

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Tuesday 7 December 2021.

**PRESENT:** Councillors M Saunders (Chair), D Coupe, D Davison, A Hellaoui, C Hobson, C McIntyre, J Platt, J Thompson, S Walker, J Walker (Substitute for M Storey) and L Mason

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** M Smiles (Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services)

**OFFICERS:** C Breheny, T Parkinson, G Cooper, J McNally, I Wright and G Field

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors T Mawston, A Bell, D McCabe and M Storey

20/51 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

20/52 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 9 NOVEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 9 November were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/53 **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**

20/54 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE: DEPUTY MAYOR AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES**

The Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities, Cllr Mieka Smiles, was in attendance to update the Board on her aims and aspirations, progress made to date and to highlight any emerging issues relating to her portfolio. The Director of Environment and Community Services was also in attendance.

It was advised that in the last presentation to OSB the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities had provided a general overview of the different areas of her portfolio and focussed on the Community Safety aspect. On this occasion the focus would be on her aims, aspirations and progress to date. Community Safety had been a strong focus during the last presentation and this time Creating Stronger Communities and Culture would be the main area of focus.

In terms of Communities the portfolio covered a vast amount, the main strands included: community hubs and libraries (located across the whole of the town); community safety, which included the Street Wardens (the numbers had increased from approximately 12 to 60) and now incorporated a range of responsibilities including community safety, environmental enforcement, car parking; CCTV; locality working; empowering communities through a wide range of schemes including the community growing projects to the amazing alleyways project.

The Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities stated that the overarching aim was to create a safer Middlesbrough and support our local communities. With regard to her priorities reference was made to the new Southlands building and it was emphasised that one of her priorities was to improve the community hubs and develop new ones. It was anticipated that there would hopefully be some action on the Southlands site in the spring and the Deputy Mayor advised that she had been on the Town's Fund Board and had advocated for the Southlands site to be included in that deal. As a result £500,000 of extra funding had been secured. Originally, it was proposed that the Southlands building would simply be a community hub style building but following work with ward Councillors and residents it was evident that their aspirations were to replicate the original Southlands Centre. A modular approach would therefore be taken and as more funding became available it was hoped that a sports hall and other facilities would be provided on the site. At the beginning of the process there was a requirement to find an organisation that would be able to manage the centre and the Tees Valley Asset Preservation Trust had been chosen to undertake that role.

Reference was made to Nunthorpe Community Hub, which was also in the pipeline and it was emphasised that the money received via the Towns Fund needed to be spread throughout the whole of the town. The majority of funding had been secured and two community groups had put their names forward to manage the centre and an independent scoring process would be undertaken to determine where it would be located and the type of services that would be provided. It was anticipated that Nunthorpe Community Hub would be built in 2022/2023.

In addition the Board was advised that the department had applied for £5million of funding from the Arts Council and part of that funding would be used to redevelop central library. Reference was made to Seven Stories in Newcastle and the Deputy Mayor advised that it was hoped that Central Library in Middlesbrough could be developed as a hub for children's literacy and also offer fun puzzle rooms and adventures that children could complete. It was anticipated that the Arts Council would make a decision in the New Year and it would be fantastic for Middlesbrough if the funding could be secured.

The Deputy Mayor advised that another one of her aims included investing in communities and enhancing the work that was already undertaken in communities. Reference was made to the communities grant programme and how effective relatively small amounts of funding could be in helping community groups and organisations to make a difference in their communities. The amazing alleys initiative had been part of that programme and this had been particularly effective in Newport and North Ormesby. Approximately 20 alleyway projects had been completed and it was really good for local communities and people's overall well-being. In addition reference was made to the Keep Boro Tidy initiative, which included investment in litter picking equipment.

In terms of further investment in communities, there was also a new initiative whereby if a community asset was sold three per cent of the value of the asset, as long as it achieved its valuation price, would be invested back into that particular community. In Nunthorpe £60,000 had been raised to date via this initiative and similarly a community asset had recently been sold in North Ormesby, which had generated approximately £10,000 worth of funding for the community. The funding had since been awarded to the White Feather Project, which was undertaking fantastic work in the community.

In terms of culture it was advised that this aspect of the portfolio covered all of the Council's leisure venues, parks, museums, the town hall and theatre, as well as events and festivals. The Council also had a key role to play in supporting culture more generally throughout the town. Reference was made to a recent visit to King's Academy, where all students in Year 7 had recently been given the opportunity to learn to play the violin. The Deputy Mayor explained that the Council had partnered with Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST) to introduce the initiative and it was hoped that this could be rolled out to all seven secondary schools across the town.

Reference was made to the recently launched Middlesbrough Lottery and the Board was advised that the scheme was currently on track to generate £40,000 in its first year for local charities and organisations, as well as supporting cultural activity. It was explained that the tickets could be purchased online for £1 per ticket and 60p from each ticket sold went directly to good causes.

Finally, the Deputy Mayor made reference to her final priority in respect of the culture element on her portfolio and advised that she was particularly keen to further develop the town's event programme. Reference was made to 'Nightfall', a new held in Stewart Park over the weekend and the Deputy Mayor advised that she would be very keen to hear feedback from members of the Board about the event. It was advised that £200,000 of additional funding had been secured for the Council's 2022/2023 events programme and it was hoped that the programme would generate additional footfall into the town centre. The recent Diwali event, which had been held in the town centre had been very successful and it was hoped that this could be further built on in 2022/2023.

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

A Member of the Board queried the amount of future additional investment that was proposed for Teessaurus Park. In response it was advised that £250,000 had been approved and it was anticipated that the works would hopefully be completed by Easter and would include a zip wire, new play equipment, light installations and an augmented reality trail.

Reference was made to the 'Nightfall Event' and the fantastic response received from residents and it was queried whether the Council had funded the event. It was advised that in terms of hosting the event it had been a collaboration and the company organising the event had received some funding from the Arts Council, the Council had contributed some funding and the ticket sales had also enabled the event to be held. It was hoped that the event would return in 2022/23, as it had been a sell out and the response had been fantastic.

Reference was made to Middlesbrough's archives and whether any progress had been made in respect of digitising records for bringing them up to date and help people in tracing their family history. In response it was advised that a digitisation was currently being undertaken and it was a huge task as the Council had responsibility for the whole of the Tees Valley.

A Member of the Board queried whether any decision had been taken in respect of a name for the new East Middlesbrough Community Hub, as reference had been made during the presentation to the Southlands Centre but the Centre was no longer in existence. In response it was advised that ultimately it should be a community decision and representation would be needed from local councillors and local residents. It was emphasised that it was very much the working title, as the Southlands Centre had been loved by so many people.

It was queried whether any progress had been made in respect of arranging racial awareness training for Members that had been agreed in 2020. In response it was advised that clarification would be sought on this issue and a response provided.

Reference was made to the different funding streams being used in respect of developing a new community hub on the former Southlands site and it was queried whether further information could be provided. In response it was advised that £1.2m was to be invested from the Council's capital budget and £500,000 would be invested from the Towns Fund.

In terms of the new community centres it was queried how these would be managed. It was advised that the Tees Valley Asset Preservation Trust would take on board the running of the Southlands Centre. Similarly a community organisation would be appointed to manage the Community Hub at Nunthorpe.

Reference was made to what work that was currently being undertaken by the Council to blend communities together, to create community cohesion and build a better Middlesbrough. In response it was advised that this was a really important point and a substantial amount of work was undertaken by the Council in respect of this agenda.

In response to the news that the Cleveland Show had now finished the Chair wished to extend his thanks to all of the volunteers who had successfully run the event for over 73 years.

Reference was made to the possibility of developing an arena in Middlesbrough and the Deputy Mayor expressed the view that this was definitely something that was on the wish list and there was a real need to maximise the events programme throughout the town.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities and the Director of Environment and Communities for their attendance and contributions to

the meeting.

**AGREED** that the information provided be noted.

20/55

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE**

The Chief Executive was in attendance and provided an update to the Board in respect of the following:-

- COVID-19 update
- Executive update
- Strategic Plan

In terms of the latest local COVID-19 data, as at 5 December 2021 the rolling seven-day rate of cases per 100k of the Middlesbrough population was as follows:

- 82 new cases had been added to the system on 8 November 2021;
- 390 new cases had been diagnosed in the last seven days;
- 276.6 rate per 100k of population (last seven days); and
- 309.30 COVID-19 deaths per 100k population.

Reference was made to the COVID case rate by age group and it was advised that the highest number of cases were amongst young people aged 0-19. With regard to the number of COVID patients in South Tees Hospitals it was noted that there were currently 56 inpatients, with 7 of those in critical care. In terms of vaccination rates it was advised that 74 per cent of Middlesbrough's population had received their first vaccination, 67 per cent had received their second vaccination and 32.1 per cent had received their booster.

In relation to the Executive decisions taken recently it was noted that a number of reports had been considered. These included; an annual update on the work undertaken by the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), a report on the findings of the Virtual School Peer Review; the Calculation of Council Tax Base for 2022/23; the Corporate Debt write-off policy and a report on the transfer of the International Centre to a community organisation.

A number of reports were expected to be considered by Executive in January 2022 and these included; Whortlton Road Industrial Estate Disposal; PSPO and CCTV Provision; Metz Bridge – Site Management Arrangements; Members Small Schemes Allocation; Digital Inclusion; Response to Scrutiny: Cultural Events; Response to Scrutiny: Middlesbrough Regeneration Post COVID-19; PSEA Timetable; BOHO X Audit Feedback; Council Tax Support Scheme for 22/23; Holiday Activities and Food Programme and Social Care White Paper.

Reference was made to Council's Strategic Plan and the current process for the drafting of the plan was outlined. It was advised that some changes to the format had been proposed and that a presentation had been given to the Executive on 7 December 2021 with any confirmed changes to current priorities and initiatives to be agreed by 21 December 2021. With a view to any follow up work and any revisions being undertaken by 18 January 2022. A report on the Strategic Plan was scheduled to be considered by Executive on 14 February 2022 and subsequently by Council on 23 February 2022. It was noted that where significant revisions / additions to the Strategic Plan were required it was likely that the new plan would be submitted to Council for approval on Summer 2022, to take into account timescales for public consultation.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his excellent briefing and contribution to the meeting.

**NOTED**

20/56

**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.

**NOTED**

20/57

**REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET - PROJECTED OUTTURN POSITION AS AT QUARTER TWO 2021/22**

The Director of Finance and the Head of Financial Planning and Support provided an update to the Board; the following points were highlighted:

- The information detailed in the report was separated into two elements: COVID-19 related and non-COVID-19 related;
- The 2021/22 Revenue budget for the Council was £116,492,035. The Council's outturn position for 2021/22 for non-Covid-19 elements was projected to be an overspend of £2.605m (2.2%). It was anticipated that there would be a potential financial pressure due to COVID-19 of £1.550m in 2021/22. The total projected outturn at the end of the year was £4.155m;
- The total projected overspend in 2021/22 would be covered by the full utilisation of the Social Care Demand Reserve of £0.5m and the Children's Services Demand Reserve of £0.732m, which were created at the end of 2020/21. The remaining £2.923m of the total projected outturn pressure would be funded from the £4.512m Covid Recovery Reserve, which was created during 2020/21 to cover the potential costs arising from the Covid-19 recovery in 2021/22 and future years;
- Paragraphs 80-100 of the report detailed expenditure against the Investment Strategy, which had a revised budget of £82.029m. The current latest estimated outturn for 2021/2022 was £64.814m;
- Paragraph 101 of the report indicated that borrowing had reduced by £11.6m in Q2 to £206.2m;
- Total reserves were detailed in paragraph 108, which showed projections for 2021/22 to be £32.3m.
- Appendix 1 showed the revised Investment Strategy which would be used from this point onwards.

The Chair thanked the Director of Finance for his attendance and contributions to the meeting.

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