
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on Wednesday 6 April 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors S Walker (Chair), R Arundale (Vice-Chair), D Branson, T Furness, B Hubbard, T Mawston and M Saunders

OFFICERS: S Bonner, G Field, R Horniman and S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Were submitted on behalf of Councillor M Storey

21/68 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/69 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 9 MARCH 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 9 March 2022 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

21/70 **THE GREEN STRATEGY - DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

A copy of the Draft Final Report on Middlesbrough Council's Green Strategy had been circulated with the agenda.

Members discussed the information provided and suggested recommendations for inclusion in the Final Report.

AGREED that:

1. the following conclusions were approved for inclusion in the report:

A) TERM OF REFERENCE A

To examine the Council's proposals to meet Government targets for greenhouse gas emissions, make Middlesbrough more climate resilient, and minimise the environmental impact of services.

Since declaring a climate crisis in 2019, Middlesbrough Council set out a ten year plan to take the lead on environmental issues, become net carbon neutral by 2029 and ensure the town is net carbon neutral by 2029.

The Council's Green Strategy, based on the ten One Planet Living principles, will help the Council achieve its aims, along with Government targets, by taking sustained action on environmental improvements, standards and awareness, community cohesion, culture, wildlife, landscape, travel, materials, consumables, waste and carbon energy.

During the first year of the Green Strategy Action Plan, amongst other achievements, there have been many biodiversity improvements throughout the town, a Big Green Week of action in September 2021, a carbon audit of the Council's vehicle fleet, and an awareness and education programme introduced to boost recycling rates.

B) TERM OF REFERENCE B

To investigate in detail the following elements of Middlesbrough Council's Green Strategy Action Plan:

- **Land Use and Wildlife**

- **Culture and Communities**
- **Sustainable Transport**

All three Action Groups have identified key areas for action and are developing initiatives that contribute to Middlesbrough becoming a greener and more sustainable place to live.

From the evidence presented, it is acknowledged that for the Council to achieve many of its green ambitions, community awareness and engagement must be encouraged and improved. Middlesbrough Council needs to lead by example and ensure that the Green Strategy is embedded in, and promoted by, everything that it does. There are several long-established community groups working hard on environmental issues in the town that could benefit from additional volunteers and publicity.

The introduction of measures such as the Local Implementation Plan (LIP), additional Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs), Travel Planning Service, Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) and the Council's new Infrastructure Plan, will aid the move to more sustainable travel around Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley. It was however recognised that there was still more action that needed to be taken in respect of improving public transport and encouraging modal shift and that there were no easy solutions. Similarly it was noted that the technologies associated with electric vehicles were still evolving and the TVCA's Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Project would not necessarily meet the demand for EVCPs within the Tees Valley.

C) TERM OF REFERENCE C

To identify and investigate examples of best practice that can be adopted in Middlesbrough.

Sheffield City Council's Grey to Green Strategy and Sandwell Metropolitan Council's West Bromwich Market Outdoor Market project provided the Panel with ideas that could be potentially be adopted in Middlesbrough. As well as the positive environmental impacts of both projects there are also tangible social and economic benefits.

Sheffield's Grey to Green Strategy incorporates many of the key areas for action identified by the Land Use and Wildlife/Sustainable Water Action Group for Middlesbrough's Green Strategy. There are also ideas in both projects that could perhaps contribute to Middlesbrough's town centre regeneration - a topic explored in the Panel's scrutiny review of Middlesbrough Regeneration Post-Covid 19, which was undertaken in 2020/2021. In particular the Panel thought that the introduction of a regular street market could greatly benefit the town, although further detailed investigation would need to be undertaken as to the viability of this suggestion.

Anecdotally, the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic in the UK in early 2020, has increased the importance of attractive and well maintained outdoor public spaces for some businesses such as cafes, bars, restaurants and markets, as well as for exercise and other leisure activities and entertainment or performance venues.

2. the following recommendations were approved for inclusion in the report:
 - A) Explore the potential for a permanent structure modelled on the West Bromwich Outdoor Market project that could provide a covered performance area in Captain Cook Square, or stalls for street markets or community events, that would also generate renewable electricity and contribute to Middlesbrough's net carbon neutral targets.
 - B) Middlesbrough Council should liaise with Sheffield City Council regarding their Grey to Green Strategy, ensure that the Council's Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) Guide identifies appropriate plant species that are attractive, low maintenance, improve biodiversity net gain and provide all season coverage for use in SuDs planting schemes and more generally throughout the town.
 - C) Review and replace signage and information boards as necessary on dedicated cycle routes throughout the Town to help cyclists plan their leisure or commute journeys and use the available network efficiently.

- D) Produce a map or guide to the cycle network either in paper format, or that could be downloaded onto a digital device from the Council's website or made available from the Middlesbrough's Town Hall, Libraries and/or Community Hubs.
 - E) Through the planning process, encourage Developers to include Electric Vehicle Charging Point (EVCPs) in new houses, housing or commercial developments.
 - F) Middlesbrough Council should continue to press the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to seek further funding to at least maintain the current number of bus services, and increase them wherever possible.
 - G) Middlesbrough Council should ask the TVCA to work with Local Authorities to ensure that new bus routes are provided in all new housing developments at the point of delivery, so that greater patronage of services can be encouraged as soon as houses are occupied.
 - H) Introduce a Wash, Squash and Recycle Campaign to reduce the level and volume of contaminated items currently collected from domestic recycling bins, and improve current recycling rates.
 - I) Trial a pilot scheme in one or two wards, for sowing more wildflower areas and moving to a monthly grass cutting regime, with more frequent litter picking, and grass cleared from the footpaths immediately after mowing.
 - J) Continue to build on initiatives such as the Green Month Takeover and Green Action Days to promote and improve membership of established local volunteer groups and encourage greater participation by Elected Members, Council Employees and Middlesbrough Residents to make Middlesbrough greener.
3. a final version of the report would be circulated to all Panel Members for any amendments/comments, with final approval delegated to the Chair of the Panel.
4. the final report would be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

The Chair provided a verbal update on the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 23 March 2022.

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

As this was the last scheduled meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel of the Municipal Year, the Chair thanked all present for their attendance and contributions during the last year.