

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

Date: Monday 2nd September, 2024
Time: 4.30 pm
Venue: Mandela Room

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Fire Evacuation Procedure

In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of interest.

4. Minutes - Place Scrutiny Panel - 29 July 2024 3 - 10

5. Home to School Transport - Scrutiny Review 11 - 24

The Director of Environment and Commercial Services and the Transport and Infrastructure Manager will be in attendance to provide an overview of Middlesbrough Council's Home to School Transport provision as an introduction to the Panel's review of this service.

Recommendation: that the Panel determines what further information will be required for this scrutiny investigation.

6. Empty Properties - Scrutiny Review 25 - 40

The Director of Regeneration will be in attendance to provide an overview in relation to Middlesbrough Council's

responsibilities with regard to empty properties as an introduction to the Panel's scrutiny review on this topic.

Recommendation: that the Panel determines what further information will be required for this scrutiny investigation.

7. Overview and Scrutiny Board Update

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 31 July 2024.

8. Crustacean Deaths Collaborative Working Group - Update

The Chair will provide a verbal update in relation to the work of the Crustacean Deaths Collaborative Working Group.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 23 September 2024 at 4.30 pm.

10. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Friday 23 August 2024

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors D Branson (Chair), J Banks (Vice-Chair), J Cooke, C Cooper, J Ewan, N Hussain, D Jackson, J Kabuye, T Livingstone, L Mason, D McCabe, A Romaine and L Young

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Joanne McNally 01642 728329 / Susan Lightwing 01642 729712, 01642 728329/01642 729712, joanne_mcnally@middlesbrough.gov.uk; susan_lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 29 July 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), J Cooke, J Ewan, D Jackson, J Kabuye, T Livingstone, A Romaine and L Young

OFFICERS: R Horniman, S Lightwing and M Walker

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Banks, C Cooper, N Hussain, L Mason and D McCabe

1/24 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation Procedure.

2/24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

3/24 **MINUTES - ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 4 MARCH AND 20 MAY 2024**

The minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 4 March and 20 May 2024 were submitted and noted.

4/24 **MINUTES - REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL - 20 MARCH 2024**

The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 20 March 2024 were submitted and noted.

A typographical error on was corrected on the second page of the minutes, ninth paragraph, seventh word –“grand” to be replaced with “grant”.

5/24 **OVERVIEW OF SERVICE AREAS**

The Director of Regeneration and the Head of Neighbourhoods, Environment and Community Services, were in attendance at the meeting and provided the Panel with an overview of the services provided across their respective Directorates, highlighting priorities and challenges for the next year.

The Regeneration Directorate consisted of five elements:

- Growth – economic development, capital projects, housing and design services.
- Planning – development control, planning policy, building control.
- Community Learning – apprenticeships, English for Speakers of other Languages ESOL, and planning.
- Property – corporate property, commercial property, sales and purchases.
- Culture – town hall, theatre, museums, events, sector development.

The Marketing and Communications Team was also included within the Directorate but the Head of Service reported directly to the Chief Executive.

The Regeneration Directorate’s role included:

- Supporting the business community to thrive.
- Supporting key sectors to grow such as digital and advanced manufacturing.
- Facilitating new commercial space so businesses could locate or expand.
- Providing opportunities for new housebuilding in order to retain and grow the population. Preparing and selling housing sites and master planning.
- Controlling development to protect the town’s future.
- Providing opportunities for people to experience and enjoy cultural activities

The

- including events at the Town Hall, Centre Square and other venues.
- Promoting the town and the work of the Council.
- Supporting people to improve their skill levels and find work.
- Providing and managing the spaces for services to operate from and managing the Council's large portfolio of commercial assets including the shopping centres.

The direct impacts on the Council of the Directorate's work included increased Council Tax and Business Rates, reduced demand on public services, income from commercial lettings and sales and good publicity. However there was also sometimes controversy in relation to housing development or building new community centres, as well as complaints which were generally planning-related.

The presentation included some photographs showing examples of work ongoing to transform the centre of the town.

Level X had been open in the Captain Cook Square for some time and Inflatable Space and Fun Shack had opened more recently. A new restaurant – Bazaar – would also start trading in the next couple of weeks.

Improvements were being made around the Railway Station and Heritage Lottery funding and Council investment were being used to develop Exchange Square. Church House was being converted into 86 apartments.

Capital projects included Boho 11. A bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the redevelopment of the Old Town Hall had reached the final round and the outcome should be known by October 2024. The proposal was to turn it into a digital business centre.

Support to the business sector included TeesAmp which had been built and let by the Council and was now in the process of being sold. Support had also been provided to the Middlesbrough Digital Initiative to help companies grow and prosper within the Boho Zone.

The Cultural Partnership had its own investment prospectus and Central Library was currently being renovated.

In respect of Community Learning, the 50 Futures Project was in place for young people who needed work experience to come into the Council and get that experience they needed to help them get employment. The Community Learning Team were due to move into the developing Employment Hub in the Cleveland Centre.

A large portion of the Regeneration Directorate's work was in relation to housing development. Preparatory work had been completed on the Nunthorpe Grange site, which was owned by the Council, so that it could be brought to market. Bohouse 2 was another project that the Council had assisted with to ensuring that the town's housing needs were met.

The key issues currently for the Regeneration Directorate were as follows:

- Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC).
- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB).
- Construction costs versus Property values.
- Nutrient neutrality.
- Local Plan.
- Dwindling resources – capital and revenue.
- Adult learning contracts.
- Building control.
- Culture spend = venues only.
- Aging property portfolio with increasing risks.

In respect of the MDC, very little had happened since its inception due to an independent enquiry that had taken place into the Teesworks Joint Venture. The Council had been due to transfer land and property to the MDC but that had not yet happened. MDC were responsible for town centre regeneration and held the funding but there had been no progress.

The biggest issue for Middlesbrough in terms of regeneration currently was anti-social behaviour (ASB). Tenants in corporate and commercial buildings were raising this as a

barrier to investment, with companies saying they would leave Middlesbrough as a result of ASB.

Another issue was the cost of construction was disproportionately higher than the value of buildings once they were completed. As a result, commercial and private developers would not invest without gap funding from the public sector.

Nutrient Neutrality was another issue which was slowing down house building.

A new Local Plan had been developed although there were still a number of outstanding issues in relation to a site for Travellers. There was likely to be a public enquiry in 2025.

In terms of capital and revenue spend, the Council had dwindling resources since the TVCA and MDC now had these funding streams.

In respect of adult learning contracts, the Council received the same funding per outcome as it had for the last five years, but the price for someone to do the work had increased. There was a net loss on that work but the Council continued to try and manage it.

In relation to Building Control, the main issue was the recruitment of staff. Qualified people tended to work in the private sector due to better pay. The Council had to fill the gaps by using agency staff and through a partial merger with Stockton Council.

There was no longer any budget for events and the only cultural spend was on venues.

Finally, the Council had a large property portfolio and no budget to spend on repairs or maintenance.

In order to transform and save money, the Council was working on the following areas:

- Property rationalisation.
- Asset sales.
- Museum closure.
- Staff reductions.
- Property management arrangements.

Commercial assets such as TeesAmp and Middlesbrough House would be sold. The staffing budget for the Regeneration Directorate had been reduced by £360,000 in the current financial year. A lot of work had to be funded from external grants. There was a gradual reduction in staff numbers through not filling any vacant posts.

The Council held long leases on the Centre Square Buildings One and Two and they were being managed through the private sector. For Council managed lettings the difference in the amount of income was significant. Tenants did not always pay their rent on the basis that the Council would not force them to leave.

A Member asked whether Middlesbrough was on track to deliver its housing supply of 450 new homes per annum. The Director confirmed that traditionally Middlesbrough had always over-achieved its target. Due to Nutrient Neutrality and previous Council decisions, the flow of sites on to the market had slowed down. In two to three years' time it would be more difficult to get 450 homes built, unless the market improved. Actions would be taken by the Executive later this year to try and mitigate the slow down in house building.

Housing that Thirteen Group were building in the Grove Hill area of the Town also impacted the numbers but the Council had no control over their developments.

In relation to ASB there were a number of businesses or organisations, particularly based around Centre Square who were suffering. They were working together to combine their security resources to make a more effective team.

At the Chair's request, the Director identified ASB, culture spend and the Council's ageing property portfolio as his top three priorities for scrutiny.

The Head of Neighbourhoods gave a presentation on the Environment and Community

Services Directorate on behalf of the Director.

The Directorate included the following areas:

Neighbourhoods, including Environment Services

- Waste services and recycling: Domestic refuse, recycling and garden waste collections, collection of household bulky waste, waste disposal contract. Pest control.
- Area care: Green strategy, play areas, alley cleansing, grounds maintenance and animals and needles, street, trees and arboriculture, burials, parks maintenance.
- School Catering: Supporting 25 primary schools to provide healthy, nutritious meals.
- Libraries and Hubs: 9 hubs/libraries and 2 self service locations.
- Community Safety Partnership: Statutory body looking at strategic oversight of multi-agency approach to reducing crime and ASB.
- Neighbourhood Safety: Wardens, partnership working, CCTV, enforcement, support and referrals.
- Flying Squad: dealing with fly tipping and education people of the consequences.
- Volunteering: Staff volunteering day, supporting community volunteers and people who want to volunteer to work for the LA, linking in with 50 futures.
- Partnership working and community development: Building resilience, doing 'with' and not 'to' communities.
- Cohesion and Migration: Supporting refugees and asylum seekers. Helping them to understand British values.
- Bereavement Services: Crematorium and cemeteries .
- Parks: Maintenance and support to events.
- Coulby Farm: supporting animals and providing an excellent facility to the community.

Highways and Infrastructure

- Strategic Highways planning: Sustainable transport, road safety, parking services, traffic management (signs, lines and traffic calming), Highways development control (New developments and traffic modelling)
- Integrated Transport Unit: Home to school transport service (SEND transport, and low-income transport,) Adult Social Care transport and Children's Social Care transport.
- Highway engineers: Bridges and Structures, Highway Maintenance, vehicle crossings, highway inspections and intervention, flooding issues, beck maintenance, highway emergency response, winter maintenance (includes gritting and snow clearance), Street Lighting.
- Fleet services: Vehicle and machinery repairs, MOTs, car hire, servicing of Middlesbrough Council vehicles, fuel.

Public Protection

- Trading Standards: Selling unsafe or dangerous items, fakes, pressuring people into buying something, scamming, carrying out poor quality or dangerous work (i.e. builders), selling restricted items (alcohol or cigarettes) to people who look underage without asking for ID.
- Environmental Health: Inspecting food premises, noise nuisance, contaminated land.

- Empty Properties: Open for access, contamination, cleanliness.
- Air and noise Quality: investigations into complaints.
- Selective Landlord Licencing: Schemes throughout Middlesbrough (North Ormesby, Newport).
- Licensing: Alcohol and entertainment, taxis, charitable collections, betting shops and amusement centres, street and market trading and scrap metal dealers.
- Gambling Policy.

Property and Commercial Services

- Transporter Bridge.
- Metz Bridge Travellers Site: Support to residents, rent collections.
- Council Buildings: Cleaning and security.

Priorities for the Directorate were:

- Support and enhance Council's transformation program.
- Introduce and develop neighbourhood working.
- Community safety plan and partnership implementation.
- Increase cleanliness of the town and its physical environment.
- Develop and implement green strategy.
- Tender for main waste disposal for post 2025/26.
- Reduce environmental crime.
- Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour.
- Maintain a robust approach with regard to trading standards.
- Improve A66 through Middlesbrough.
- Highways investment to improve roads.
- Library development.
- Bridge investment.
- Building cleaning, caretaking and security services.
- North East Migration Partnership.
- The Director was currently the regional lead on asylum and migration.
- The Director was also the lead on emergency planning.

A Member asked how successful the Selective Landlord Licensing scheme had been and whether it should be implemented in other areas of the town. The North Ormesby scheme had been running for over five years and people were wanting to stay living in the area now. In Newport there had been a positive impact and some reduction in crime and ASB which it was suggested was related to the scheme. Middlesbrough's Selective Landlord Licensing schemes did not just focus on the enforcement of those who did not get a licence. Properties had to be inspected and Council Officers took residents' welfare into consideration – checking that they were claiming all of their benefit entitlements, or whether they needed additional support in terms of adults or children's social care. A survey in North Ormesby at the beginning of the scheme had asked how likely residents were to stay in the area. In 2017 around 70% of young people who started in Year 1 at school did not stay in the area until Year 6. That figure had improved significantly by 2019 although there was still some transience of the population.

A Member asked whether the rota for alley cleaning could be shared with Councillors. It was agreed that this information could be shared but should not be made public. In response to a query about the success of the Council's Flying Squad, the Head of Neighbourhoods agreed to provide further information.

The Head of Neighbourhoods suggested that potential topics for scrutiny might include ASB and Crime, School Transport, Catering or Neighbourhoods.

The Chair thanked the Director and Head of Service for their presentations.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

6/24

SETTING THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

The Democratic Services Officer presented a report, the purpose of which was to assist Members of the Panel to consider and agree its work programme for the 2024-2025 Municipal Year.

A list of suggestions received in respect of the Scrutiny Panel's remit were contained in the submitted report. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Panel should select up to three topics to review.

Members discussed the suggestions received from Councillors, Council Officers, members of the public and the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Chair invited Panel Members to suggest topics at the meeting.

Following discussion, Panel Members agreed the following topics for review:

1. Empty Properties.
2. Barriers to Regeneration.
3. Home to School Transport.

Short Reviews:

4. Bereavement Services (in relation to diminishing cemetery space)
5. Provision for Migrants

The Panel also agreed to include the following updates in their work programme:

- Flood Risk Management.
- Toxic Chemicals in the River Tees/Crustacean Working Group.
- RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers) – annual update.
- Prevent and Channel – annual update.
- Community Safety Partnership – annual update.
- Medium Term Financial Plan Refresh for Regeneration and Environment and Community Services Directorates

A Task and Finish Group would be formed to review progress on actions from some previous investigations including: Green Strategy, Waste Recycling and Town Centre Regeneration post-Covid.

Throughout the last municipal year, the Environment Scrutiny Panel undertook a detailed investigation into Waste Management. It was agreed that a draft Final Report on Waste Management should be presented to the Place Scrutiny Panel for consideration at the earliest opportunity.

AGREED as follows that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. The topics listed at 1 to 5 above, would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval.

7/24

PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MEETING DATES FOR 2024-2025

A proposed schedule of meeting dates for the Place Scrutiny Panel for the 2024-2025 Municipal Year was submitted for the Panel's consideration.

AGREED that the proposed meeting dates for 2023-2024 were approved.

8/24

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

29 July 2024

The Chair was not in attendance at the last Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting and therefore no update was provided.

The Chair did attend the Executive meeting on 24 July 2024 and presented the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on Planning Capacity, which was well received.

NOTED

9/24

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

None.

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Integrated Transport Unit

School Travel Assistance

- The Home to School Travel Assistance Policy is informed by the Education Act 1996 and additional duties required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- National guidance sets out the expectations of LA's regarding home to school travel and transport arrangements.
- Updated in June 2023 by DfE. In particular, the guidance sets out the circumstances in which the LA has a duty to provide or arrange free school transport or travel support for children of compulsory school age.
- Home to School Travel Assistance Policy updated this year and published ahead of the new academic year 2024/25..

Eligibility - Education

- The following eligible pupils who will be of compulsory school age during the current academic year:
 - a) A primary school age pupil attends their nearest suitable school and that is **over 2 miles** from the home address where the distance is determined by the Council and uses the shortest walking distance along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety;
 - b) b) A secondary school age pupil attends the nearest suitable school and that is **over 3 miles** from the home address, where the distance is determined by the Council and uses the shortest walking distance along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety;
 - c) A secondary school age pupil from a **low income family** and attends:
 - any one of their three nearest suitable schools and the school is between **2 and 6 miles** away from their home address, or
 - the nearest school preferred by their parents on the **grounds of religion** or belief and the school is between **2 and 15 miles** away from their home address.
- Eligibility criteria, application forms, FAQs and parent/carer information can be found on the Home to School web page. Education and Inspection Act (EIA) applications are submitted by the parent and / or carer of the student.

Eligibility -Education

- Transport requirements are considered as part of a full assessment of a student's special educational need. If a student is assessed as unable to walk the statutory distance to their nearest appropriate school because of their special educational needs or disability, even if accompanied by a responsible adult; the Council will provide travel assistance which is subject to a statutory assessment or subsequent annual review.
- Eligibility criteria, FAQs and parent/carer information can be found on the Home to School web page.
- Eligibility is assessed at the earliest opportunity. SEND student applications are initially raised during a SEND resource panel which links with a student's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with a more detailed assessment carried out once a referral has been received by the transport team.

Types of Assistance - Education

- When considering any placement for a pupil, colleagues are reminded of the principle that:
It is the family's responsibility to take their own child to school.
- However, there are exceptional circumstances as to why a student who is not eligible may need travel support and these are assessed on an individual basis.
- Where a student is assessed as being eligible for support - a hierarchy of travel assistance is made and could be that the parent/carer is asked

How do you intend to get your child to school?

Other offers may be:

- Travel training, walking bus, use of existing resources where available.
- 45p per mile as Parental Travel Allowance (PTA).
- Transport for a limited period to give parents time to arrange their own transport with a refund of fuel or other costs to be made.
- Full time transport up to Year 8 Assessment when the offer may be amended to meet the relevant needs of the student (if available).
- Refund of bus fares or seat on a designated bus.
- Other offers may include multiple modes of transport i.e. use of a bicycle in Spring/Summer terms and refund of bus fares to use on public bus services in the Winter months.

Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEX)

- Some students can be permanently excluded from a school or other education provider.
- The Council is required to secure alternative provision for them which may entitle the student to free transport or travel assistance to an approved alternative provider.
- Applications for travel assistance are assessed in accordance with the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for mainstream and special schools if the student has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- It is expected that assistance will be on a temporary basis until such a time as the child is re-integrated into mainstream or special school and will be subject to review.

Service Delivery

- Combination of in-house and external suppliers and vehicles - Minibus, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle, Taxi and Coach.
- Travel training inc. walking and use of public transport services.
- Payments to parents/carers.
- Journey Planning.
- Other support i.e. assistance / direct delivery in partnership with schools.
- During 2023/24 there were various types of travel assistance – equating to over **600,000 journeys.**

Adult Social Care

- No statutory duty to provide Adult Social Care Transport.
- However, adult support plans may need to describe how a person will be supported to attend a day care centre or setting.

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Support Plans are developed in line with requirements under The Care Act 2014. Draft Demand and Sufficiency Plans have highlighted a potential increase from 70 transports per day across 6 settings to approx. 610 across 160 settings.

- This increased demand for transport support is not new to the authority but would be new to the Integrated Transport Unit and would be a significant increase in workstream tasks for the team.

Statistics

– Drivers:		29
– Passenger Assistants:		84
– Office Staff:		13
– Medical Carers (Private Sector)		4
– Training (Mandatory elements only)		2772
– Site and Field Based Risk Assessments:		72
– Individual Passenger Risk Assessments		210
– Contractors	137	
– Tendered Routes (estimated)		150

Demand Planning

- Sufficiency planning & transformation work continues with colleagues across all relevant departments in the Council to ensure that ITU is able to meet any increasing demand levels.
- This ensures;
 - Demand data from SEND/Education/Children's Services has undergone comprehensive QA process.
 - Transformation across the service is co-ordinated.
 - Policies and working practices are streamlined and robustly followed.
 - Eligibility is assessed at the earliest opportunity to aid continuity of all relevant services i.e. Education and Adult Social Care.
 - Capital and Revenue Investments can be made in timely manner.
 - MTFP projections are based on validated to ensure robust financial planning.

Challenges

- Increasing number of children with complex educational and medical needs with an EHCP aged between 5-25 in both Middlesbrough and out of area.
- Sufficiency of localised placements for both Mainstream and SEND.
- Evolving pressures within 2024/25 Budget of £6,644,770.
- Managing expectations.
- Managing a large workforce.
- Availability of Drivers with D1 entitlement.
- Availability of suppliers with vehicles in the private sector.
- Economic climate and increasing costs.
- Supply and maintenance of internal fleet.
- The Procurement Act – Implementation date of 28th October 2024.

Next Steps

- Commence delivery of 2024/25 service.
- Continuous engagement with all stakeholders to outline further improvements that can be achieved.
- Continue to build on successful relationship with Parents4Change forum.

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Develop and grow relationships with internal colleagues in People Services and Health.

Engagement with other services to achieve their aims and co-production with service users and their families; developing confidence and reassurance in accessing the appropriate level of support and inclusion in the Travel Training Programme.

- Sufficiency planning – working continuously with colleagues across Education and Finance for demand planning; which influences the MTFP.
- Explore new methods of working such as further integration of ICT into the service or seeking invisible benefits for the student and school such as child welfare checks and improved attendance.

Any questions?



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Empty Properties in Middlesbrough

Created by Emma Dorgan
September 2024



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Agenda Item 6

Background



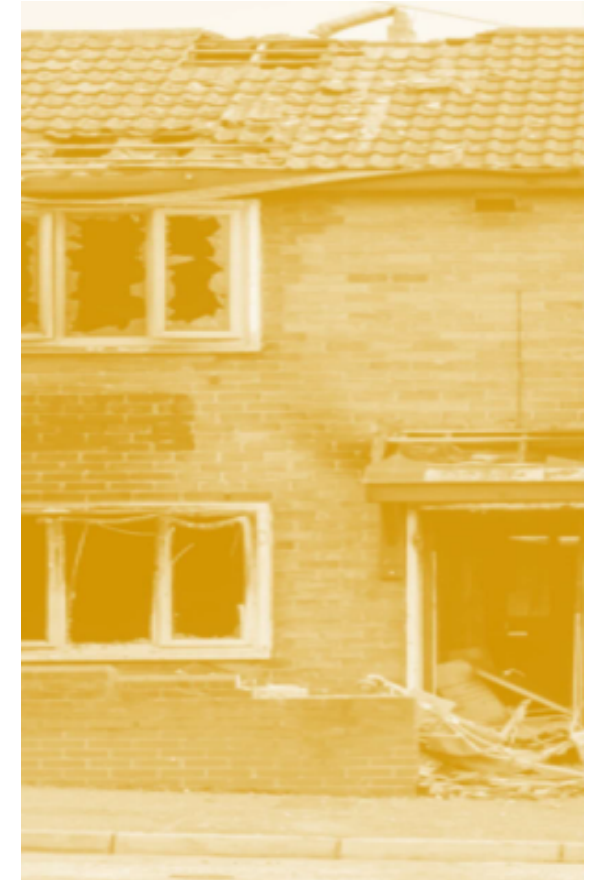
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- Middlesbrough has a number of empty homes (circa 2000) (some of which are problems, eyesores)
- Problem properties, and specifically those that have been empty for longer than 6 months diminish local housing needs and can have a severe impact on neighbourhoods.
- These homes can attract anti-social behaviour, increased crime rates and decrease local property values and outside investment opportunities.
- Rising Debt Problems, difficult to engage with landlords – when chasing debt.
- Alternative approach applied – case study – what good looks like – preferred approach.

"Why does Middlesbrough need to tackle Empty Properties?"

- Substantial areas of the town have high residential voids, low sale values and high population churn, creating potential market failure - resulting in social consequences and implications for Council resources and service delivery.
- This is unsustainable and will result in the need for significant market intervention at great cost to the Council.
- Clusters of empty homes can be problematic, putting pressure on Council and partner services.
- Tackling empty homes in Middlesbrough and bringing them back into use will positively impact on our residents, including the homeless, children leaving care and families in need of **accommodation**, or **temporary accommodation** that the wider community, for whom empty properties often cause problems.

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What we have implemented so far:

Empty Homes Strategy

- The strategy is designed to target and address empty homes in Middlesbrough – subject to review - is being considered alongside - homeless and temporary accommodation needs.

Problem Property Action Plan

- The aim of the plan is to better unify and co-ordinate Middlesbrough Council's cross-directorate and partner agency problem property interventions, bridge gaps and embed the actions.
 - Assess and address the issues across Middlesbrough's problem properties, streets and gardens aligning with the new Empty Homes Strategy.

Designed a questionnaire – live from June

Seeks information - why the properties are empty.

- Follow up actions - sign posting to other services or informing the resident of available funding options and/or assisting with repair work to bring them back into use.
- Draw down on cross directorate enforcement powers.
- Track premiums.
- Information is being returned – findings to be evaluated.

Pilot - North Ormesby - high deprivation - highest percentage of empties, high levels of council tax arrears. (Findings are shown below).

- Information held on the ctax database was correct - with exception of handful of cases (what was empty – was empty) etc.
- Reviewed all the streets – identified the problem properties (Detrimental to the area – all of which were empty) Also identifying the referral pathway. Flagged and reported through the AIM meeting – collaborative working. See slide 13 case study.

What we have implemented so far - cont:

Introduced Completion Notices –April 2024

- Forcing owners to undertake the work – bringing the property into the rating list.

Cross Directorate Approach

- Consultation process with stakeholders and partners taking place monthly.
- A communications Management Matrix.
- ToR has been created.
- Work Packages within the problem properties action plan have been agreed.
- Task and Finish Group established.
- Regular meetings taking place.
- Bimonthly Highlight Reporting on progress,
- Empty and problem premises intervention process and powers agreed.
- Presented to the PDG.
- Presented to the Mayor and Executive Members



Priorities:

Work with Housing providers:

To bring back their empty properties back into use for the purpose of using them to accommodate temporary households, homeless or children leaving care.

Regeneration:

Purchase empty properties and refurbish to an acceptable standard to increase housing stock.

Pilot:

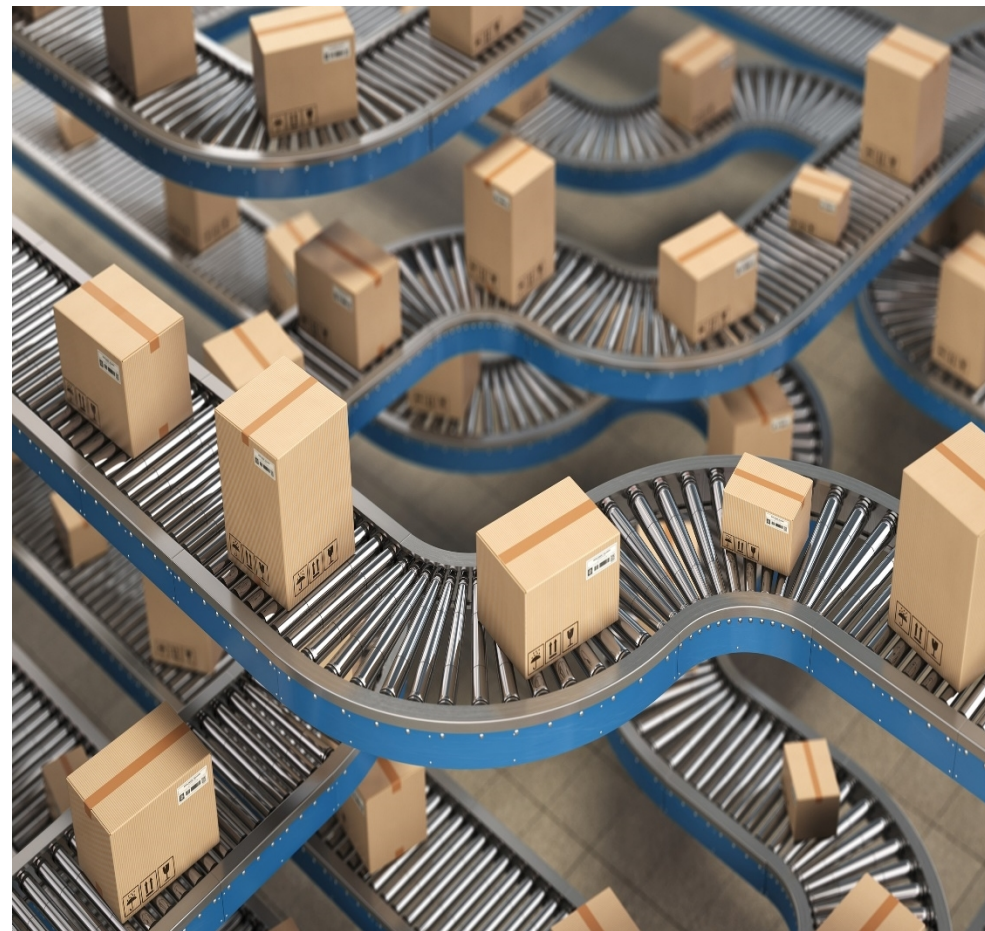
Top 10 Long term empties - Survey issued finding to be evaluated.

Top 10 properties considered to be most in need of refurbishment – identify actions to bring them back into use.

Top 10 properties with highest arrears for Council Tax and Business rates, potential forced sale.

Strategy:

Review empty property strategy aligning to homeless and temporary accommodation needs by October 2024



For Information - Empty & problem premises intervention process & powers

Concern	Threat level	Service responsibility	Empty Homes Scoring	RAG Rating
Property is empty and insecure	High risk – immediate action needed if known / likely threat e.g., arson / property is known to be open.	Public Protection	RED - All avenues will be explored with the owner to return their property to use in a way that suits their own needs, the needs of the community and the Council. Where assistance is refused and the owner is unwilling to cooperate, all enforcement options will be considered to establish the most appropriate course of action.	
Property is empty and secure	Medium risk – no immediate threat but may attract crime / asb / threat to safety	Public Protection, Community Safety, and / or Planning Enforcement	AMBER - Resources will be invested and officers will work with owner in an attempt to prevent empty homes from deteriorating and being reassessed to a higher category. Where necessary, enforcement options will be employed if considered the most appropriate course of action. Cases in this category will be monitored on a regular basis.	
Property is empty but in good condition and not likely to become a concern	Low Risk	Resident and Business Support	GREEN - owner will be contacted and offered any assistance they may need to return their property back into use. These properties will be monitored for any change and reassessed where necessary.	
Property is empty and attracting anti-social property	Medium to High Risk	Community Safety	RED - All avenues will be explored with the owner to return their property to use in a way that suits their own needs, the needs of the community and the Council. Where assistance is refused and the owner is unwilling to cooperate, all enforcement options will be considered to establish the most appropriate course of action.	
Property is a low value long term empty	Low to Medium Risk	Resident and Business Support	GREEN - owner will be contacted and offered any assistance they may need to return their property back into use. These properties will be monitored for any change and reassessed where necessary.	
Property is in a dangerous condition	High risk – risk of serious injury	Building Control	RED or AMBER – subject to cause of danger and effect of remediation.	
Properties is empty but not maintained	Low risk	Public Protection, and / or Building Control	AMBER - Resources will be invested and officers will work with owner in an attempt to prevent empty homes from deteriorating and being reassessed to a higher category. Where necessary, enforcement options will be employed if considered the most appropriate course of action. Cases in this category will be monitored on a regular basis.	

Aims and Objectives Aligns our Strategic priorities:

To ultimately reduce the number of empty and problem homes and return these properties back into use

People

- To improve the quality of life of our residents.
- To maximise Net Collectable Debt.
- To protect vital public resources and services for local people.

Place

- Meeting local housing needs.
- Improve housing conditions.
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Maximise both physical and social regeneration outcomes within the town.

Businesses

By reducing empty homes and problem properties, creates thriving communities, possibility for inward investment etc.

Objective 1: Ensuring income maximisation

Objective 2: Ensuring strong relationships with housing providers/owners

Objective 3: Ensuring referrals are in place with other agency's

Objective 4: Ensuring a coordinated approach around inspection and verification of empty problem properties.

Objective 5: Ensuring accurate and live recording of empty and problem properties

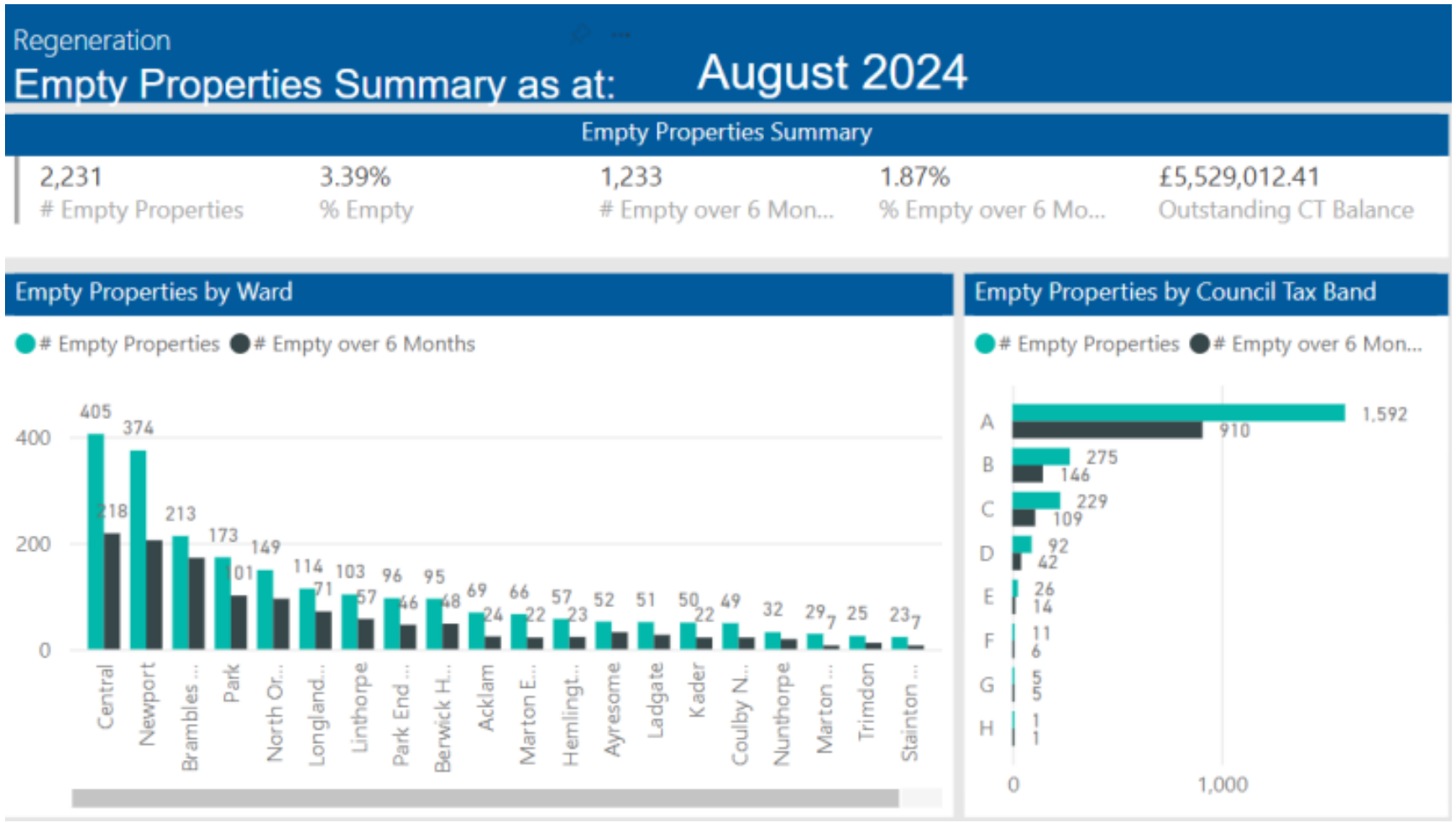
Objective 6: To increase affordable accommodation opportunities for vulnerable individuals and families.



Review of the empty property strategy and linking this to work currently being undertaken around the housing needs (such as homeless / temporary accommodation).



Current position



- By ward – no of empty properties.
- Unpaid Council Tax – ability to collect – owners hard to track down in a number of cases.

Current position – maximum charge

Council Tax regulations allow for a premium to be charged on properties which have been empty for 2 years or more. The details of the maximum charges are as follows:

Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished	Premium applied	Charged	Maximum
In second year	0%	100%	200%
In third - fifth year	100%	200%	200%
In sixth - tenth year	200%	300%	300%
From eleventh year	200%	300%	400%

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- Current level of empty premiums applied.
- The premium - implemented as soon as a property has been empty for over two years, and often initiates a 100 per cent levy.
- Opportunity to increase the premiums ALTHOUGH
- Nationally, the number of properties being charged the empty homes premium has risen year on year, suggesting that properties are remaining empty for longer, despite significant financial charges being placed against a property by the authority – [possibility not having the desired impact](#).



Options – advantages and disadvantages

The Council does not currently charge the maximum premium for properties which have been empty for 10 years or more. The option is therefore available to impose the maximum charge.

Advantages

- Potential increased income to the Council ?
- Properties become occupied?
- Anti social behaviour reduces as properties in occupation?
- Housing availability/opportunity increases.
- Access to disbursed properties to solve accommodation issues.



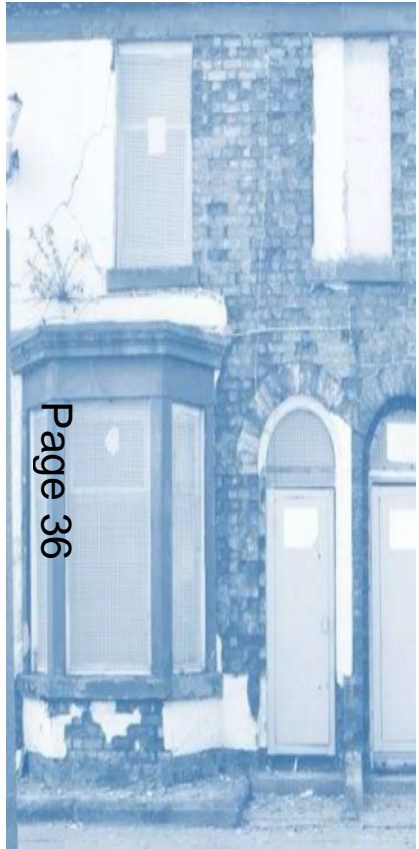
Disadvantages

- Large unpaid council tax following implementation of 200% charge – likely not to collect additional premium therefore increasing bad debt
- Difficult to track down owners.
- Difficult to locate current owners to enforce charge
- Option for owner to easily avoid increased premium by furnishing property
- Doesn't generally reduce the number of empties – simply masks the problem.

Exercising Cross Directorate Powers and Engagement with the Landlord – creates far more positive outcomes as can be seen by the test cases.

Summary and Recommendations

Reducing empties – increasing housing options – many are Band A and disbursed – which would support accommodation needs if brought back into use.



Local housing conditions will be improved, and these are intended to support the council's objectives around such things as reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

Increase in Empty Homes Premium MAY act as a deterrent and support the council's medium term financial plan; ALTHOUGH easy to avoid. - See slide 13 for recommendation.

Increase affordable accommodation opportunities for vulnerable individuals and families.

Collaborative working – exercising combined powers provides for a longer-term solution – aligns to the empty property strategy.

Measures - utilised to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of reducing the overall number of empty and problem properties such as a number of empty homes supported back into use.

Recommendations

Review of the empty property strategy and linking this to work currently being undertaken around the housing needs (such as homeless / temporary accommodation).

Expanding the work with RSL to ensure they bring their properties back into use as soon as possible.

Continuing the cross directorate work around responding to problem properties to increase the desirability of the area from a social perspective.

Recommendations – cont:

Q Should the Council increase the empty property premium > 10 years from 300% to 400%

Note: Increase can only be applied from 1st April – subject to Council approval.

Recommendation... No and for the following reasons.

- 21 properties = over 10 years
- Approx £2.3m on uncollected premiums – assigned bad debt provision and movement from substantially furnished – admin effort and visits to properties are .
- Suggest...
 - A strategic approach to responding to empties... Council take a stronger, directional lead and use the combined enforcement powers to bring about change.
 - Giving consideration to the advantages and disadvantages presented on slide 11.
 - Execution of existing arrangements which have recently been introduced – case study reflects what good looks like like 14 Norcliffe – slide 14 below.
 - Targeted approach that responds to such things like accommodation needs, ASB, etc through an aligned model.
 - Firmer and focused expectations placed on RSLs – bringing properties back into use.
 - Targeted approach to debt collection – already part of the agreed savings – feedback findings – is it working?.
 - Press Announcements – Council are taking a firmer, considered approach to responding to empties and problem properties – publicise outcomes.

Note: Extensive work to bring us to this point (over the last 12 months) - we need to see this through. Pause the introduction of the increased premium – lets test the ‘new’ approach.

Case study

14 Norcliffe Street – completely derelict - now back in use and tenanted and paying Ctax. Landlord is paying for the older debt (number of others are on the plan) – 1 example of what good looks like. The collaborative cross directorate working – and extended powers provide this outcome.

Before



After



Any Questions



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