

EXECUTIVE

A meeting of the Executive was held on Tuesday 19 January 2021.

PRESENT: Mayor A Preston (Chair) and Councillors D Davison, A High, C Hobson, D McCabe, M Smiles and A Waters

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors R Arundale, B Hubbard and J Thompson

OFFICERS: M Adams, C Benjamin, S Bonner, G Field, R Horniman, C Lunn, G Moore, T Parkinson, S Reynolds, E Scollay and I Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Saunders (Chair of the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Environment Scrutiny Panel)

20/90 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

20/91 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 22 DECEMBER 2020**

The minutes of the Executive meeting, held on 22 December 2020, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/92 **FINAL REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - TEESIDE CREMATORIUM - SERVICE RESPONSE**

The Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel had undertaken a review of Teesside Crematorium. A copy of the full report was attached.

The scrutiny panel made four recommendations upon which a response was sought from the relevant service area. The Executive Member for Environment and the Director of Environment and Communities submitted a service response to the recommendations of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel. A copy of the Action Plan was attached.

The Vice-Chair of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel presented the final report to the Executive. The Executive Member for Environment presented the service response.

ORDERED

- 1. That the content of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel's Final Report, on Teesside Crematorium, be noted.**
- 2. That the Action Plan, developed in response to the scrutiny panel's recommendations, be approved.**

REASON

It was a requirement that Executive formally considered the Scrutiny Panel's report and confirmed the Service Area's response to the Panel's accompanying plan.

20/93 **LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN; LINTHORPE ROAD CORRIDOR**

The Executive Member for Regeneration and the Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide information on the proposals to reallocate road space along the Linthorpe Road corridor (between Borough Road and Ayresome Street) to create protected cycle lanes in both directions.

Following the Tees Valley Combined Authority's (TVCA) Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP), Active Travel Funding had been secured from the Department for Transport (DfT) to deliver transformational infrastructure across the region.

Linthorpe Road had been identified as a key corridor due to the direct connections to the town centre, the number of destinations along the route and the density of population surrounding it.

The corridor planned to work on the principles of re-allocation of road space (removal of car parking spaces) to accommodate the following:

- segregated cycle lanes along the entire corridor in each direction;
- one lane of traffic in each direction (except at main junctions where right turn filters would be accommodated to improve junction queuing/stacking)
- side road closures at key junctions (identified in plans) to improve safety for all road users;
- upgrade, re-location and additional crossing points to be included to aid pedestrian movement;
- consolidation of the bus stops to provide improved facilities at key locations (reduced from 3 to 1 location in both North and South directions - close to Victoria Road junction - equidistant between Borough Road and Parliament Road); and
- rationalise taxi provision as per plans.

Appendix 3 of the submitted report provided full detail of the scheme proposals, along with artist impressions of the final outcome.

Appendix 1 of the submitted report highlighted the Average Annual Daily Traffic Flows for Linthorpe Road, Appendix 2 showed accident levels recorded along the scope of the proposals between 2015 and 2019, Appendix 4 provided the cost estimates that had been worked up to deliver the scheme as anticipated, Appendix 5 summarised the parking revenue implications associated during construction phase and future operation and Appendix 6 summarised the anticipated alterations (current vs proposed).

A discussion ensued and Members commented on the need to:

- provide a secure bike storage facility;
- ensure the maintenance of existing cycle lanes;
- encourage businesses to use side streets for loading/unloading; and
- take a similar approach in other areas of the town to improve safety and reduce congestion.

OPTIONS

The other potential decisions that had not been recommended included:

- a) Doing nothing - that was not recommended, as it would not have allowed the Council to realise the benefits outlined within the report. That would have had an impact upon the Council's Town Centre Strategy, and other strategic objectives such as the recently approved *Cycling in Middlesbrough; Investment and Future Infrastructure Opportunities* report.**
- b) Re-assessing the corridor proposals - that was not recommended, as the proposals had been designed using internal and external expertise, identifying the most economic and safe utilisation of space. Any changes to the provision would have had significant implications for delivery, as each element was symbiotically balanced against one another. Any alterations would have deviated away from the DfT's cycle standards and not achieved the goals.**
- c) Accept the proposals and deliver as anticipated. Following consultation, there may have been scope to accommodate minor alterations to the proposals, however it was recommended that the proposals were approved as presented in order to realise the benefits of:**
 - improved safety/reduced accidents;
 - improved environment quality;

- reduced congestion;
- improved public realm; and
- improved access to key facilities.

ORDERED

That the ambitious, re-allocation of road space to deliver cycle infrastructure improvements along the Linthorpe Road corridor, as per plans contained in the appendices, be approved.

REASONS

The proposal was recommended as it aligned with a number of Council objectives, namely:

- **improving safety along the corridor for all road users, and reducing accidents;**
- **making the corridor more pedestrian friendly, particularly for those with mobility issues;**
- **supporting the local economy; improving accessibility to local retail, leisure and services by improving facilities for short journeys to be made;**
- **reducing congestion along a busy corridor planned to improve air quality, reduce noise and help to improve the local environment;**
- **better use of the available space would improve the public realm; giving the space back to people as opposed to vehicles - helping the area to look and feel amazing;**
- **improving public health by reducing pollution, and creating an environment where people could travel actively, and be more likely to want to spend time in the area;**
- **ensuring the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) on Middlesbrough Council's Highway Network; and**
- **acting as a statement of intent to echo Governments ambitions to significantly increase cycle levels and adopt LTN 1/20 cycle infrastructure guidance.**

The Council had identified a problem with localised congestion. Building roads and making improvements for cars would have simply induced further demand for vehicles, and further compounded that issue. By developing a suite of alternate mode infrastructure, the Council would be assisting in reducing the issue.

That transformational proposal planned to help set the tone as to what was achievable, providing a platform for further improvements and connectivity across the town. That was in line with the Council's ambitious proposals to mitigate the impact of economic and housing regeneration and growth, and supported the Middlesbrough Town Centre Strategy.

20/94

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2021/2022

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2021/2022.

From 1 April 2013, the Government replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme with a new CTS scheme to be designed and administered by local authorities. The Government passed that responsibility to councils with a 10% cut in the grant funding and prescribed that pensioners must be no worse off under any local scheme. That translated into an effective reduction in funding for working age claimants of 20% and meant that some residents, many of whom had previously been required to pay nothing, now had to pay at least 20% of their Council Tax. Middlesbrough's scheme had been approved by full Council on 9 January 2013 and remained unaltered (apart from some minor legislative changes) until 2018/2019 when the scheme was amended to bring regulations in line with the current Housing Benefit scheme, whilst also increasing the amount of support provided to 85% for working age residents. That, therefore meant residents claiming CTS had a minimum of 15% of their Council Tax to pay as opposed to the previous 20% charge.

The current CTS scheme was working well with no challenges to the regulations. Central Government had made some slight changes to the prescribed regulations between late December and early February each year, which would be incorporated into the new scheme. Apart from those minor changes, it was not recommended to alter any other elements.

OPTIONS

The Council could have reduced or increased the amount of support awarded. However, as indicated, the Council recognised the financial challenges placed on residents through the Government's welfare reforms when increasing the CTS support for 2018/2019, therefore, that was not considered a viable option.

In addition, the Council was not in a financial position to consider awarding additional support without affecting other Council services. If that were to be considered, a full consultation exercise would have needed to be carried out which had not taken place during the current financial year.

ORDERED

That Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2021/2022 be approved and the report be considered at the full Council meeting, of 24 February 2021.

REASONS

The Council recognised the financial challenges faced by some residents due to the Government's welfare reforms when increasing the amount of support provided through the CTS scheme in 2018/2019. The roll out of Universal Credit (UC) in Middlesbrough, which commenced in October 2018, had been a challenge for some residents to claim CTS although the Revenues and Benefits Service had amended its procedures so that UC claimants could be smoothly transitioned on to CTS.

As the only changes to the scheme were minor legislative changes, set by Central Government, no stakeholder consultation had been carried out. Similarly, those proposals had not been examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or by a Scrutiny Panel due to the scheme remaining the same.

20/95

LAND ADJACENT FORMER MIDDLESBROUGH WAREHOUSE SITE, SOUTH BANK ROAD/JAMES STREET, NORTH ORMESBY - DISPOSAL [PART A]

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide information on the proposal to dispose of the Council's freehold interest in land adjacent the former Middlesbrough Warehouse Site.

Shown edged red on plan VAL 6048, attached at Appendix A of the submitted report, the subject property was situated on James Street occupying an irregular shaped site measuring @ 3.21 Acres [1.55 Ha], in a visually prominent position adjacent the A66 at North Ormesby.

An Asset Disposal Business Case (ADBC), confirming the status of the subject property as surplus to operational Council requirements, was attached as Appendix C to Part B of the report.

In accordance with the ADBC, Align Property Partners had been instructed to market the site for sale on behalf of the Council and to invite unconditional offers for the Council's freehold interest by 20 November 2020.

Marketing commenced in early September. Align reported a very healthy interest in the site, which had resulted in nine offers being submitted by the closing date and those were outlined in Part B of the report.

OPTIONS

Re-use for operational purposes - No Council operational service requirement had been identified.

Other uses - Although the property was capable of being used for other purposes, future use of the site for industrial/commercial purposes as proposed by the Buyer, was preferred.

Do nothing - The Council would not have received a significant capital receipt and the property would have remained in its present state. Whilst the subject property would have been retained for potential Council use in the future, the liability and responsibility for maintaining and holding the property would have remained with the Council in the interim.

ORDERED

That the information contained in Part A of the report be noted and that the decision be taken once all the financial or exempt information contained in Part B of the report had been considered.

REASONS

In order to meet the Council's requirements to generate capital receipts, increase annually recurring revenue streams and to bring the subject property into a far more beneficial use in the future.

The disposal of the subject parcel of land as proposed supported delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

20/96

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

The Mayor advised that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board wished to make a statement in respect of the scrutiny call-in procedure.

The Chair of the Board advised that scrutiny was a legal requirement that provided non-executive Councillors with the opportunity to hold the Executive to account for the decisions and actions that affect their communities. It was highlighted that non-executive Councillors had been questioning the credibility and effectiveness of the call-in procedure and comments had been made that the views of the Board were not debated or discussed by the Executive Members. Specifically, previously, when the Board had referred a decision back to the Executive for reconsideration, the findings of the Board had not been fully considered by Executive Members.

In response, the Mayor highlighted the importance of scrutiny and its role in scrutinising decisions of the Executive. The Mayor commented that the Executive welcomed the comments and findings of the Board and those were discussed/debated at both informal and formal meetings.

20/97

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The resolution to exclude the press and the public was agreed.

20/98

EXEMPT - LAND ADJACENT FORMER MIDDLESBROUGH WAREHOUSE SITE, SOUTH BANK ROAD/JAMES STREET, NORTH ORMESBY - DISPOSAL [PART B]

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration.

ORDERED

That the recommendations of the report be approved.

REASONS

The decision was supported by the following reason:

For reasons outlined in the report.

20/99 **CONFIDENTIAL - PROJECT FUNDING**

The Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Social Care and the Director of Public Health submitted a report for the Executive's consideration.

ORDERED

That the recommendations of the report be approved.

REASONS

The decision was supported by the following reason:

For reasons outlined in the report.

20/100 **CONFIDENTIAL - PROJECT FUNDING**

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration submitted a report for the Executive's consideration.

ORDERED

That the recommendations of the report be approved.

REASONS

The decision was supported by the following reason:

For reasons outlined in the report.

The decision(s) will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) was published unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures. The two reports entitled 'CONFIDENTIAL - Project Funding' were added as urgent items and, following agreement from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, will be exempt from call in procedures.