

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Thursday 11 February 2021.

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Thompson (Chair), M Storey (Vice-Chair), C Cooke, D Coupe, L Garvey, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, S Hill, B Hubbard, J Platt and Z Uddin.

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors L Lewis and A Waters.

**OFFICERS:** S Bonner, G Cooper, R Horniman, C Lunn, E Mireku, T Parkinson and S Reynolds.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors T Mawston, C McIntyre, J McTigue, M Saunders and A Preston (The Mayor).

20/79 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

20/80 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD CALL-IN - 18 DECEMBER 2020 - RESIDUAL WASTE COLLECTIONS**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 18 December 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/81 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 14 JANUARY 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 14 January 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/82 **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.

A Member made reference to the impending Equality and Diversity Policy report and queried why this was a triennial refresh, as opposed to being a more frequent refresh. It was agreed that this would be followed up with an appropriate officer for a response to be provided to the Member.

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

20/83 **MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The Chief Executive provided a brief introduction to advise the Board that the Council was currently experiencing a steady state in terms of responding to COVID-19, with support being provided to communities and businesses as required. The only recent decision of note concerned IT provision to school children.

The Consultant in Public Health delivered a presentation to the Board.

Regarding the latest regional COVID-19 position (and trends), it was explained that over the most recent seven day period, which ended on 6 February 2021, most Local Authority areas in the North East were (in comparison to the previous seven day period) seeing a downward trend in COVID-19 cases. Middlesbrough had been stable over the last two-week period.

The local position showed a downward trend, which had plateaued over the last two weeks. On 10 February 2021, there had been 64 new cases of COVID-19; 526 new cases had been

diagnosed in the last seven days; the current rate per 100,000 of the population was 373.1.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, there had been circa. 11,000 cases in the Middlesbrough Council area. There had been 858 cases diagnosed in the last 14 days, and 1462 new cases diagnosed in the last 21 days.

In terms of COVID-19 mortality rates, up to 22 January 2021 inclusive, there had been 298 deaths. Four of these had occurred in the previous week; the rate per 100,000 of the population was currently 211.10. The majority of those deaths had occurred in hospital (194), followed by care homes (91), at home (12) and in a hospice (1).

Regarding the COVID-19 case rate by age groupings, it was indicated that the majority of Middlesbrough's current cases were amongst the 23-34 age group.

In terms of current clustering and outbreaks, and activities being undertaken as part of community testing, it was explained that there were two outbreaks currently ongoing, both of which were in high risk settings (Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)): one was a mother and baby unit and the other a supported living unit. In terms of work places, cases had been identified at DWP offices; Cleveland Cable Company; Teesside University; On a Roll sandwich manufacturer; and First Source.

As part of the Council's response to the pandemic, the Council hosted a community testing programme. Through the programme, additional testing was provided to essential workers who were not able to work from home during the lockdown period, which was provided twice per week. Additional testing was also available to any members of the public who were not showing symptoms of COVID-19, which was in addition to the testing sites already available to those displaying symptoms. In Middlesbrough, three fixed sites within the community were planned: Middlesbrough Sports Village (now live), North Ormesby Community Hub, and Newport Community Hub. As part of the programme, essential worker testing (mainly Social Care staff) was now live at three Council sites: MAIN, Resolution House, and Cavendish House. Work was also being undertaken with high risk businesses, i.e. those with between 50-250 employees, to undertake Lateral Flow/regular testing.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member referred to HMOs and to one of the identified cases, and requested clarification around the 42 residents that had been shielding. In response, it was explained that in this case, this referred to 20 adults and 22 children – a mother and baby unit that hosted mainly asylum seekers. To date, there had been seven positive cases; all those living in the facility were required to self-isolate because of the way the venue was structured (e.g. communal areas and shared facilities in place). The Member was concerned of the number of people in one household. In response, it was explained that this was similar to the other HMO where 50 people resided (each with individual rooms, but with shared facilities). It was difficult to ask a few to isolate.

In response to an enquiry regarding the potential reasons for the plateauing of cases, but the number appearing to remain quite high, it was explained that one of the things being observed was that following the first lockdown, the number of cases had reduced to a very low level. After the second and current lockdowns, the number of cases had reduced, but not as far as expected. During the current lockdown, there was still a number of people working because they were not able to work from home, whereas after the first lockdown, anyone that could not work from home remained at home. As more people were leaving home to work, there was an assumption that because more people were coming into contact from different households and mixing at the workplace, the likelihood of cross infection was higher. This was one of the reasons for increased support to businesses in terms of testing to help break the chain of transmission in the workplace. The Member commented on the movement of people in Middlesbrough, which seemed as high as at any other time. It was hoped that the number of cases would be reduced to that of other areas.

A Member referred to HMOs and queried the procedures followed to deal with confirmed cases, particularly in terms of contact tracing if individuals did not have mobile phones or apps

to support this. In response, it was explained that as part of the measures put in place, food (3 meals per day) and support to obtain medication was provided. Close working was undertaken with management to ensure that outbreak control measures were in place and that residents were supported as much as possible. Reference was made to the New walk facility, where there had been an outbreak; there had been no issues and the isolation period had now passed. Some segregation had been required for the shared facilities, but residents were supported throughout. The Member commented that he had been aware of one resident from within that facility being out in the community, and queried whether a local lockdown had been put in place for those residents. In response, it was explained that there had been agreement that residents were not to leave the premises during the isolation period; this matter would be discussed with the management.

A Member referred to concerns raised with him by a Head teacher in relation to the safeguarding of children who had been at home for some time and queried, from a Council perspective, how children who were not in care, but living in vulnerable households, were being identified and supported. In response, the Chief Executive advised that during the last lockdown, new risk plans had been completed on every child that was in the Local Authority's care, and every child that had an Education, Health and Care Plan. A review of almost 4000 risk plans had been conducted, which re-assessed the child's situation and the issues that they would face if not attending school. Those plans had been maintained and through the review processes in place, it was being ensured that any new concerns identified were monitored and dealt with accordingly.

A Member referred to other areas in the North East and the downward trend in the number of positive cases that had been observed, and Middlesbrough remaining the same despite more testing in the area. It was queried whether this additional testing would have an effect on Middlesbrough's trend or not. In response, it was explained that all areas were undertaking large amounts of testing at the moment and Middlesbrough's trends were going down, it was within the last two weeks that these had plateaued. Observation would continue to ascertain whether the downward trend continued. The Chief Executive commented that, geographically, Middlesbrough was far more urbanised than a lot of the Local Authorities of the same population size. More people living in an urbanised area was a contributory factor to figures being higher, and it also needed to be recognised that Middlesbrough was a major employment hub for all of the Tees Valley. It was felt that everything that could be done was being done; it was not felt to be an issue of more testing, but due to the type of place Middlesbrough was, which meant that it would be more susceptible to rising figures.

A Member queried the number of Teachers or Teaching Assistants that had tested positive for COVID-19. In response, it was indicated that this data would be obtained.

A Member referred to testing sites and queried accessibility for areas such as Hemlington and Coulby Newham, where rates were high. In response, it was explained that the test site at Cannon Park was a regional test site; mobile testing units were currently hosted in Hemlington at the Viewley car park next to All Nations Church on Mondays and Tuesdays, and on Cargo Fleet Lane in the Thirteen Group car park Wednesday to Friday. An additional mobile unit had been established at Pallister Park car park. Testing was spread as broadly as possible; it was reiterated that a site had also been established at Middlesbrough Sports Village, and intended that one would be established in the North Ormesby area. Consideration had been given to vehicle ownership and access to testing sites; drive-in and walk-in options were available as appropriate.

A Member requested that the presentation slides be circulated to the Board; this would be actioned.

A Member referred to the vaccination programme in respect of taxi drivers and queried whether those drivers, who were contracted by the Council to transport (vulnerable) children and adults, were receiving vaccines. In response, it was indicated that there was a national list of occupations and conditions that created a priority list. The vaccination programme was controlled by the NHS, with the hospital conducting vaccinations for occupations that fell within that priority list and key demographics. Mention was made to other areas and the distribution of surplus vaccines to individuals within specific categories. This query would be

raised with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and further information provided in due course.

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

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

20/84

#### **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION**

The Executive Member for Regeneration, Councillor A Waters, 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 Director of Regeneration and Culture was also in attendance at the meeting.

The Executive Member made the following points as part of his update to the Board:

- This portfolio covered transportation, inward investment to the town, economic development, development, planning and building control.
- Current key issues included: Cycle lanes on Linthorpe Road; Inward investment at Centre Square, with the properties now largely being let; Tees AMP, with all units now let or under offer; and the BOHO Zone area.
- Regarding economic development, the Town Centre issues in relation to COVID-19 had had a huge impact. Reference was made to the significant amount of work being undertaken by officers in relation to grants and revenues and benefits, with a message of thanks being conveyed to all of the teams involved.
- Regarding the Future High Streets Fund, the Council had secured £14m, which was excellent news for the Town Centre and the wider Tees Valley area.
- Work was currently being undertaken in repurposing Captain Cook Square.
- In terms of housing development, work was progressing in Gresham and it was hoped that Thirteen Group would be on site soon. Reference was made to BOHO Bright ideas, where 60 units would be on site soon. Agreements had been reached with all of the developers for housing at Middlehaven, which was excellent news.
- Work was currently ongoing with regards to the Stainsby consultation, which was due to end at the end of January 2021.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member referred to cycle path investment and the importance of this. Reference was made to the cycle lanes investment on Linthorpe Road and to the potential for further investment in other areas of Middlesbrough. Further details were requested as to how Linthorpe Road had been selected for the lanes, what other options had been considered, and what consultation work had been carried-out. In addition, it was queried whether further investment for other areas could be identified. In response, the Executive Member explained that consultation work in respect of Linthorpe Road had been carried out through the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), as it was a TVCA funded project. Consideration was given to the feedback received to date, which had included negative feedback from some businesses. This was acknowledged, however, it was indicated that car parking on Linthorpe Road was limited, and the revenue generated from car parking was minimal as only 30 vehicles paid to park in this locality during designated/peak times. Following consultation activity, responses had been reviewed and it was hoped that some further ideas would be brought forward to support businesses in the area. It was explained that Linthorpe Road was a gateway into the Town Centre. In terms of further infrastructure, it was important that development permitted cycle lane linkage across the town to drive the cycling initiative forward, to encourage change and reduce reliance upon personal vehicle usage. The Member requested that, if/when looking at other sites for cycle infrastructure, as many Ward Members as possible be involved in the process.

A Member referred to the Stainsby development and commented upon potential traffic issues if the spine road did not proceed. In the event that this did not go ahead, a commitment was sought from the Executive Member that further consultation work would be undertaken with

affected Wards/Ward Councillors (including Hemlington and Stainton and Thornton). In response, the Executive Member provided background details in respect of the development, referring to: housing development in the area; inclusion of the road in the 2014 Local Plan; preservation of as much of the meadow as possible; and consultation activity currently being carried-out. It was indicated that further consultation work would be undertaken with Members of the surrounding Wards, as appropriate.

A Member referred to the £14m allocation from the Future High Streets Fund and requested further information. In response, the Executive Member explained that, in essence, the purpose of the allocation was to ensure that Middlesbrough retained its High Street for the future. Consideration was given to a neighbouring Local Authority area where a significant number of businesses had been lost. It was indicated that Middlesbrough provided a centre point for the whole of the Tees Valley and it was essential that the Town Centre be kept in what was an ever-changing environment. Continued investment was needed in order to keep businesses operating.

The Director of Regeneration and Culture explained that the Council had secured a 70% allocation of the funds originally bid for from the Future High Streets Fund, which appeared consistent with other Local Authorities. Reference was made to retail space and empty premises being replaced with leisure and cultural facilities, and urban living space. It was envisaged that the Town Centre would continue to retain a core retail offering, but would be complemented by a wider mix to ensure that it could continue to operate. It was highlighted that a report would be considered by the Executive in April 2021, which would set-out the full programme for the Future High Streets Fund.

A Member made reference to the Future High Streets Fund and commented that the High Street was not only concerned with the Town Centre. It was queried whether any of the funding would be allocated to other localised shopping areas, such as The Viewley Centre and Parliament Road. In response, the Executive Member acknowledged this point and made reference to other elements of development plans, such as wider business, leisure and retail. The Director of Regeneration and Culture explained that there were two funds in existence: the Future High Streets Fund, whereby funding had already been secured, and the Towns Fund, whereby the outcome to a recent bid was currently awaited. It was explained that this enquiry aligned more towards the Towns Fund bid, but it was difficult to say what and how activity would be undertaken until the outcome of that bid was known.

A Member referred to a recent meeting of the TVCA's Audit and Governance Committee and commented that the Authority had £19.3m worth of funding set aside to support Local Authorities in the Tees Valley to develop brownfield sites. It was queried what plans were in place for Middlesbrough in this regard. In response, the Executive Member commented that wherever funding opportunities were presented through the TVCA, bids would be made for an allocation. The Director of Regeneration and Culture explained that this funding was being allocated in phases; Middlesbrough had received an allocation of £7.9m in phase one for preparatory work at Middlehaven. This was subject to the satisfactory completion of legal and contractual work, which was currently being undertaken. The outcome of this would be reported to Executive in due course. Mention was also made of funding that the Council had helped secure for Thirteen Group in relation to a couple of sites. It was indicated that the £7.9m was spread across a number of years. The fund was still open and bidding would continue for other sites.

In response to a request for clarification regarding the Stainsby/Mandale Meadow consultation work currently taking place, the Executive Member explained that this consultation activity referred to housing development. Reference was made to the Local Plan produced in 2014, which stipulated the inclusion of a road in the locality to alleviate problems with traffic. Unfortunately, a road was mandatory and despite every effort to achieve otherwise, it was highly likely that a road would run through the site. Work would be undertaken with the community and activities undertaken as sensitively as possible to mitigate damage.

A Member referred to brownfield sites and commented upon payments made to surrounding communities to develop amenities for local people, feeling that in some cases the payment amounts needed to be increased. In response, the Executive Member explained that if there was a profit from a land sale within the town, i.e. the amount received exceeded the Council's

asset value, the Council would do its utmost to share that amount with the local community. It was hoped that in the long term, in light of the work being undertaken with housing developers, increased monies would be afforded to local people within those areas. Members were encouraged to come forward with their ideas and suggestions as to how local areas could be improved through the payments/allocations.

A Member commented that there were many brownfield sites located around Middlesbrough; it was hoped that some would be retained to provide work opportunities for both older and younger people residing in Middlesbrough. Reference was made to development of one site that had been awarded a 199-year lease to a housing developer, which although would provide Council Tax revenue, the use of the land by the Council for this period of time would not be possible. In response, the Executive Member acknowledged this point. It was explained that development of brownfield sites in small pockets would generate Council Tax income. Reference was made to the regeneration of Middlehaven, where the infrastructure was being established first to provide training and employment opportunities in industries, such as technology, that would provide for future generations. It was highlighted that there was a current skills shortage in Middlesbrough, with individuals relocating from other areas of the country to fill digital employment vacancies. Work was currently taking place with schools in order to address skills shortages and prepare young people for future employment.

A Member agreed that consideration did need to be given to the future, but commented that Middlesbrough had a finite number of greenfield sites – it was important to remain mindful of this when looking at development opportunities. In response, the Executive Member acknowledged this point. Reference was made to the Mayor's Vision and the desire to increase urban living, which would utilise brownfield sites in the Town Centre. It was also important to remain mindful of the desire to provide training and employment opportunities for local people in digital industries. Reference was made to the Local Plan, currently being drafted, which would help protect greenfield sites.

A Member referred to the Local Plan and a recent meeting of the Planning and Development Committee, where an application for a housing development had been considered. It was explained that the maximum allocation for housing identified in the Local Plan for that particular area had been exceeded, and planning permission granted; clarification as to the role of the Local Plan was sought. In response, the Executive Member explained the importance of the Local Plan, which was enshrined in law. The Director of Regeneration and Culture explained that the Local Plan guided the Planning and Development Committee. It was not 100% specific on every issue and there was flexibility available (the example of a change to housing numbers on a particular development was provided). Omission of a Local Plan would have very negative consequences; a clear and concise Local Plan facilitated the Planning and Development process. If justification for changes to the housing mix or design of a particular development was provided, this could be taken into account by the Planning and Development Committee.

A discussion ensued in relation to the wider benefits afforded to local communities in instances where development work was undertaken. A Member felt that in some cases the benefits awarded had differed; reference was made to the Nunthorpe and Newport Wards. The Executive Member referred to the past, current and planned development of these areas and the work that would be undertaken in moving forward.

A Member referred to the development of Middlehaven and, on the basis that the snow centre project would no longer be progressed, queried the plans for that key site. In response, the Executive Member advised that there was interest in the site; work was currently being undertaken as to potential ways forward. In terms of timescale, the Director of Regeneration and Culture advised that a report regarding the future development of Middlehaven would be considered by the Executive shortly, which would set out how a strategy would be developed. A subsequent report to a future Executive meeting in three/four months' time would provide details of this strategy. Ward Members would be involved in this process and consulted upon.

A Member referred to the development of a new Community Centre in East Middlesbrough, which would replace the Southlands Centre, and queried the current status of this. In response, the Executive Member confirmed that this development would be taking place. A large proportion of the required funding had been identified from within the Council's Capital Programme; it was intended that the remaining funds would come from the Towns Fund bid, which would hopefully be confirmed in March 2021. Work was currently taking place to

determine potential ways forward to ensure that it was a community site fit for purpose. The planning application was being prepared and activities were on-going with the local community in respect of the design of the Centre. A full programme of works would be provided once the remaining funds had been confirmed.

A Member made reference to the Towns Fund bid. To help ensure the most effective way forward for local communities, it was requested that Ward Members be involved/consulted at appropriate times throughout the process. In response, the Executive Member agreed with this point and the importance of Ward Member involvement.

A Member made reference to Selective Landlord Licensing and, given the amount of time that had been lost to COVID-19, queried whether this initiative would be extended. In response, the Director of Regeneration and Culture advised that further information was currently awaited, which would be provided when available.

A Member referred to the consultation activity undertaken in respect of the cycle infrastructure works and queried whether a copy of the consultation document, together with an analysis/details of the responses, could be provided. In response, the Executive Member advised that the consultation work had been carried out by the TVCA as it was funded through the TVCA. The Executive Member referenced media work that he had carried out to publicise the consultation process. The Director of Regeneration and Culture advised that the consultation had now closed and work was currently underway on analysing the results, details of which could be provided in due course.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Regeneration and the Director of Regeneration and Culture for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

#### **NOTED**

20/85

#### **FINAL REPORT - CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - SOCIAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION**

The Vice Chair of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's Final Report in relation to Social Cohesion and Integration.

The recommendations to be submitted to the Executive were:

1. That the Council develop a Community Cohesion Strategy for Middlesbrough that:
  - Ensures all aspects of Community Cohesion work is co-ordinated and monitored.
  - Informs the Council's existing social regeneration agenda and is monitored through existing performance reporting processes.
  - Is in place by the end of 2022/23.
2. Given recent staffing changes, as well as the discontinuation of funding for key projects after 2021 and the uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council should look to ensure the current Strategic Cohesion and Migration Manager is sufficiently supported via a robust staffing structure beyond 2021.
3. That the Executive consider including Middlesbrough in the Refugee Resettlement Scheme.
4. To assess progress against its objectives, the Panel should receive an update on the progress of Place Based Working no later than November 2021.

**AGREED** that the findings and recommendations of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

20/86

#### **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

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

11 February 2021

A Member queried that, if it was necessary for a scrutiny panel to be postponed and then subsequently cancelled, would it be possible for that panel to decide to temporarily look at holding a substitute meeting on a slightly different topic, or did the topic currently under review need to be completed.

This query would be raised with the Head of Democratic Services.

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

20/87 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - THURSDAY, 11 MARCH 2021 AT 4.00 P.M.**

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had been scheduled for Thursday, 11 March 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

**NOTED**

20/88 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

Outcome of Executive Meeting – Call-in Referral – Nunthorpe Grange Farm Disposal

The Chair reported to the Board that the Executive had met on 9 February 2021 to consider the Call-in referral in respect of Nunthorpe Grange Farm Disposal.

The outcome of that meeting was that the recommendations put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Board were noted but not endorsed. Therefore, the decision taken by the Executive on 24 November 2020 was still valid, and would be implemented with immediate effect.

**NOTED**