

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

<b>Date:</b> Wednesday 16th November, 2022
<b>Time:</b> 10.00 am
<b>Venue:</b> Mandela Committee Room

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes - Overview and Scrutiny Board - 25 October 2022 3 - 8
4. Executive Forward Work Programme 9 - 16
5. Executive Member Update 17 - 20
6. Chief Executive's Update
7. The Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel - Final Report - The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Supporting Adult Social Care (With a Focus on Covid-19 and Recovery) 21 - 42
8. Scrutiny Chairs Update
  - Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor J. Platt (Chair)
  - Children & Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor D. McCabe (Chair)
  - Children & Young People's Social Care and Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor D. Davison (Chair)

Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor C. McIntyre (Chair)

Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure  
Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor R. Arundale (Vice Chair)

Health Scrutiny Panel  
Councillor D. Jones (Chair)

9. Any other urgent items which, in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.
  
10. Date and Time of Next Meeting - Tuesday, 13 December 2022 at 10:00am

Charlotte Benjamin  
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall  
Middlesbrough  
Tuesday 8 November 2022

#### MEMBERSHIP

Councillors M Saunders (Chair), T Mawston (Vice-Chair), C Cooke, D Davison, C Hobson, B Hubbard, D Jones, D McCabe, C McIntyre, J McTigue, J Platt, M Storey and J Thompson

#### **Assistance in accessing information**

**Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Scott Bonner, 01642 729708, [scott\\_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk)**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Tuesday 25 October 2022.

**PRESENT:** Councillors M Saunders (Chair), T Mawston (Vice-Chair), C Cooke, D Davison, C Hobson, D Jones, D McCabe, C McIntyre, J Platt and J Thompson

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors D Coupe

**OFFICERS:** C Breheny, E Scollay, C Benjamin and M Adams

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors B Hubbard and M Storey

20/123 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

20/124 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 19 JULY 2022**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 19 July 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/125 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 21 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 21 September 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/126 **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.

A Member of the Board queried whether the items on the Forward Work Programme allocated to the department of Children's Services would progress as indicated given the forthcoming departure of the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Director of Children's Care. In response the Monitoring Officer advised that confirmation on this would sought and written confirmation provided to the Board following the meeting.

**NOTED**

20/127 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE**

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Protection and Digital Inclusion, Cllr David Coupe, was in attendance to update the Board on his aims and aspirations, progress made to date and to highlight any emerging issues relating to his portfolio.

The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration, the Director of Public Health (South Tees) and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services were also in attendance. The Executive Member opened by thanking the Board for the invite and advised that he would highlight some of the key areas he had been working on, as well as some of the emerging issues relating to his portfolio. During the presentation the following key points were made:-

- In terms of the broader context it was advised that it was becoming an increasingly challenging local environment for staff within these service areas, as they were dealing with increasingly complex "chaotic" users of services, the impact of the

increasing cost of living and the on-going impact of COVID-19. They were managing these challenges in the context of the current financial restrictions for both the Council and for partner organisations. There was also uncertainty around the impact and resourcing of central government's reforms of Adult Social Care (charging reforms and changes to the ways in which care providers are funded – would they go ahead and how would they be funded?).

- It was advised that plans were in place for the commencement of CQC inspections of Adult Social Care from 2023 and the Council was connecting into the emerging Integrated Care Board (ICB) work programme in order to support the delivery of shared aspirations to reduce health inequalities and improve population health. In addition the delivery of the national drugs strategy "From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives" was also high on the agenda.
- The Executive Member highlighted the on-going work and key current issues in which he was involved and all of the issues were detailed in his PowerPoint presentation, which had been shared with Members and was available via the modern.gov system.

Following the presentation Members of the Board were afforded the opportunity to ask questions and the following queries were raised:-

- In response to a query regarding the monies received by the Council during the pandemic for the provision of workforce support in Care Homes it was advised that the Council had developed a mechanism to disperse the funding, which had been monitored through the contracting and commissioning teams. The Member was advised that if the question could be submitted in writing a detailed response in respect of the figures could be provided.
- In terms of the way in which the Council and its partners were responding to the cost of living crisis it was advised that a multi-agency response was in place and the cold weather plan would also soon come into effect. The Council was working with the NHS to identify those at particular risk of being unable to heat their homes and community warm spaces across the town had been identified. Efforts were also being made to understand the offer from the Revenue and Benefits Team and where any professional went into a cold home personalised advice would be provided. The Live Well Centre in central Middlesbrough would ensure that people were also supported to connect into other opportunities. It was about looking at what else could be done to support the individual – addressing loneliness for example. The Sport England programme funding was being used to support the initiative to ensure that warm spaces were not simply a place to go to be warm but that would lead to ongoing connections.
- In response to a query it was confirmed that the substance misuse service had been brought back in-house.
- Reference was made to the ending of the Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT) programme in Middlesbrough and Members of the Board expressed the view that the decision by the Police and Crime Commissioner to withdraw his funding had been really disappointing. The Executive Member advised that he was extremely supportive of the programme and still backed it 100 per cent. Unfortunately the Police and Crime Commissioner had struggled to make the case to fund it, stating that it was a health issue, and although the Council had funded it for a short period it was unable to sustain the funding. It was advised that the current patients, of which there were approximately 10, would continue to be supported and safely transitioned onto another form of treatment.
- The Board expressed dismay that a great service had been lost at a time when there was an increase in the number of drug related deaths due to overdose. The Executive Member advised that he would love to find another way to source the programme and was happy to push as hard as he could for it to be funded. Reference was made to the funding contributed by Middlesbrough Council to Cleveland Police to increase the number of Police Officers and whether the PCC's office could therefore be asked to contribute to the scheme by the Board.
- A Member of the Board advised that the Health Scrutiny had had a similar discussion at its recent meeting and had determined that it wished to write to the PCC, along with the Health Secretary and the Home Affairs Select Committee. Representatives from the Home Affairs Select Committee had recently visited the HAT scheme in Middlesbrough and had appeared on national television on 11 October 2022 praising the effectiveness of the scheme in terms of the savings generated in court time and Police time. The Executive Member advised that he would certainly be supportive of

such action and having previously been Vice-Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel during its undertaking of a review on Opioid Dependency all of the evidence he heard had persuaded him that it was an excellent scheme and he would be very keen to see it continue.

- Reference was made to the food hygiene star system and the recent press coverage in relation to a small number of premises. In response it was advised that there were over 1000 eateries in Middlesbrough and only a very small percent had any problems identified. Whilst undertaking visits Environmental Health staff did on occasion experience situations whereby they would need to close a business. However, Environmental Health staff worked to a legislative framework and depending on what they found appropriate action would be taken. It was advised that if a premises received zero stars it was obvious that improvements had to be made and support would be provided to ensure the premises was brought up to standard. The Director of Adult Social Care advised that he would be happy to arrange an all Member Briefing on the Food Hygiene Star System.
- In response to a query regarding digital roll out it, it was advised that City Fibre had recently attend a local community council meeting and advised that it planned to cover great pockets of the area, although the south of the town was more complicated. It was anticipated that 5G coverage would be ongoing until 2025 and would cover as much of Middlesbrough as possible.
- A query was raised in respect of telephone access to the Registrars Service and the Monitoring Officer advised that this information would be sought and fed back to Members following the meeting.
- In response to a query on the issue of bed blocking it was advised that this was an issue that had occupied the most management time over the last 10 years and one which obscured the complexity of the issue. The sheer volume of people attending A&E and the availability of resources in the community at the point of discharge meant it was a multifaceted issue. The Director of Adult Social Care advised that the Council was working very closely with the Integrated Care System (ICS), as there was a need to ensure that we worked hand in hand with GP's and the ambulance to prevent people ending up in hospital. It was acknowledged that there was a whole discussion to had on this issue.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Protection and Digital Inclusion for his comprehensive presentation and contribution to the meeting.

**AGREED** as follows:-

1. That a letter be written to the Police and Crime Commissioner highlighting the concerns of the Board in relation to the ending of the Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT) programme in Middlesbrough.
2. That an all Member Briefing on the Food Hygiene Star System be arranged by the Director of Adult Social Care Services.

20/128

## **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

Each Scrutiny Chair provided an update on the work undertaken by their respective panel's as follows:-

### Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel

The last meeting of the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was held on 5 October 2022.

The panel received an update from the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration in respect of integration work that had taken place between health and social care.

Members then heard from both the Director and the Head of Strategic Commissioning and Procurement in relation to 'The Impact of the Energy and Cost of Living Crises on Caring for Vulnerable Adults'. Following receipt of this information, the panel agreed that rather than continue with this topic as a short term scrutiny review, because issues would be present for the foreseeable future, updates would be provided periodically. The next update would be received on 30 November 2022.

The panel's next meeting will take place on the 2 November 2022, when consideration of the draft final report of 'The Role of the VCS in Supporting Adult Social Care (With a Focus on COVID-19 and Recovery)' would be undertaken.

#### Children & Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel

The Children & Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's last meeting was held on 10 October 2022.

In respect of the scrutiny panel's 2021 review of Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools, Caroline Cannon - the Council's Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services and the Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review had attended to provide:

- an update on the progress made with the implementation of the agreed recommendations / actions; and
- information and data demonstrating the impact of the 0-25 Inclusion and Outreach Model.

The information received had demonstrated to the panel that there was emerging data, case study and impact evidence to suggest that the Inclusion and Outreach Model was having a positive impact for children, families and schools.

At the meeting, the scrutiny panel also considered and agreed the Terms of Reference for its review of Youth Offending and Partnership Working with Schools.

#### Children & Young People's Social Care and Scrutiny Panel

The Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel had last met on 24 October 2022.

The South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership Manger had attended the meeting to present the STSCP's Annual Report for 2021/22. The Panel had heard details of the Partnership's work over the previous year, including details of the numbers of serious case reviews and training provided to strategic partners.

The Scrutiny Panel's next meeting was scheduled to be held on 14 November 2022.

#### Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel

The last meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny was held on 20 October 2022 and the panel discussed the Council's strategies for dealing with off road bikes.

The Council's Operational Community Safety Manager was in attendance to provide the update but unfortunately the representative from Cleveland Police had been unable to attend.

The Scrutiny Panel's next meeting was scheduled to be held on 14 November 2022.

#### Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

In the Vice Chair's absence the Democratic Services Officer advised that the last meeting of the EDEI Scrutiny Panel had been held on 12 October 2022. The Panel had discussed the topic of prevention of damage to grass verges with key officers from Environment and Commercial Services. Information had been provided with regard to potential prevention measures including legal powers that were available to the Council. The Chair had suggested that a representative of Thirteen Housing should be invited to the next meeting for further discussion on this topic.

In addition the Panel had received an overview of Nutrient Neutrality – its new scrutiny topic – from the Head of Planning.

At the next meeting, on 9 November 2022, the Panel was scheduled to receive the annual Flood Risk Management Update and also discuss the Work Programme for the rest of this

year.

### Health Scrutiny Panel

The last meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel was held on 11 October 2022. At that meeting the Director at North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB) was in attendance to update the panel on a consultation exercise currently being undertaken in respect of proposed changes to the provision of Integrated and Urgent Care in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland.

The Director at NENC ICB had explained to the panel that having looked at the models of care in place across the five Tees Valley authorities at present Middlesbrough was the only one not to have an integrated / urgent care facility. It was therefore proposed that an integrated urgent care service be provided at James Cook University Hospital. The Panel heard details about how this would be developed and it was advised that if the proposals were approved then the facility would open in August 2023.

In addition to the above a regional health scrutiny update was provided to the panel on the work undertaken by the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 23 September 2023. The scrutiny panel also considered the areas on which it wished to focus for its review on Dental Health and the Impact of Covid-19. Finally, an update was provided on the panel's previous review on Opioid Dependency.

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<b>Report of:</b>	Chief Executive
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Board – 16 November 2022
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<b>Subject:</b>	Executive Forward Work Programme
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**Summary**

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider the content of the Executive Forward Work Programme.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?
Information	No	N/A	N/A

Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan		
People	Place	Business
Open and transparent scrutiny supports all elements of the Mayor’s Vision.	Open and transparent scrutiny supports all elements of the Mayor’s Vision.	Open and transparent scrutiny supports all elements of the Mayor’s Vision.

Ward(s) affected
All Wards affected equally

**What is the purpose of this report?**

To make OSB aware of items on the Executive Forward Work Programme.

**Why does this report require a Member decision?**

The OSB has delegated powers to manage the work of Scrutiny and, if appropriate, it can either undertake the work itself or delegate to individual Scrutiny Panels.

One of the main duties of OSB is to hold the Executive to account by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive and decide whether value can be added by Scrutiny considering the matter in advance of any decision being made.

This would not negate a Non-Executive Member’s ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.

## **What decision(s) are being asked for?**

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider the content of the Executive Forward Work Programme.

## **Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended**

No other options were considered.

## **Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)**

### ***Legal***

Not Applicable

### ***Financial***

Not Applicable

### ***Policy Framework***

The report does not impact on the overall budget and policy framework.

### ***Equality and Diversity***

Not Applicable

### ***Risk***

Not Applicable

## **Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)**

Implement any decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Board with regard to the Executive Forward Work Plan.

## **Appendices**

The most recent copy of the Executive Forward Work Programme (FWP) schedule is attached as Appendix A for the Board's information.

## **Background papers**

Executive Forward Work Plan

**Contact:** Caroline Breheny  
**Email:** caroline\_breheny@middlesbrough.gov.uk



## Appendix 1

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
<b>The Mayor</b>						
14314 All Wards	Corporate Performance Report: Quarter Three 2022/23 To review the corporate performance of Q3	Executive 14 Feb 2023	KEY	Public		The Mayor <i>Director of Legal and Governance Services</i>
<b>Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services</b>						
I014364 All Wards	EXEMPT - Fostering Allowances Fostering allowances decision.	Executive 6 Dec 2022	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings that are above the threshold decided by the Council i.e. Over £150,000	Fully exempt		Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services <i>Director of Children's Care</i>
I014164	Children's Services	Executive	KEY	Public		Deputy Mayor and Executive

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
All Wards	Improvement Update To provide the quarterly update to Executive on the Ofsted Improvement Journey	10 Jan 2023				Member for Children's Services <i>Executive Director of Children's Services</i>
<b>Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Protection and Digital Inclusion</b>						
I014027 All Wards	Approval for consultation on the Draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2022-2027 and Cumulative Impact Assessment. This report seeks Executive approval for the draft Statement of Licensing Act Policy 2022-27 for a period of consultation to be undertaken. It sets out the proposed changes to the Statement of Licensing Policy 2022-27 and the proposed Cumulative Impact Assessment which support the Cumulative Impact Policies in the town.	Executive 6 Dec 2022	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Protection and Digital Inclusion <i>Director of Adult Social Care &amp; Health Integration</i>
I013777 All Wards	Healthy Weight Declaration Adoption This report outlines the purpose and process of signing up to the Healthy Weight Declaration in Middlesbrough.	Executive 6 Dec 2022	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Protection and Digital Inclusion <i>Director of Public Health South Tees</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
<b>Executive Member for Environment</b>						
I012273 All Wards	Tees Valley Waste Report To seek approval for MBC to enter with seven other councils a Special Purpose Vehicle company in order to manage the Tees Valley energy recovery facility that will be responsible for the disposal of Middlesbrough municipal waste.	Executive 14 Feb 2023	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings above £150,000 and will affect 2 or more wards	Public		Executive Member for Environment <i>Director of Environment and Community Services</i>
<b>Executive Member for Finance and Governance</b>						
I014528 Central	Exchange House – Disposal [Part A] This report advises on the proposal to dispose of the Council's freehold interest in Exchange House	Executive 6 Dec 2022	KEY	Public		Councillor Stefan Walker, Executive Member for Finance and Governance <i>Director of Finance</i>
I014529 Central	EXEMPT Exchange House Disposal (PART B) This report advises on the proposal to dispose of the Council's freehold interest in Exchange House	Executive 6 Dec 2022	KEY	Fully exempt		Councillor Stefan Walker, Executive Member for Finance and Governance <i>Director of Finance</i>
I012905	Impact Assessment policy 2024-27 (Date TBA - March 23) The policy sets out how the	Executive Member for Environment 1 Mar 2023		Public		Executive Member for Environment <i>Director of Legal and Governance Services</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	council ensures that it impact assesses decisions.					
<b>Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety</b>						
I013842 Central; Newport	TS1 PSPO Extension Executive approves a reapplication as the current TS1 PSPO expires in October.	Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety 16 Nov 2022	KEY Will have a significant impact in two or more wards	Public		Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety <i>Director of Environment and Community Services</i>
<b>Executive Member for Regeneration</b>						
I013742 Central	Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park – Phase 2 Funding Agreement Executive to approval an additional 1.5 million pounds of capital which will be repaired through retention through business rates of the enterprize zones site.	Executive 6 Dec 2022	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings that are above the threshold decided by the Council i.e. Over £150,000	Public		Executive Member for Finance and Governance
I012243 Central	Middlehaven - Electricity Reinforcement Works The report is seeking approval from Executive for funding to facilitate the upgrade of electricity provision in Middlehaven.	Executive 3 Jan 2023	KEY Will incur expenditure or savings that are above the threshold decided by the Council i.e. Over £150,000	Public		Executive Member for Regeneration <i>Director of Regeneration and Culture</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
<b>Executive Member for Young People and Democratic Engagement</b>						

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**16 NOVEMNBER 2022**

**ATTENDANCE OF EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AT  
THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To provide information in respect of the scheduled attendance of Members of the Executive at the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is **RECOMMENDED** as follows:
  1. That Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board are appraised of the work of the Executive Member for Finance and Governance
  2. That Board Members question the Executive Member for Finance and Governance in respect of his portfolio and any issues which arise at the meeting.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Arrangements are in place in the Council to ensure that potential issues for consideration via the scrutiny process (i.e. by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or the relevant scrutiny panel) are highlighted and brought forward as necessary.
4. Overview and Scrutiny also has a responsibility of “holding the Executive to account.” This can happen in a number of different ways and at different stages in the decision-making process. In terms of decision making, this can be:
  - Before decisions are made - such as by examining policy options or considering issues included in the Council’s forward work programme.
  - Immediately after decisions are made, but prior to their implementation, through the call-in process; and
  - After decisions are implemented, through monitoring and evaluation of their effects.

5. Overview and Scrutiny can be involved in holding the Executive to account as a whole, by using the methods outlined in the preceding paragraph, or on an individual basis. The OSB's role in this area has been strengthened in recent years, with arrangements having been made for individual Members of the Executive to attend OSB.
6. This has given OSB Members the opportunity to hear directly from each Executive Member on matters such as their aims and aspirations, progress made, objectives and priorities and also any emerging issues or pressure areas relating to their portfolio.
7. The process has also presented an opportunity for OSB to highlight and question any issues of concern or difficulty (for example in respect of service areas where targets have not been reached or where objectives have not been achieved) and to question what action will be taken to address such issues.
8. Arrangements have been made for the Executive Member for Finance and Governance to be in attendance at today's meeting. Details of the relevant aspects of the portfolio are attached at **Appendix 1**.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9. There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

### **Contact Officer:**

Caroline Breheny

Democratic Services

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<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	<b>Executive Member for Finance and Governance</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Stefan Walker
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Director of Finance, Director of Legal and Governance Services
<b>SCOPE OF PORTFOLIO</b>	
<p>The Executive Member for Finance and Governance has the responsibility of ensuring that the Council operates efficiently, openly and fairly. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance has oversight of budgetary issues.</p> <p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance, Property, Revenues &amp; Benefits and Pensions</li> <li>• Performance, Contract Management and Risk Management</li> <li>• Procurement</li> </ul> <p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democratic Services, Registrars and Electoral Registration</li> <li>• Human Resources</li> <li>• ICT</li> <li>• Information Strategy</li> <li>• Legal</li> </ul> <p><b>Correspondence address:</b>  c/o Democratic Services  Town Hall  Middlesbrough  TS1 9FX</p> <p>stefan_walker@middlesbrough.gov.uk</p>	

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

**FINAL REPORT  
ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL  
THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS)  
IN SUPPORTING ADULT SOCIAL CARE  
(WITH A FOCUS ON COVID-19 AND RECOVERY)**

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## **THE AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW**

1. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic created a wealth of unprecedented challenge that has had a devastating impact on communities and societies across the world, and there have been many studies, reports and briefing papers by leading organisations examining this, such as those by Age UK (2022), NHS (2020), Office for National Statistics (2021) and others.

The purpose of this review was to ascertain the local impact by first examining the support provided by voluntary organisations to Adult Social Care in delivering services to local residents, and then exploring how COVID-19 has changed this. By understanding the different approaches undertaken to improve outcomes for service users in the wake of COVID-19, the panel was keen to consider how these could be further developed.

2. The review aimed to assist the Local Authority by contributing to the delivery of the following themes of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan:
  - People – Working with communities and other public services to improve the lives of our residents;
  - Place – Securing improvements in Middlesbrough’s housing, infrastructure and attractiveness, improving the town’s reputation, creating opportunities for local people and improving our finances; and
  - Business – Promoting investment in Middlesbrough’s economy and making sure we work as effectively as possible to support our ambitions for People and Place.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

3. The terms of reference for the review were as follows:
  - a) To understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on local communities, the Local Authority, VCS organisations and how services are delivered;
  - b) To examine how the Local Authority has worked with the VCS during the pandemic and how support has been provided; and
  - c) To explore effective strategies and projects to further develop support provision in a post-pandemic environment.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Adult Social Care and VCS Organisations in Middlesbrough**

4. In a time of great change and uncertainty, as presented by COVID-19, Adult Social Care’s work did not stop. Moreover, there was an ever-increasing drive to focus on continued operational delivery to ensure that Middlesbrough’s essential services continued during a most difficult and demanding time. That said, however, the pandemic also created opportunities, and as the service now moves into the recovery phase, now is the time to reassess and consider how activities will be carried out in a post-pandemic world. Things are returning to state of ‘normality’, though exactly what this entails and the impacts it will have for the different sectors of society is yet to be determined. Coupled with wider current economic and social challenges, the cost of living crisis for example, it is clear that further challenge lays ahead.

5. Within Adult Social Care, there are a number of different themes of service delivery/operational activity that consist of in-house service provision and independent (commissioned) service provision. Some of the services within the VCS are commissioned by Adult Social Care, whereas other VCS organisations act entirely independently from the Council in the community.
6. In terms of those independent VCS organisations, although they are not directly commissioned by Adult Social Care, they provide a critical contribution to the resilience of the Council's services because they support the same communities that the Council seeks to support.
7. Traditionally, the Council has linked into the VCS through the Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA), but there are also other organisations that fall outside the umbrella of the MVDA.

### **SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

8. Information was provided to the panel at meetings held on 2 March 2022, 30 March 2022 and 7 September 2022.
9. In addition to the evidence that was provided at panel meetings, in order to ensure that VCS organisations were afforded the opportunity to contribute to the investigation, a survey was sent to all VCS organisations involved with the Council's Adult Social Care department. The survey attempted to capture opinions including support received from the Council; alternative sources of funding; and to what extent COVID-19 had impacted upon service delivery. Details of the questions comprising the survey are attached at **Appendix 1**.

### **Term of Reference A - To understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on local communities, the Local Authority, VCS organisations and how services are delivered**

10. The panel notes that as the pandemic hit and communities were forced into lockdown, most VCS organisations found themselves suddenly unable to support vulnerable clients in their usual ways. Following the implementation of strict COVID-19 measures, in particular the removal of face-to-face contact, VCS organisations needed to reconsider their operational models. In addition to this, the usual sources of income, such as charitable donations, grant funding, income from charity shops and/or holding events, were also significantly affected, therefore VCS organisations needed to work differently.
11. Of the organisations that responded to the survey, 88% of them (22) were successfully able to continue in their work supporting Middlesbrough's communities, which demonstrates the resilience, flexibility and determination shown during this unprecedented time. The panel commends the work of all those involved in achieving this.
12. The panel heard that, during this process of reviewing service delivery methods, examples of traditional community support re-emerged, which included such activities as collecting shopping and prescriptions, and assisting neighbours. In addition, Volunteer Responders were set up to support the NHS and Social Care, with GoodSAM volunteers being provided access to an app to facilitate the support of vulnerable people in England. The panel welcomes this cross-sector partnership work and hopes that this support can continue, as it has been incredibly valuable for local communities.
13. The panel notes that, in respect of funding/financial support, the Council recognised the need to support the VCS organisations that were suddenly affected; Public Health commenced engagement work with the VCS via the government grants programme in order

to initiate support. The panel highlights that VCS organisations were encouraged to apply for grant funding on a partnership basis, which was particularly positive as it eradicated a sense of competition/division by bringing resources together and promoting joint working. Grant funding is considered in further detail under Term of Reference B.

**Term of Reference B - To examine how the Local Authority has worked with the VCS during the pandemic and how support has been provided**

14. There were a number of ways in which the Council worked with the VCS during the pandemic. For the purposes of this review, the panel focused upon grant funding; support in assisting vulnerable persons to access essential services; and COVID Awareness and Vaccination Programme (including the ‘Health Champions Network’ and the ‘COVID Champions Network’) matters.

**Grant Funding**

15. The Council has a ‘Grants to the Voluntary Sector’ budget which provides a number of core budget and funding amounts for a variety of programmes that vary in size.

16. In terms of core grants, which cover such operational costs as salaries and other overheads, the Council determines three recipients to receive these from the Voluntary Sector budget. The recipients are chosen every three years following a thorough application process.

17. The current recipients and the amounts of funding allocated are as follows:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Total Allocation</b>
Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)	£87,314 plus £46,000 = £133,314 (combination of two funding streams: VCS grant and Public Health funded grant)
Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA)	£41,314 plus £38,250 = £79,564 (combination of two funding streams: VCS grant and Public Health funded grant)
St. Mary’s Centre	£12,625

18. In addition to offering core funding, other grant funding programmes exist to enable VCS organisations to support activity for people in Middlesbrough (N.B. all applications must demonstrate how they link to the Mayor’s Vision). These include:

- **Community Grant Fund** - this offers grants of up to £1500 through two different funds: the Small Grants Fund and the Community Chest. The Small Grants Fund is for residents and small community groups who want to make a difference to their area (a bank account or constitution is not needed for applications to this fund; a recent example of this were applications/grant payments for Platinum Jubilee street parties). The Community Chest fund is for more established groups which have a constitution, and a bank account and policies are required to be in place;



- **Dementia-friendly and age-friendly activities grants** – funding is available to support activities which improve quality of life for Middlesbrough’s older residents;
- **Community Grant Fund - Levelling Up Grant 2022** – funding is available for VCS groups to look at addressing Middlesbrough’s needs which tie in with the government’s Levelling Up agenda;
- **Development grants** – around £20,000 is available in grants to fund new or emerging projects;
- **Befriending** – in the current financial year (2022/23), £18,000 is available to fund one or two projects in Middlesbrough to support elderly residents to feel less lonely and isolated;
- **Community Fund – Staying Included** – Staying Included is a Council-run service aimed at helping vulnerable people find solutions to live independently at home and stay connected to their community. Grants of up to £2,500 are available to help build capacity within the VCS to support clients beyond the Staying Included support period;
- **Carers Community Fund** – available to community-based groups who want to support informal carers in their area. There are two programmes: the first is a small grant programme for grants of £20-£5,000; the second is a larger grant programme for applications of £5,000-£20,000; and
- **ESF community grants programme** – Middlesbrough Council, in partnership with the four Tees Valley Councils, has been awarded funding to support those who are furthest from the labour market to move. Jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), grants of between £10,000-£20,000 are available for individual projects.

19. In addition to delivering the grants programme itself, the Council and MVDA run an online search tool for Middlesbrough Communities. Training sessions in respect of this ‘FIND a Funder’ resource are regularly made available for VCS groups seeking grant funding.
20. There are strict processes in place for the allocation of funding, which are administered by staff in Adult Social Care. These include the development of criteria, due diligence and monitoring of use. The team also provides support by way of offering support and advice to VCS organisations in terms of project management.
21. In respect of Community Chest funding for more established groups, due diligence is carried out during the application process (e.g. a review of policies around safeguarding and DBS will be undertaken, and bank accounts and statements will be verified). No payments will be made if any concerns are raised.
22. Some financial institutions no longer offer community accounts, which in some cases may pose issues for obtaining relevant documentation (e.g. bank statements). Links have been forged with South Tees Community Bank who may be able to offer facilities to VCS organisations.
23. Only on rare occasions would a request be made for grant funding to be returned. For example, with regards to the Holiday Activities Fund (HAF), if a grant was paid upfront for a specific project to run over the summer holidays, and either that project did not run or not enough eligible children accessed it, the organisation would be asked to return it.
24. In comparison to previous years, the total amount of grant funding increased significantly during the pandemic. The amounts awarded were as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Amount Awarded</b>
2018/19	£290,950
2019/20	£303,293
2020/21	£1,342,664
2021/22	£2,287,739
<b>Current Projections:</b>	
2022/23	£581,821 plus HAF allocation
2023/24	£195,000 plus HAF allocation

25. There were 664 grant applications processed in 2021/22, 532 of which were approved (80% success rate); due to over subscription, there was a significantly higher level of unsuccessful grants. A number of the successful programmes were delivered with a view of encouraging people to return to activities and support local communities.
26. In respect of the current projections, these figures are particularly fluid in nature. These figures may increase as government energy grants are received, and government grants may also be received to deal with the current cost of living crisis (social care grants, for example).
27. As grant funding budgets are fixed, any additional demand would adversely impact the distribution of grant funding. In terms of the cost of living crisis there are a myriad of issues at play, including the impact on businesses and the payment of business rates; the impact on Health and Social Care budgets; energy issues; and Council Tax collection. It is anticipated that some financial support (such as the government's energy support grant) will be received, though further details are currently awaited. The Council's Leadership Management Team continues to review this situation, and a Welfare Strategy has been produced to assist matters going forward.

#### COVID-19 Grant Funding

28. In addition to this Grants to the Voluntary Sector budget, additional grant funding was made available to VCS organisations during the pandemic.
29. Following receipt of the first round of government grant funding, Public Health considered how VCS organisations could be best supported. To begin, the first group of grants (Communications Grants) were awarded to facilitate Public Health's engagement with vulnerable people in communities, essentially around raising awareness of COVID-19 and keeping safe. The 'COVID Champions Network' was created through VCS organisations because they knew what messages would work best for their communities, and small grants were awarded for this work. The panel recognises the important role that the VCS played in conveying public health messages to local residents, particularly in respect of vulnerable individuals and 'hard to reach' groups.

30. The second group of grants to be awarded were VCS Sustainability Grants. The purpose of this funding was to support organisations that were losing their funding streams, or were experiencing reduced human resource levels because staff needed to self-isolate. The aim was to sustain those services whilst simultaneously offering them opportunity to consider how they could operate differently. This included, for example, virtual engagement with clients; doorstep deliveries; and purchasing laptops to maintain contact with vulnerable people. Those organisations involved in this joined the 'COVID Champions Network'.
31. One of the organisations to benefit from sustainability grant funding was Streets Ahead for Information, which provides a one-stop service for residents to receive advice and support. Since the start of the pandemic, Streets Ahead for Information has worked far closer with other VCS partners to help support residents' needs, which have become significantly more complex. The organisation utilised grant funding to assist with key projects to enable individuals to stay connected and to reduce loneliness and isolation. One project involved the provision of tablets to retain connection and access support (a similar project was undertaken by Recovery Connections whereby a limited number of tablets and telephones were procured following the receipt of grant funding). A further project involved the employment of an Outreach Officer to door knock and check on peoples' wellbeing. Following the announcement of the first national lockdown, some individuals took to their homes and had not re-emerged. Work is currently taking place to reintegrate these individuals back into local communities. In addition to this, work continues in supporting many residents in the Newport and Gresham areas of Middlesbrough who are not readily connected to digital services, whether that be by choice or through accessibility issues (such as in respect of broadband services).
32. The panel recognises that mental health has become a major issue because of isolation. The provision of sustainability grant funding was followed by the provision of Mental Health/Isolation Grants to those VCS organisations that provided applicable support, whether that be related to dementia, caring or older people.
33. The third group of grants to be provided concerned recovery work, with VCS Recovery Grants being awarded.
34. Public Health was especially keen for organisations, through the 'COVID Champions Network', to become more aware of what others were doing and provide opportunities for partnership working. When Mental Health/Isolation Grants and VCS Recovery Grants were being allocated, Public Health encouraged partnership working via the grant application forms by offering higher funding packages if partners demonstrated how they were going to work together and deliver services differently. It was felt that this had been a very positive spin-off of the grants process and the 'COVID Champions Network', as well from the pandemic overall.

#### Other Sources of Grants / Funding

35. In addition to funding from the Council, other sources of funding are available to VCS organisations. In order to ascertain whether alternative funding is being accessed, a survey was issued to VCS organisations which asked "*Does your organisation currently receive any grants/funding from other sources (e.g. National Lottery)?*". In response:
- 72% of respondents (18) indicated that they currently receive funding from other sources;
  - 24% of respondents (6) indicated that they do not receive funding from any source other than the Council; and

- 4% of respondents (1) indicated that they had previously received funding from other sources, but now only receive funding from the Council.

36. For those identifying other sources of grant funding, these included:

- The National Lottery (core funding in some cases);
- Social Centre and fundraising events;
- Contracts with educational establishments;
- Banks and Building Societies (e.g. Cooperative Bank and Darlington Building Society);
- Private businesses and individual monetary donations;
- BBC Children in Need;
- Premier League funding;
- Tees Valley Community Foundation;
- The Brelms Trust;
- Jack Brunton Trust;
- Big Lottery Awards for All;
- Postcode Neighbourhood Trust;
- Other Local Authorities (e.g. community partnerships and arts and culture commissions);
- Thirteen Group;
- Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner; and
- Henry Smith Foundation.

### **Support in assisting vulnerable persons to access essential services**

37. In addition to understanding the role of grant funding, the panel wished to understand how VCS organisations provide support to vulnerable persons in accessing essential services.

38. The panel recognises the fundamental role that the VCS plays in supporting individuals to access health and wellbeing services (and preventing poor health), as well as social care services. Although some VCS may have a considerably higher profile in comparison to others, the panel notes the importance of recognising the value of all organisations.

39. Throughout the pandemic, VCS organisations and their volunteers were essential (and will continue to be both during the recovery phase and beyond). Individuals had volunteered to help in a number of ways, including as GoodSam Volunteers (also known as NHS Volunteer Responders); 'COVID Champions' to deliver messages in their communities; and helping to provide support at Public Health's COVID Community Clinics (undertaking queue management tasks and engaging with clients and promotional work). The panel recognises that volunteers have gone above and beyond, which has been positive for relations between the Council and the VCS.

40. During the initial lockdown period, VCS organisations were required to adapt quickly to an ever-changing and incredibly challenging time. The panel recognises the resilience and flexibility that this work required when adopting sudden new ways of working.

41. **Appendix 2** details the new/revised approaches to working that VCS organisations implemented during the pandemic, and the resource implications that came with those.

42. The biggest shift to new ways of working was to a virtual environment. However, the panel appreciates that technology is not always the most available or appropriate method for reaching out to all sectors of local communities, as sometimes accessibility and/or a

willingness or ability to embrace technological advances does offer restriction. Print publications, such as magazines and newsletters, delivered to households continue to act as main sources of connection/information. For example: Street Wise is a monthly newsletter and web information source, generally comprising 4-8 pages, that is produced by Streets Ahead for Information in collaboration with Middlesbrough Council and Cleveland Police. The newsletter, which informs about a wide range of issues in the Newport Ward, is delivered to circa. 3500 homes in the area. Language barriers can pose an issue at times and therefore the panel recognises the importance of organisations being able to work flexibly, and utilise all available resources effectively to reach all demographics of local communities.

43. When asked the question “*During the pandemic, was your organisation able to continue supporting local communities by adopting new ways of working (for example, moving from face-to-face to virtual meetings and telephone appointments)?*”:

- 88% (22) of respondents answered ‘yes’;
- 4% (1) of respondents answered ‘no’;
- 4% (1) of respondents advised that they were a new organisation established during the pandemic; and
- 4% (1) of respondents advised of a ‘yes’/‘no’ mix in that some projects could continue whereas others could not.

#### **COVID Awareness and Vaccination Programme (including the Health Champions Network and the COVID Champions Network)**

44. The panel recognises the fundamental role that the VCS sector played in helping to raise awareness of COVID-19 and the vaccination programme. One of the VCS’ key strengths is the ability to provide information and support to ‘hard to reach’ groups, and the panel commends all those involved for their efforts in communicating messages to the diverse demographics within Middlesbrough’s communities.

45. VCS organisations operate at a ‘grass roots’ level and it was important that Public Health were able to understand the issues facing local communities and communicate accordingly. Two-way communication was key and the assistance of the VCS in facilitating this process was invaluable. Moving forward, it is essential that this continues to ensure that emerging issues and barriers for communities are understood. The panel acknowledges the work that VCS organisations have carried out with ethnic communities, and the fundamental role that local religious leaders have played in conveying health messages. There are key individuals at a ‘grass roots’ level that need to be engaged with, and therefore the importance of maintaining these relationships and developing them going forward cannot be underestimated.

46. The panel recognises the importance of ensuring that VCS organisations were appropriately supported during the lockdown periods, and that this support continues as far as practically possible. As organisations at a ‘grass root’ level, these are fundamental to the support provided in local communities and it essential that these can continue to operate.

47. As an example of some of the communication methods used by VCS organisations to reach out to local communities, Streets Ahead for Information produced COVID-19 flyers to inform residents of such matters as current government guidance and regulations; vaccination advice; and reminders that support was available for other tasks, such as collecting prescriptions and running errands.

48. Prior to the pandemic, Public Health had intended to create a 'Health Champions Network', to consist of a cross-sector membership that would work together to develop communications and offers for local communities. As a positive of the pandemic, COVID-19 had helped to develop this because a 'COVID Champions Network' was created. The network consisted of approximately 80 Members, some of which were Council staff but the vast majority were VCS organisations or volunteers. It is hoped that, as COVID-19 has now entered a recovery phase, members of this network can be retained as generic 'Health Champions' within local communities, to help develop Public Health's outreach resource.
49. As members of the 'COVID-19 Champions Network', VCS organisations could approach one another for information/advice where required. Representatives of VCS organisations Streets Ahead for Information and Recovery Connections indicated to the panel that, as members, the network had brought VCS organisations together and encouraged them to share information and work together. This had been both useful and positive for opening up communications.
50. The 'COVID Champions Network', which had town-wide representation and a particularly strong BAME representation, had met on a fortnightly basis in the earlier stages of the pandemic, and then on a monthly basis thereafter. At the 2 March 2022 meeting, Members were advised that the group was, at that moment, meeting virtually every six weeks. All of the information distributed to the Champions was the latest, formal information available at the time of the respective communication. The importance of two-way interaction in building relationships had been recognised, and therefore officers from Public Health always responded to any requests for information submitted by champions. Similarly, if any messages needed to be amended or specified for different communities, this would be undertaken collaboratively. Volunteers and VCS organisations were offered training by Public Health England in relation to vaccine and COVID-19 conversations; all champions had completed this.
51. In December 2020, because previous grants had been provided and delivered well, Public Health had received further funding of £180,000, which was utilised to strengthen the approach with 'COVID Vaccine Champions'. The issue of COVID-19 vaccines had been difficult to address because there were some key areas/communities that were not engaging, and as restrictions were being lifted nationally, people were becoming more blasé about the need for vaccines. Therefore, more specific engagement work was undertaken to address this, with more VCS organisations joining the network.

**Term of Reference C - To explore effective strategies and projects to further develop support provision in a post-pandemic environment**

52. While there is a great deal of support available, Members were keen to understand how this could be further improved. To achieve this, the panel looked at several possible initiatives.
53. One of these initiatives concerned the role of Elected Members and the assistance that they can provide. For example, in terms of conveying messages to the various communities in Middlesbrough, the panel feels that the input of Members is crucial. The establishment of Members' training and briefing sessions in collaboration with VCS organisations/representatives, and invitations to community events, helps to facilitate contact at a 'grass roots' level and aid partnership working.
54. Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, there has been some positivity. For example, organisations have been required to rethink their operational models, including consideration of how services could be streamlined or delivered in a way that improves relations with their contacts. In addition, some projects have provided significant insight that

could form the basis of effective strategy that could be taken forward in the future. For example, in relation to men's mental health, one project identified men to be more responsive to telephone communication than in-person communication.

55. Partnership working has been actively encouraged throughout the pandemic period and VCS organisations have felt the benefit of this. Offering higher levels of grant funding for partner projects, for example, promoted relations well.
56. The panel feels that consideration now needs to be given towards how the VCS can be supported in the future to enable more robust services to be provided longer term.
57. The responses to the survey indicated that the majority of VCS organisations feel that they are supported by the Council, i.e. when asked "*In general, to what extent do you feel supported by the Council?*", the following responses were provided:
  - Very well - 44% (11 respondents);
  - Well - 24% (6 respondents);
  - Indifferent - 4% (1 respondent);
  - Not well - 20% (5 respondents);
  - Very poor - NIL; and
  - Not answered - 8% (2 respondents).
58. However, VCS organisations did provide several suggestions on how existing support could be improved. When asked the question "*In thinking about COVID recovery and the services your organisation delivers, is there anything you would want the Council to provide that is not being provided to you already?*", 56% of respondents (14) replied 'Yes' and 32% of respondents (8) replied 'No' (12% (3) did not answer). The following suggestions were made:
  - IT/digital support;
  - Having organisations link into a network with a service user system in place;
  - Superfast broadband in premises;
  - A steady funding stream and/or continued block funding;
  - Increased/continued level of grant funding (e.g. a longer term plan or commitment of 3 to 5 years);
  - Grant funding for training to upskill VCS organisations;
  - Grant funding to support the mental health of professionals (e.g. Social Workers, key workers and health professionals);
  - A dedicated full-time link person/officer within the Council to contact for practical support (this would facilitate partnership working between Middlesbrough Council and the VCS);
  - Improved links to avoid duplication of effort;
  - Ongoing support and partnership working;
  - Opportunities for family/carer engagement support;
  - Occasional access to transport to take elderly people out on day trips (presently relying on volunteers and their own cars but becoming more difficult as the groups grow in popularity);
  - Emergency planning to take into account provision of key services operating from Council-owned buildings, and what would happen to these in the event of office/building closure);
  - 'Service appropriate' premises with free parking for staff/volunteers or on a good bus route;

- Stationery service - could the Council offer VCS organisations/groups a cheaper rate through the bulk purchasing of stationery items, in particular printer paper?;
- Free parking for charity workers;
- Corporate volunteers (i.e. staff offered paid leave or days off to volunteer with a VCS organisation for one or two days per month; N.B. similar initiatives are currently being explored by the Council); and
- Available meeting space offered on either a free or reduced rate basis.

59. In relation to finance, some VCS organisations would have struggled to operate within the first three-to-six months of the pandemic if grant funding had not been provided, which is very concerning given the positive impact that they had. In moving forward, the panel feels that provision of support/knowledge around financial planning could be offered to VCS organisations to help strengthen their approach to be more business-like, and to maintain and develop sustainability. This will be particularly beneficial over the coming months as the cost of living crisis continues.

#### Welfare Rights and Support for Vulnerable Persons

60. With regards to Welfare Rights, the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG) (which consists of 40 partners across Middlesbrough) continues to undertake benefit campaign work.

61. In terms of a pre/post COVID-19 Welfare Rights service offering, a pre COVID-19 hub advice and benefit take up service was offered at fixed weekly advice sessions at some venues, and one-off sessions at a range of other venues. During COVID-19, these sessions moved to telephony only, which resulted in a significant reduction in the number of residents accessing the service. Sessions had re-opened following COVID-19 restrictions on an appointment only basis. During 2021, one off sessions had ceased due to increased risk of COVID-19 infections, and a reluctance of venues to open.

62. All those accessing the service receive a full interview including assistance with form completion, help to challenge adverse decisions, review benefit entitlement calculations, etc.

63. In terms of challenging decisions, the Welfare Rights Service is unique in that it is the only service in Middlesbrough that will provide assistance with appeals, for example to those individuals turned down for Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

64. The following table shows the number of successful appeals and values won for residents. For context, Members were advised that during the pandemic, the number of residents who had benefit removed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the relevant requirements, were somewhat relaxed, which would account for the reduction in numbers:

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Successful Appeals</b>	<b>Annual Amount Claimed (£)</b>	<b>Arrears Claimed (£)</b>	<b>Total Annual Amount Claimed from Appeals (£)</b>
01/04/2022 - 31/10/2022	23	82,843.67	69,941.19	152,784.86
01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022	46	135,813.76	163,788.00	299,601.76
01/04/2020 - 31/03/2021	93	301,035.20	407,250.38	708,285.58



Year	No. of Successful Appeals	Annual Amount Claimed (£)	Arrears Claimed (£)	Total Annual Amount Claimed from Appeals (£)
01/04/2019 - 31/03/2020	80	222,739.52	271,764.56	494,504.08
01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019	98	285,765.07	213,790.04	499,555.11
01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018	98	332,521.81	185,620.17	518,141.98

65. As the service does not focus only on appeals work, the following additional figures were provided to the panel in order to illustrate the wider work carried out:

Year	No. of Recorded Outcomes	Annual Amount Claimed (£)	Arrears Claimed (£)	Total Annual Amount Claimed (£)
01/04/2022 - 31/10/2022	216	805,428.42	147,671.80	953,100.22
01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022	523	2,039,295.44	272,501.07	2,311,796.51
01/04/2020 - 31/03/2021	423	1,613,041.33	267,962.98	1,881,004.31
01/04/2019 - 31/03/2020	543	2,004,377.58	295,712.77	2,300,090.35
01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019	495	1,854,023.18	262,657.02	2,116,680.20
01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018	437	1,487,999.95	128,264.84	1,616,264.79

(N.B. These figures do not include the appeals figures shown at para.64 above, or the Estates figures shown at para. 66 below)

66. With regards to Estates work estimates, these were provided as follows:

Year	No. referrals	Estimated Annual Amount Gained (£)
2022	62	483,600.00
2021	52	405,600.00
2020	45	351,000.00
2019	284	2,215,200.00
2018	190	1,482,000.00
2017	173	1,349,400.00

67. The service currently provides weekly sessions at 11 different venues: Breckon Hill Community Hub; Contact Centre; Easterside Community Hub; Grove Hill; Hemlington Library; Hope Foundation; Live Well Centre; Newport; North Ormesby Hub; Streets Ahead for Information; and Thorntree.

68. Regarding the number of clients accessing the service during 2021/22, this equated to: Q1 – 188; Q2 – 303; Q3 – 274; and Q4 – 300. Those aged 60-plus composed the highest figure across all four quarters (53; 91; 87; 99), and more females than males had accessed the service. In response to this, work has been, and will continue to be, undertaken to support those of pensionable age. Work to date has included targeting the demographic in writing, with a physical letter to 5,500 residents (this resulted in a 50% return); digital solutions are not always the most appropriate for that particular age group. A budget of approximately £550,000 is available to provide support.
69. The Welfare Rights team became part of the Resident and Business Support department in December 2021, with review of all financial assistance, advice and support undertaken as part of the Welfare Strategy. As this service is now centralised, this offers opportunity to identify where duplication exists and can be removed, where appropriate to do so.
70. In relation to the cost of living and energy crises, work is currently taking place - such as 'stay warm' campaigns and other projects - to link in with these. In terms of the rise in the number of people struggling to pay domestic bills and the additional support that will be required, monies will be provided by way of the Household Support Fund.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

71. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel concluded that:
- a) COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Local Authority, VCS organisations and how services are delivered.
  - b) Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, support for VCS organisations from the Council, and vice-versa, has continued. The panel commends the valuable work undertaken by Middlesbrough's vibrant and diverse VCS sector, which undoubtedly enhances the support provided to residents.
  - c) From the perspective of the VCS, the majority of organisations would like to see additional support from the Council, though largely in the form of more stable financial assistance. Consideration will need to be given, however, as to how the grants allocation process may be affected by the Local Authority's wider financial position.
  - d) Although there has been significant challenge and change, COVID-19 has also provided remarkable opportunity. It is important that all organisations seek to consider their core make-up and operating models for the benefit of all stakeholders.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

72. The Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:
- a) That exploratory work be undertaken to identify opportunities for more collaborative working between the Council and the VCS, particularly in relation to the availability of meeting space. To be undertaken by Spring/Summer 2023.
  - b) That the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration works with LMT to explore the most effective form of relationship management between the Council and the VCS. To be undertaken by Spring/Summer 2023.

- c) That a link between the VCS and the Council's Emergency Planning Team be established to assist with policy/practice statement development. To be undertaken by Spring/Summer 2023.

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- N Brown - Coulby Newham Litter Pickers;
- J Bryson - Regional Services Manager, Recovery Connections;
- W Cai - Sunshine Project North East;
- L Farrow - Trinity Holistic Centre;
- N Gibany - Nite Light CIC;
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- K Jackson - Public Health Practitioner, Middlesbrough Council;
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- N Jones - Nuvo Wellbeing;
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- S Kearney - The Hope Foundation;
- M Landers - Tees Valley Community Asset Preservation Trust;
- B Major - The Junction Foundation;
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- S Stevens - Senior's Friendship Group;
- R Tomlinson - Linx Youth Project;
- M Turley - Teesside Ability Support Centre; and
- H Whyman - MAIN.

## **ACRONYMS**

74. A-Z listing of common acronyms used in the report:

- BAME - Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic;
- CAB - Citizen's Advice Bureau;
- CQC - Care Quality Commission;
- DWP - Department for Work and Pensions;
- ESF - European Social Fund;
- FIG - Financial Inclusion Group;

- HAF - Holiday Activities Fund;
- MVDA - Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency;
- PIP - Personal Independence Payment; and
- VCS - Voluntary and Community Sector.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

75. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports to, and minutes of, the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 2 March 2022, 30 March 2022 and 7 September 2022.
- Age UK, 2022, '*The Impact of COVID-19 to date on older people's mental and physical health*', [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-older-people\\_age-uk.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-older-people_age-uk.pdf) - accessed September 2022.
- GoodSAM, 2022, '*NHS Volunteer Responders*', <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS - accessed September 2022>.
- Middlesbrough Council Website, [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk) – accessed various dates.
- National Voices, 2022, '*The impact of COVID-19 on the health and care voluntary sector*', [https://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/sites/default/files/public/publications/briefing\\_impact\\_of\\_cv19\\_on\\_the\\_hc\\_vol\\_sector.pdf](https://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/sites/default/files/public/publications/briefing_impact_of_cv19_on_the_hc_vol_sector.pdf) - accessed September 2022.
- NHS Providers, 2020, '*The impact of COVID-19 on community health services*', [https://nhsproviders.org/media/689993/impact-of-covid-19-on-chs\\_5.pdf](https://nhsproviders.org/media/689993/impact-of-covid-19-on-chs_5.pdf) - accessed September 2022.
- Office for National Statistics, 2021, '*Leaving no one behind – a review of who has been most affected by the coronavirus pandemic in the UK: December 2021*', <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/leavingnoonebehindareviewofwhohasbeenmostaffectedbythecoronaviruspandemicintheuk/december2021> - accessed September 2022.
- The British Academy, 2021, '*The COVID Decade: understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19*', <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/covid-decade-understanding-the-long-term-societal-impacts-of-covid-19/> - accessed September 2022.

**COUNCILLOR JIM PLATT**  
**CHAIR OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

## **PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

Councillors J Platt (Chair), G Wilson (Vice-Chair), D Davison, T Higgins, D Jones, G Purvis, D Rooney, R Sands and J Walker.

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## Appendix 1: Survey questions sent to VCS organisations

Q1.	<p>Please provide a brief description of the services that your organisation currently provides:</p>
Q2.	<p>Please outline the type of support your organisation currently receives from the Council (including financial assistance and other resources):</p>
Q3.	<p>Does your organisation currently receive any grants / funding from other sources (e.g. National Lottery)?</p>
Q4a.	<p>During the pandemic, was your organisation able to continue supporting local communities by adopting new ways of working (for example, moving from face-to-face to virtual meetings and telephone appointments)?</p>
Q4b.	<p>If yes, please explain the new methods adopted and describe the resource implications:</p>
Q4c.	<p>What support did your organisation receive during the pandemic and from whom (e.g. Council, partner VCS organisations, etc.)?</p>
Q5.	<p>In thinking about Covid recovery and the services your organisation delivers, is there anything you would want the Council to provide that is not being provided to you already?</p>
Q6a.	<p>In general, to what extent do you feel supported by the Council?</p> <p>Please tick the appropriate box:</p> <p>Very well <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Well <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Indifferent <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Not Well <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Very poor <input type="checkbox"/></p>
Q6b.	<p>If 'Not Well' or 'Very Poor', please explain how this could be improved:</p>

**Appendix 2: New / revised approaches to working implemented by VCS organisations during the pandemic and their resource implications.**

Method Adopted	Resource Implication (where indicated)
<p>Shift to virtual support and use of technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual services: use of Zoom / MS Teams / Facetime, etc. for online meetings; teaching and physical exercise sessions; therapeutic sessions</li> <li>• Creative ways employed to manage activity – virtual performances from domestic settings to offering a staggered hybrid approach as ‘normality’ began to emerge</li> <li>• Creation of a YouTube channel</li> <li>• Delivery of community sessions for care home and disability organisations online</li> <li>• Development of private online Facebook groups so participants / service users could share updates and resources and ask questions to help boost their social wellbeing and connectivity during periods of isolation</li> <li>• Online 1:1 support to clients and professionals</li> <li>• Online campaign work</li> <li>• Use of mobile phones for calls and texts</li> <li>• Increased use of tablets to ‘stay connected’</li> <li>• Website creation and increased use of social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move to online training was very resource intense and staff had to work hard to create quality online learning materials</li> <li>• Cost implication for investing in new multimedia equipment and providing broadband to some homes</li> <li>• Training and additional supervision for staff / volunteers and also extended working hours (e.g. to accommodate out of hours sessions)</li> <li>• One VCS organisation reports that it took two weeks to pull together online group work</li> <li>• IT support – some residents required telephone training / support; support also provided in gardens / outdoor spaces</li> <li>• Classes and workshops updated on a monthly basis</li> <li>• Addressing client access digitally (addressed through grants)</li> <li>• Delivery of online therapeutic services was challenging as no one had ever delivered in this format, so national guidelines were few and far between (although safeguarding and guidance were established quickly)</li> <li>• Ongoing data access for clients is an ongoing pressure as grants have now been depleted</li> <li>• Cost implication for investing in devices, but grant funding did cover in most cases</li> </ul>
<p>Shift to telephone support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone contact and development of Helplines (1:1 telephone support) / appointment service</li> <li>• Launch of new services, including ‘wellbeing call services’ (in addition to listening and offering support, the Council’s pandemic services were publicised, and referrals to other services made as appropriate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased training for staff</li> <li>• Increased resource planning around availability of team members for appointments / coordinating work whilst working from home</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socially distanced ‘garden gate’ / outdoor visits and funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When staffing was low due to COVID, this could not always be done</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of outdoor community space for meetings, such as community allotments</li> <li>• Outdoor coffee mornings where participants made / brought their own refreshments</li> <li>• A community garden project was developed to encourage people to get more active through volunteering post lockdown</li> <li>• Provision of 'old school' support – e.g. collecting shopping and prescriptions, doorstep visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased costs associated with travel and use of private vehicles</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership working / membership of 'COVID Champions Network'</li> <li>• Establishment of a 'Community Connectors Group' – the purpose of this was to convey information across a particular patch / locality; the group operates on a recurring six-person contact basis, i.e. initial contact is made with six people, who then subsequently link to a further six people, who then subsequently link to a further six people and so on. The group continues to grow.</li> </ul>	<p>None identified</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of PPE equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to produce new risk assessments in line with government regulations / guidance to keep users safe</li> <li>• None to organisation as provided by Council / MVDA</li> </ul>
<p>Establishment of delivery services for food and other goods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery service – e.g. food (home cooked meals as well as packaged foods), craft and sensory equipment, sports equipment, workbooks and learning resources</li> <li>• Preparation of 'coffee morning in a bag' bags and delivery to elderly people in community once a month</li> <li>• Delivered 'goodie bags' of activities and equipment to keep people occupied and ensure information shared</li> <li>• Establishment of a food bank to collect and distribute food donations to vulnerable adults forced to self-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use of vehicle(s) meant increased mileage, fuel costs and wear and tear</li> <li>• Not able to share craft equipment in a group setting, so available monies and small grant from Ageing Better was quickly used on purchasing items for delivery</li> <li>• Delivery of food packages – employees could not go shopping and deliver together so mainly left to one person</li> <li>• Increased costs – 'coffee morning in a bag' bags (treats, activities, home baking and a personal card) cost circa. £120-£150 per month (obtained Council grant)</li> </ul>



<p>isolate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership working to support meal distribution and delivery</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalised letters / correspondence to reduce feelings of loneliness / isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time – longer to produce personalised letters than generic ones</li> <li>Increased postage costs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of personalised workbooks</li> <li>Provision of a plastic box filled with games and other resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Printing and copying costs quadrupled</li> <li>Increased paper consumption</li> <li>Time to put the resources together</li> <li>Cost to purchase boxes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers and staff working from home / office closures</li> <li>One organisation closed the office for a three-week period, reopening with COVID restrictions in place. This being the case, it was the only centre open for face-to-face contact for a specific period of time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost to purchase mobile internet devices; PAYG SIM cards; Wi-Fi signal boosters; additional laptops and tablets</li> <li>Challenges around ensuring data compliance – needed to train / refresh staff on requirements</li> <li>Residents' needs becoming more complex</li> <li>The need to provide support placed stress and pressure on staff</li> <li>Some staff furloughed</li> </ul>

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