Health. In response, it was explained that this would need to be looked into as it was a national document. Members considered private versus public transport and the potential for cost savings to be made, as well as the availability of licensed vehicles to transport disabled persons to activities. A Member also commented upon existing walking schemes that were currently operating within Middlesbrough.

AGREED that the findings and recommendations of the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

20/42

FINAL REPORT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - ADDRESSING POVERTY ISSUES AND THE IMPACT ON LEARNING

The Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's Final Report in relation to Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning. An introduction to the report was provided, and attention drawn to the conclusions and recommendations contained within the report.

The recommendations to be submitted to the Executive were:

1. That a partnership be developed to deliver a more joined-up, collaborative and integrated approach to tackle poverty and promote social mobility, cutting cross employment support, welfare, housing, early years provision, education, public health and family support.
2. That a coherent strategy be developed to ensure that poverty remains high up on the agenda for every organisation in Middlesbrough and to maximise resources available across all sectors and agencies (including the Voluntary Community Sector).
3. That, once established, the partnership:
 - a) develops a monitoring tool to effectively measure poverty rates and trends in Middlesbrough; and
 - b) submits data on an annual basis, to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, to demonstrate the impact of its work and to highlight the practices, interventions and strategies that have been most successful in tackling poverty.
4. That, in respect of those areas that have high levels of deprivation, the Local Authority works with the Financial Inclusion Group to ensure there is a greater presence from advisers offering benefits support and advice in the community.
5. That, in respect of those areas that have high levels of deprivation, the Local Authority works with the Financial Inclusion Group and schools to introduce school-based

- advisers to provide welfare rights advice for parents, to help maximise family income.
6. That the Local Authority works with schools to capture an accurate baseline of individual children's attainment as early as possible (on entry to nursery) to inform planning and maximise learning.
 7. That the Local Authority works with Children North East to:
 - arrange training for teachers on the barriers to learning that exist because of poverty;
 - identify common threads that exist in schools; and
 - develop a good practice guide that highlights the effective practices used in tackling the root causes of poverty and mitigating the effects of disadvantage.
 8. That the Local Authority works with schools and catering suppliers to encourage implementation of the recommendations proposed by the Just Change campaign.
 9. That the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel writes to the Secretary of State for Education to request that census data for early years is collected in July instead of January, when numbers are at their highest - as this data determines the Dedicated Schools Grant for the following year.

A Member commented that the number of children living in poverty in Middlesbrough was extremely high, in some of the most financially deprived Wards in the country, and commended the hard work being undertaken by schools to provide support around this area.

AGREED that the findings and recommendations of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

20/43

FINAL REPORT - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - TEESIDE CREMATORIUM

The Chair of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's Final Report in relation to Teesside Crematorium. An introduction to the report was provided, and attention drawn to the conclusions and recommendations contained within the report.

The recommendations to be submitted to the Executive were:

1. A six-monthly update on income and any mitigation required should be provided to the Scrutiny Panel until further notice.
2. The potential for Teesside Crematorium to offer a Direct Cremation Service should be explored.
3. The possibility of voile curtains being installed around the catafalques in St Bede's and St Hilda's Chapels should be explored.
4. Car parking arrangements should be reviewed to ascertain whether further space could be made available and whether the disabled parking spaces could be relocated nearer to the Chapel entrances.

AGREED that the findings and recommendations of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

20/44

SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

The Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs provided verbal/written updates in respect of the work undertaken by their respective panels since the last meeting of the Board.

NOTED

20/45

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2020 AT 4:00 P.M.

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had been scheduled for Thursday, 3 December 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

NOTED

20/46

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE

CONSIDERED.

Chair's attendance at North East Scrutiny Network

The Chair made reference to her recent attendance at a North East Scrutiny Network meeting and commented that both she and other attendees had shared their experiences of chairing virtual meetings.

NOTED