

## **CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel was held on Thursday 21 July 2022.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Councillor Chris McIntyre, G Wilson (Vice-Chair), R Arundale, C Dodds, D McCabe, M Nugent and Z Uddin

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

**OFFICERS:** Susie Blood, Sam Gilmore and Leanne Littlewood

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** J Rostron and J Walker

### **22/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest received at this point in the meeting.

### **22/2 MINUTES - CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - 23 JUNE 2022**

The minutes of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 23 June 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### **22/3 FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND**

The Chair welcomed Sam Gilmore, Head of Economic Growth and Infrastructure who was in attendance to provide information of the future high street fund and the development of the town centre.

Before covid, town centres have been changing significantly as many have been shopping online, especially those on a retail focus. There is an oversupply of retail space for businesses and this causes many of the current issues and is exacerbated because of the four large, competing shopping centres.

When covid emerged (although it is a reason, not an excuse), online shopping escalated, however the fragility of retail was present long before Covid. However, retail will always have a role but it will need to re-invent and adapt to new commercial conditions, however the Council has no power to compel more retailers to return to the town centre. Research has shown that people have time for leisure, free time and we need to compete with outside shopping centres. It demonstrates people's passion for experiences and interaction.

In terms of the strategy, it is based on Densification and Diversification, we need to do the following:

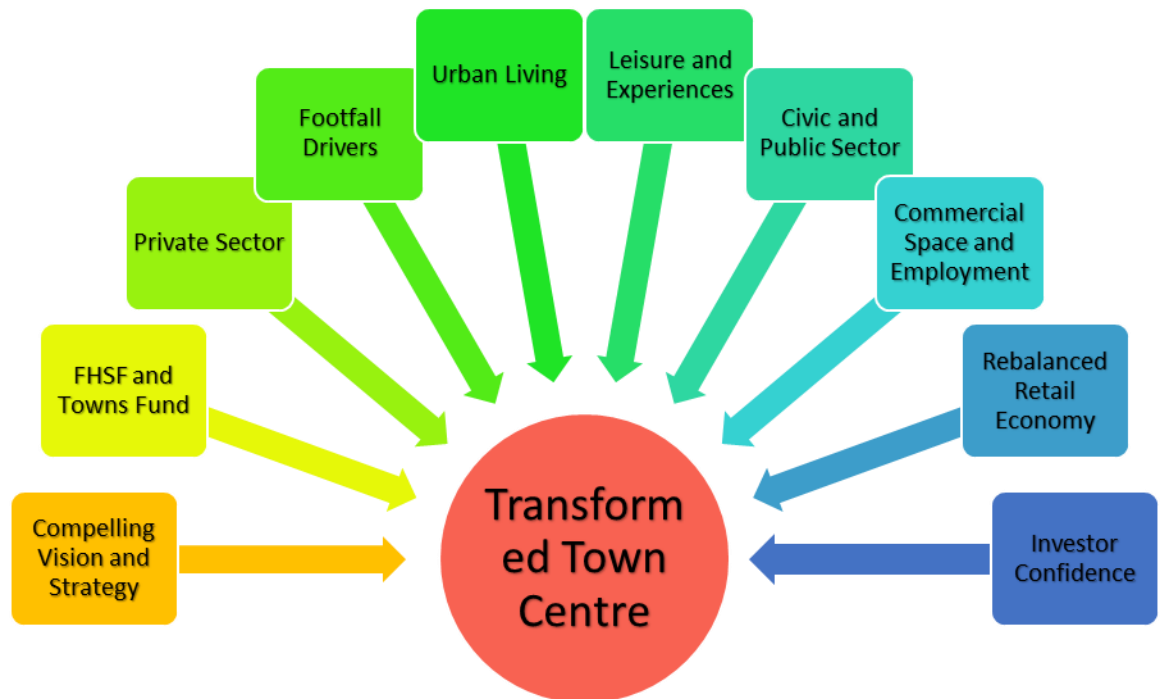
- Living: building residential communities in central Middlesbrough.
- Skills and Learning: integrating our educational services and institutions.
- Working: Bringing Employment and Commercial uses to the centre.
- Health / Wellbeing: Bringing together public services together.
- Culture and Leisure: Providing entertainment and spaces for people to enjoy.
- Retail: Maintaining a strong retail component in the high street.

There were cross cutting themes to bring this together, these include:

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- Transport – Delivering excellent transport and connectivity.
- Digital – Digitising our town centre and building The Digital City.
- Environment – Providing green spaces and public places which promote activity and wellbeing.

The officer advised that this would be delivered by the following diagram, the virtuous circle based on mutual sustainability, looking to Stabilise and Grow, continuing to adapt to trends and having a forward outlook- what till the town centre look like in 25 years?



In order to transform the Town centre, the Council bid for £20.9m in funding and has successfully secured £14.1m from the Future High street fund (FHSF) in the Budget March 2021. The programme has been adjusted to match the funding offer and this has been approved by MHCLG. The current FHSF programme now comprises:

1. £3.5m for residential property;
2. £1.05m for transport adaptations and improving safety / security of town centre areas;
3. £270,352 for cultural animation and experiences;
4. £250k for businesses adaptations for covid mitigations; and,
5. £9.1m for the transformation of Captain Cook Square for leisure uses, incentives, decant compensation, remodelling units, contribution to fit out and adapting public spaces. This programme is underway.

Performance has been as follows:

- Residential – Funding offer to church house with 86 residential units.
- Transport, Safety and Security – we have contributed to some highway adaptations, parking enhancements and lighting projects. Zetland and Captain cook car parks have been painted to look more light and safer.
- Cultural Animation – matches £5m Cultural Development Fund – work within the Library etc
- Business Grants – Delivered and complete – time of essence
- Captain Cook Square – 4 tenants – 3 fitting out now / 1 very soon. Open

within 6 to 9 months – major adaptations – protecting tenancies. Coordinated decant. One of these is an e-sports shop, which the panel looked at in a previous review.

Whilst the panel were aware the town centre will never be the same as it was years ago, it is hoped that the fund will allow future plans, which a mixture of retail, leisure and residential. Middlesbrough is a wide space and this can also be a down fall. We are looking at all of the centres we have to accommodate tenants.

A number of comments were made in relation to bus station/transport and car park opening times. In response, the bus station has been a great bonus to new tenants and seen as a positive in bringing consumers into the town. In relation to the car parks, Captain Cook Square will stay open until 2am or in order to mirror the business hours, in line with the business needs. There are additional costs with this but these will be covered, however after 6pm parking would be free.

The officer was thanked for his presentation.

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## **CULTURAL STRATEGY**

The Chair welcomed Leanne Littlewood, Acting Head of Culture to the meeting to provide the panel with an overview of the Cultural strategy.

In terms of internal facilities within culture, all are open after covid ; some are more successful than others and some are seeing the brunt of the cost of living.

In terms of Middlesbrough town hall:

- Town Hall: Community focussed activities Monday and Tuesdays continue with Commercial program the rest of the week. Sourcing program is challenging with less content available due to the pandemic and the continued pressure from the Globe scooping program that would once have certainly belonged at the Town Hall.
- Q1 the Town Hall delivered 36 shows and 49 workshops with 10,917 tickets sold
- Since the wedding brochure was launched in June 2021, 18 weddings and ceremonies have been booked.
- Reapplied to the Arts Council for NPO status which supports classical music development and engagement if successful it will bring us £250k a year for the next three years.

Middlesbrough Theatre:

- Operates by the same staff as the town hall.
- Continues to provide a broad range of professional and amateur program.
- The hyper local audiences have returned as expected which can be seen in the Q1 attendance figures
- Middlesbrough Theatre: Q1 the delivered 49 shows with a footfall of 13193
- The theatre have added additional school performances for this year's panto due to the high demand

Newham Grange Leisure Farm:

- First venue which reopened after Covid
- Q1 engaged 5540 in workshops
- Delivered 33 events
- Audience footfall of 30049
- New program out of hours starts with Moovies this summer – revenue intent and well received.

Parks and open spaces:

Council has been looked at ways to increase revenue, this has been done through the following:

**Albert Park Snap shot:**

- The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) have **in principle** agreed to fund approximately £100k to refurbish the tennis courts at Albert Park and Pallister Park.
- Council was awarded £13,219.20 from the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) to deliver a summer programme at Albert Park/Dorman Museum.
- Council have submitted an EOI with the Football Foundation to access funding to install Multi Use Games Areas in Middlesbrough.
- Installing new Play equipment.
- Reinstating rowing boats and swans
- Fishing: Fish restocked so visitors can aim for a catch of the day (and throw it back again)

Park events:

- Lots of interest in Stewart park from external organisers
- Some residents were unhappy about the number of events and have objected to the licence applications made by third parties.
- In order to gauge views, there was a drop in session consultation on 24 July 2022, where residents were given the chance to pop and speak directly to the Acting Head of Culture about any questions queries or worries they had about events.

Events:

- The Events team are on track to deliver/support more events in 2022 than they have every before including for example:

***Away day festival /Local History Month (30 events) / Race for life / Pop up Mela / Curious pop up / 6 Orange Pip Markets / The May fair / The Killers concert / Jubilee celebrations / Armed forces day/ Circus extreme / Party in the park/ Commonwealth games Baton relay/ Glastonboro / Nagar Kirtan/ Class of 2022 / Mela / Taste of Africa carnival / Middlesbrough 10 K /Bark in the park/ Exchange square market/ Hit the bar/ Big Boro Book Bash/ The Arts weekender/ Pallister park fair/ Oktoberfest/90's event / Rugby league world cup / Discover Middlesbrough (20 events) /Dino day / Eco Fest / Diwali / Cenotaph***

***memorial 100 years / Remembrance day / laying of the first poppy / Xmas Parade and lights /Nightfall.***

The Acting Head of Culture advised that there was partnership work being undertaken. The Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership was established in 2018 and is made up of around 25 local organisations, who all have the weight of voice regardless of size or status.

The Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership, with support from Middlesbrough Council developed the Investment prospectus, which details capital projects which are in the midst of being launched or those which would bring difference to the town i.e. CDI funding and partners. This looks at developing safes for cultural events , and includes:

- The Central Library – Middlesbrough Council
- Mima – Teesside University
- Platform Gallery – Platform Arts/Network Rail/Trans Pennine Express
- The Auxiliary- Auxiliary Arts
- Exchange square- which has received two expressions of interest to hold events during November/December 2022.

This would bring development to spaces including for example; development of central library and mima, the Auxiliary (10,000 square foot warehouse) and within Platform arts and the railway station.

The panel learnt that the Council had been successful in the second stage of Arts Fund funding to develop the museums.

In terms of the cultural strategy, the panel were advised that a refresh was being developed, which would focus on the following:

Health and wellbeing

Council have initiated the development of a Arts in Health Strategy for the South Tees (launching Aug 22).

The aim of providing an evidence base that will leverage further investment into cultural program linked to public health and wellbeing.

Wellbeing network exists in South Tees that evidences 20% more referrals from Public Health and related council services than in 2021-22.

Place making and regeneration

To develop a creative approach to placemaking and regeneration in Middlesbrough which puts culture at the heart of the town's transformation

The cultural partnership will be further developed and sewn into the consultation processes we facilitate as a local authority

The delivery of all projects within the investment prospectus will be actively prioritised.

Connecting communities

To better understand the needs, interests, priorities and barriers of our communities through consultation and co-production, resulting in increased engagement in cultural and physical activity.

Embedding a cocreation ethos into all development program in line with ACE priorities.

Establishing or renegeing with friends group networks across our venues museums and open spaces

Develop opportunities for YP to feed in and see real change from their contributions

Creative Economy

To grow Middlesbrough's creative economy through strategic partnerships internally with Regeneration/Economic Growth teams and externally with industry and sector partners.

There is a more coordinated approach to growing the sector by local government resulting in a greater appreciation of the importance of the creative sector economically.

Stronger co-ordination with central government bids, increase in affordable space for cultural, creative and physical activity organisations.

#### Young people

To create positive, engaging and sustainable opportunities for young people (0-25 years) to be active and creative.

Develop the NPO programs that already support engagement and activities with primary and secondary schools

Offer to schools is widened to incorporate Parks alongside our other privately run venues so more children are exposed to careers in arts and physical activity.

Development of Internships and Arts apprenticeships.

#### Environment and sustainability

To champion environmental and sustainability practices in all Middlesbrough do.

Setting the example and leading from the front

Advocacy and training

Creative alternatives

Infrastructure

The Arts council maintains keen to work with communities and develop opportunities for all. An example of this is youth music, who work with the Links project or hard to reach groups. The youth group is brought to the town hall for the evening and entertainment is supplied. This allows Middlesbrough to talk to young people and gain their opinions, outside of the school setting.

Following the presentation, the panel wanted to ensure that there was a forward plan in place for the capital plan to ensure these were maintained.

A query regarding wedding capacity for the town hall, and in response, it was advised that the main hall holds 300 guests but could potentially be more if the wedding party used both rooms, however this would depend on the infrastructure.

In terms of culture, a panel member felt that there were very little opportunities for our children and young people to learn about the heritage of the town hall.

In response, the officer advised that two tours had been conducted with schools, and throughout the year, there are three events were offer opportunities to visit the town hall:

1. Local History month
2. Heritage week
3. [Discover Middlesbrough](#)

The officer did however state these tend to be focused on adults, and focus on a subject e.g. democracy. However conversations have taken place with Cleveland Fire brigade to potentially have open days, which would incorporate history of the town hall and fire brigade. It was agreed more should be done with our children to educate them about their town and their heritage.

The Council do have a network of volunteers to undertake the tours, however number of volunteers are limited.

The officer was thanked for her presentation.

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**CHAIR'S OSB UPDATE**

The Chair provided an overview of the issues raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 19 July 2022.

The Chair advised that whilst the Board had approved the panel's work programme, it would add value to look at a cultural element. Following the presentation from the Acting Head of Culture , the panel would give further consideration and report back accordingly.

AGREED- That the update be noted and further consideration to given to the cultural aspect within the panel's work programme.

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