

EXECUTIVE

A meeting of the Executive was held on Tuesday 16 March 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 A Hellaoui, T Higgins, J Thompson and G Wilson

OFFICERS: M Adams, C Benjamin, S Butcher, B Carr, G Field, L Grabham, R Horniman, S Lightwing, G Moore, T Parkinson, S Reynolds and E Scollay

20/118 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor D Davison	Non-Pecuniary	Agenda Item 8 - Acceptance of the Holiday Activities Fund 2021 Grant/ family member may be involved in the delivery of activities, funded by the grant.

20/119 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 9 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Executive meeting, held on 9 February 2021, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/120 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 16 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Executive meeting, held on 16 February 2021, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/121 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 26 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Executive meeting, held on 26 February 2021, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/122 **CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS NOVEMBER 2020 - FEBRUARY 2021**

The Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Social Care and the Executive Director for Children's Social Care submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide an overview of the strategic and operational actions that had been undertaken from November 2020 to February 2021 against the Children's Services Action Plan 2020/21.

The report covered the period from November 2020 to February 2021 i.e. from the time when Middlesbrough's Children's Commissioner carried out his virtual visit to gather information for his second report for the Minister, until the beginning of the focus on reviewing and revising the action plan for year two of the Council's improvement programme. The submitted report was not exhaustive but covered the most significant issues of improvement work during the named period.

It was important to note that the work represented by the report had all been carried out in a COVID lock down period with the accompanying stresses and strains that brought to the families that Children's Services were working with but also its workforce.

The submitted report contained details on:

- Quality and Performance, which included information on social workers' and social

care workers' caseloads, Futures for Families (FFF), the number of children looked after by Middlesbrough Council, the Children with Disabilities (CWD) Service, vulnerable children's attendance at school and care leavers (see paragraphs 5 to 16 of the submitted report);

- Leadership and Management, which included information on the 'Middlesbrough Children Matter' website, the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the Children's Workforce Development Strategy (2021-24) and the Youth Service tender process (see paragraphs 17 to 20); and
- Governance and Partnerships, which included information on the DfE review and the Ofsted inspection (see paragraphs 21 to 23).

ORDERED

That the overview of the strategic and operational work undertaken between November 2020 and February 2021, in line with the Children's Services Improvement Action Plan 2020/21, be approved.

REASON

It was crucial that members of the Executive had a line of sight into the strategic and operational work being undertaken in line with the Children's Services Improvement Action Plan 2020/21.

20/123

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

The Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Social Care and the Executive Director for Children's Social Care submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to request ratification and support for the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy set out the vision and action plan for how the Council and its partners planned to support children and young people who were in care and care leavers to achieve the best possible outcomes. Transforming the approach to corporate parenting was a key priority for the Council, as part of its wider improvement programme across its whole system of support for children and young people in Middlesbrough. The Council's progress in delivering positive change for children in care and care leavers was a particular focus for the Strategic Multi-Agency Improvement Board, with support and challenge from the DfE and Ofsted.

The strategy had been directly informed and shaped by the active involvement of local children and young people who had contributed their views and ideas based on their personal experiences, their aspirations and ambitions.

Attached at Appendix 1 of the submitted report was a copy of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023.

A discussion ensued and Members commented on:

- the importance of elected members demonstrating that they care about what happens to their looked-after children and care leavers by taking their corporate parenting role seriously; and
- the need for regular Member briefings to provide information, advice and support to elected members, enabling them to carry out their responsibilities to be good corporate parents.

OPTIONS

If the strategy was not ratified by Executive then there would not be a strategic overview of the work with children who were looked after and care leavers. That may have left them vulnerable and impacted on their life chances.

ORDERED

That the Corporate Parenting Strategy be ratified and supported.

REASONS

Devising and implementing the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and subsequently evidencing its impact, was a fundamental part of delivering Middlesbrough's Children's Services improvement plan and therefore improving outcomes for Middlesbrough's Children who were looked after (CLA). There was a clear expectation that whenever a decision was made the question was asked 'is it good enough for my child?'

20/124

ACCEPTANCE OF THE HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES FUND 2021 GRANT

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and the Director of Public Health submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide details in respect of the Holiday Activities Fund 2021 (e.g. the delivery requirements) and request that the Council accepted the grant on offer.

Over recent years, the Government had piloted a range of approaches to delivering school holiday activities with the aim of providing free healthy meals and fun activities to disadvantaged children. In November 2020, the Government announced that local authorities would be allocated a share of £220 million to expand the Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) programme in 2021, so that it was available for every child and young person eligible for free school meals (FSM).

The grant being made available to Middlesbrough Council was:

- 2020/21 FY = £105,340
- 2021/22 FY = £942,130
- Total indicative allocation = £1,047,470

Broadly, the requirements of the HAF programme 2021 were to provide:

- healthy (hot) meals to School Food Standards;
- enrichment activities;
- physical activity and nutrition education;
- signposting and referrals to services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families (e.g. Housing Support Officers, Affordable Warmth Advisors);
- inclusive and accessible provision;
- at least 4 hours for 4 days a week - for 4 weeks in the summer, and for a week in Easter and Christmas; and
- Ofsted registered providers where appropriate.

ORDERED

1. **That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Public Health to accept the Holiday Activities Fund 2021 grant.**
2. **That the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Director of Education, Prevention and Partnership; Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and Executive Member for Communities and Education be granted delegated authority to sign off future implementation plans and allocate funding up to £150,000 per provider to deliver the Holiday Activities Fund programme.**

REASON

Poverty was a significant issue in Middlesbrough, with 31.4% of children living in low income families. The school holidays posed additional stresses on those families. The provision of the HAF programme locally, alongside other holiday hunger and wider food poverty work, would alleviate some of those stresses and benefit the children most in need, particular in terms of holiday learning loss.

20/125

TEESSAURUS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The Executive Member for Education and Communities and the Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to seek approval for funding of £250,000 for the proposed improvements to Teessaurus Park.

The Teessaurus Park attracted visitors from across the north and had been synonymous with Middlesbrough since its opening in 1979. The park had provided opportunities for children, families and adults to enjoy the area and the access to the river.

As with any park or leisure space, there was a constant need to update the offer and ensure that the attraction continued to support Middlesbrough's desired cultural image.

To facilitate that, a working group had been set up in 2020, which explored options for improving Teessaurus Park. A range of improvements had been identified and costings gathered and aligned to the improvement plan.

The proposed improvements to the park to be funded from the £250,000 capital investment were as follows:

- 40ft café unit to include internal toilets and customer seating, full kitchen and appliances, a serving hatch for take away refreshments (it proposed that the operation of the café would be outsourced and managed by an independent business);
- enhanced lighting throughout the park to be installed on columns and located to illuminate paths and the dinosaur sculptures;
- improved footpaths throughout the park to improve accessibility;
- mains utilities provision to the park of electricity, water and drainage;
- children's zip wire and embankment slide to help increase visitor dwell time;
- accessible children's play equipment for children with disabilities;
- installation of three CCTV cameras mounted to columns;
- motion sensors and sound system installed on columns close to dinosaur sculptures to make dinosaur sounds when visitors pass them;
- points of interest around the park (including installation of large outdoor fixed dinosaur-themed jigsaw puzzles and large dinosaur footprints);
- improved signage to direct visitors to the park from the A66;
- improved new signage around the park, including educational signage providing information on each dinosaur; and
- development of a marketing campaign to increase visitor numbers and creation of a brand for the park.

Subject to Executive approval, the improvement works would commence in late May 2021 with planning permission application, followed by a procurement exercise to tender for the purchase of the café unit and site works would be expected to commence in May and be completed in late September 2021.

A discussion ensued and Members commented on:

- the importance of providing toilets and changing facilities that could be accessed and utilised by children with disabilities;
- the need to improve access to the site in respect of public transport; and
- the need for the Director of Finance to explore alternative funding options and financial opportunities in order to deliver the improvement works.

In light of discussions, the Mayor proposed an amendment to the recommendations of the submitted report. Following a vote, Members were in agreement that, if no alternative funding options could be identified by the Director of Finance to deliver the improvement works, approval would be granted to access funds from the Capital programme, which had been agreed by full Council.

OPTIONS

An alternative option that had been considered was to leave the park in its current condition and not improve it any further. That option was not recommended as it would not have assisted with improving visitor numbers to the town and would not have provided an improved leisure offering to residents and those who work in Middlesbrough.

ORDERED

- 1. That work be undertaken by the Director of Finance to explore alternative funding options and financial opportunities in order to deliver the improvement**

- works; and
2. That funding of £250,000, for the proposed improvements to Teessaurus Park, be approved.

REASONS

The proposal to improve Teessaurus Park was recommended to enhance, develop and further market the presence of the popular and unique visitor attraction within the town. The unique offer planned to benefit the people who lived and worked in Middlesbrough and also to enhance the town's leisure offering to visitors, aiming to increase and develop visitor attendance from the wider Tees Valley. The outlined developments would increase visitor dwell time at the park which offered large open green spaces, free admission, free car parking and led on to popular walking routes along the River Tees.

The proposed improvements would make the park more of an inclusive environment for everyone due to the improved paths and walkways and the installation of accessible play equipment for children with disabilities. The park could become a great venue to host outdoor events and educational paleontology sessions for school children could be held there.

Increased marketing and interpretation opportunities were proposed to increase awareness of the unique outdoor space, access to the river and increase the knowledge of the presence of a series of playful public art pieces within the town. It was felt that it was important to connect the park up with the wider public art plans for the town and the importance of connecting local people with cultural and heritage assets. Working with the marketing and communications team would develop a comprehensive plan to promote the park to audiences in Middlesbrough, the Tees Valley and the Wider North East Region.

Sponsorship for some improvements could be explored with local businesses and a marketing campaign could be developed to identify a brand for the park and to increase awareness of the site.

Overall, the proposed developments planned to improve the much-loved leisure facility, which was truly unique in the Tees Valley and North East of England and growing on the Council's reputation of offering high-quality green spaces. It would be the aspiration to work towards green flag award ensuring Middlesbrough continued to develop vibrant opportunities.

Initial stakeholder consultation had been undertaken with the Executive Member for Culture and Communities and the Executive Member for Environment and was not statutorily required.

The proposal to improve Teessaurus Park had not been examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or by a Scrutiny Panel.

20/126

IMPROVE RECYCLING RATES AND PARTICIPATION ACROSS MIDDLESBROUGH

The Executive Member for Environment and the Director of Environment and Community Services submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the implementation of a Recycling Education and Communications Plan.

To enable Middlesbrough Council to improve recycling there was a need to change residents' behaviours/attitudes towards recycling.

Key milestones were to be incorporated into the plan, to enable a measurement of performance against the intended outcomes:

- develop a communications and marketing plan by June 2021;
- develop an education plan to raise awareness of recycling across Middlesbrough by June 2021;
- develop a plan to work with education establishments commencing July 2021;
- begin working with schools on Waste Minimisation and Recycling commencing September 2021; and

- to have an active schools environmental sustainability programme with all schools by July 2023.

The Council planned to embark on a substantial education and awareness programme where it would look to work with external stakeholders to assist them in forming relevant/practical solutions to improve their recycling rates.

To go alongside the education programme, the Council planned to undertake a comprehensive communications and marketing plan.

In response to a Member's query, it was advised that regular updates would be provided to councillors on waste and recycling statistics.

ORDERED

That the proposal for an Education and Communications Plan, to increase recycling across Middlesbrough, be approved.

REASON

The proposed changes planned to support the Council's Green Strategy and therefore aid achieving a Net Carbon Neutral status by 2029. It would improve the Council's current recycling rate toward the current Government target of 50% by 2020. NB, the Government was currently reviewing that target as part of the resource waste strategy. It would also embed the vision of the Council to be the lead authority on all environmental issues.

20/127

VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION OF LAND AT THE AVENUE, NUNTHORPE AS A VILLAGE GREEN

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to request approval to submit an application seeking the voluntary registration of land at The Avenue, Nunthorpe as a Village Green.

The Avenue site was a Council owned open space of 2.74 Ha (6.76 acres). It was used for informal recreation and formed a valuable amenity space serving the Nunthorpe community. The site was protected as primary open space within the Council's Local Plan (2014). In recognition of the importance of the open space to the local community, approval was now sought to voluntarily designate the site as a Village Green.

Section 15(8) of the Commons Act 2006 made provision for landowners to voluntarily seek to have their land registered as Village Green if they so wished. The process for doing so involved submitting to the registration authority the required application form, with accompanying site plan and a statutory declaration that the applicant was the landowner. The required application form and accompanying documentation had been included at Appendix 1 of the submitted report. An application for voluntary designation could not be rejected by the registration authority. The Council was the registration authority and any application for designation would need to be considered by the Licensing Committee.

Once registered as Village Green, the land would be protected from development or change. Registration of land as a Town or Village Green meant that the residents of the locality would have the right to use the land for lawful sports and pastimes.

OPTIONS

Two alternative options had been considered:

- 1. to retain current designation and status of the land without Village Green registration; and**
- 2. that the land be designated as Local Greenspace in the forthcoming Local Plan review. Whilst that offered more protection than the current status of the land, the designation could have been removed via a subsequent review of the Local Plan.**

ORDERED

That an application seeking the voluntary registration of land at The Avenue, Nunthorpe as a Village Green be approved.

REASON

The land at The Avenue, Nunthorpe was a valued open space resource that benefitted the local community. Village Green status recognised its importance and role in the local community and represented the most appropriate course to seek to protect it in perpetuity.

20/128

COUNCIL FUTURE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION - PREFERRED OPTION (PART A)

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 building options that had been explored for the future accommodation of Council Staff and request approval for:

- a) a departure from Centre North East (CNE) being considered the preferred option due to changing circumstances;
- b) Fountains Court being the preferred option for the future accommodation of staff;
- c) the purchase of Fountains Court; and
- d) a delegated decision to the Director of Regeneration and Culture, Richard Horniman, and the Director of Finance, Ian Wright, with regard to expending the £200,000 contingency set aside in the investment strategy, should it be required.

Fountains Court was proposed as the preferred option, the key benefits of the option being that:

- a) The building had recently been vacated by Firstsource, therefore purchasing and occupying the building would prevent long-term vacancy, thus helping to meet the Council's regeneration objectives.
- b) It offered the space and layouts required for staff. At approximately 38,000 sq. ft it could accommodate approximately 335 desks (5 per 10 people) and all previously assumed services, with the exception of the Customer Centre which would remain on the ground floor of Middlesbrough House. Furthermore, the building offered the flexibility to extend with modular space if required in the future.
- c) As the building would be fully occupied by the Council, there was no requirement for the Council to let the vacant space. That in contrast to the CNE option whereby the Council would be taking a commercial risk on vacant space needing to be let.
- d) A recent building survey had confirmed the building was in sound condition and although it required refurbishment, it would be possible to achieve a very high standard of fit out and an excellent working environment for staff. As it was by far the most economical option to purchase, a good proportion of the investment could be allocated to ensuring a high internal specification.
- e) It was by far the most economically advantageous option. Further due diligence and survey work needed to be undertaken to fully understand the costs, but it was anticipated that the cost of the purchase and fit out of the building could be accommodated within the original fit out budget for One Centre Square. If the detailed due diligence subsequently identified that could not be achieved, a request for an additional allocation of funding would be made prior to work starting. A saving of up to £6.8m would be made when comparing Fountains Court to a generic new build option of the same net internal area.
- f) Moving to Fountains Court would be achieved in a shorter timescale than the other options, particularly any new build options. It was estimated staff could begin to relocate there in autumn 2022.

If approved, the next steps would be:

- design work and staff consultation to firm up the requirements;
- tendering and a mobilisation period for the refurbishment and fit out. Any tendering work would take account of the preference to support local businesses and in turn the local economy;
- on site works; and,
- staff could begin to move there in autumn 2022.

OPTIONS

The Council could:

- Do nothing - The principle that the Council should relocate to a new office building had been established by previous Executive direction. The Civic Centre would have required significant investment to bring it up to an acceptable standard and was not an economically viable option in the long-term.
- Continue to proceed with the CNE option - The Council could have continued to proceed with leasing and occupying CNE. However, CNE was unlikely to meet the Council's evolving needs and that would have resulted in higher costs and greater risks than necessary.
- Pursue another option highlighted in the report - That was not recommended, predominantly because they were not as economically viable, carried greater risks and also prolonged the timescales for relocation.

ORDERED

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

REASONS

The last report to Executive on 27 October 2020 had identified that a further options appraisal would be required, as the Council's needs had evolved, as had the wider property market.

The report outlined the Council's updated requirements, and how those now fit against the current available options.

The report identified Fountains Court as the preferred option as it was the most economically viable option whilst still meeting the Council's requirements and regeneration aspirations. It was recommended that Fountains Court was purchased with the intention of refurbishing the building, ready for staff to relocate.

The subject of the report had not been examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or by a Scrutiny Panel.

20/129 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

20/130 **EXEMPT COUNCIL FUTURE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION - PREFERRED OPTION (PART B)**

The Executive Member for Regeneration and the Director of Regeneration and Culture 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.

