

Report of:	Richard Horniman, Director of Regeneration and Culture Cllr Eric Polano, Executive Member For Regeneration
Submitted to:	Executive – 11 January 2022
Subject:	Final Report of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel - Middlesbrough Regeneration Post COVID-19 - Service Response.

Summary

Proposed decision(s)	
It is recommended that the Executive:	
a) approve the service response, and associated actions to the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel.	

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?¹
<i>Decision</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>No</i>

Contribution to delivery of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan		
People	Place	Business
<i>The response to Covid 19 is driven by economic development opportunities which create and protect employment opportunities within Middlesbrough.</i>	<i>Key economic growth initiatives aim to transform Middlesbrough’s economy and diversify the economic base, making Middlesbrough a more attractive place to live, work and visit.</i>	<i>The service response will support Middlesbrough as an attractive place to invest, enabling good conditions to do business, with a strong pipeline of skills and talent.</i>

Ward(s) affected
The wards affected are townwide.

What is the purpose of this report?

1. This report seeks Executive approval of the services response and action plan relating to the recent final report of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel – investigating Middlesbrough Regeneration post covid-19.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. The proposal affects more than two wards and is therefore considered a key decision requiring approval by the Executive.
3. The Scrutiny Panel report includes recommendations, and arising actions, which require Executive consideration.

Background

4. During a number of sessions in 2021, the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel gathered information in relation to Middlesbrough Council's current plans for the regeneration of the town, as well as considering current and planned legislation and other initiatives which might impact on these plans.
5. These sessions explored major regeneration initiatives including:
 - a) Middlesbrough's programme for the Future High Streets Fund;
 - b) Middlesbrough's programme for the Towns Fund;
 - c) The Masterplan for Middlehaven;
 - d) Waltham Forest Council's Mini Holland and Liveable Neighbourhoods Programmes;
 - e) The Highways and Infrastructure Local Implementation Plan (LIP);
 - f) Broadband, Communications and CityFibre;
 - g) Housing Local Plan/Planning Reforms/Business and Planning Act 2020; and,
 - h) Business Support and Recovery during the Covid 19 Pandemic.
6. The Scrutiny Panel recommended seven actions for further consideration. They include:
 - A. Whenever opportunities arise, and in line with the hierarchy of need identified in the Local Implementation Plan (LIP), the Council should seek to ensure that it is easier, safer and more convenient to walk, cycle or use public transport, rather than travelling by car by:**
 - i. Providing additional cycle routes.**
 - ii. Implementing traffic free zones.**
 - iii. Working with public transport operators to increase local provision.**
 - iv. Reviewing existing road networks to identify particular instances of traffic congestion at peak times and address these through the LIP to encourage further economic growth.**

Service Response A:

7. The Local Implementation Plan (LIP) provides the framework for new and complementary highways improvements, particularly with respect to the hierarchy of need. Funding secured from Tees Valley Combined Authority has enabled plans for enhanced cycle routes along Linthorpe road corridor and this will be implemented during 2022. Similarly, Future High Streets Fund resources have been allocated to further improve and extend this type of amenity along Grange road and Albert road, linking in with major network improvements in Middlehaven and around the rail station.
8. The LIP provides a reference frameworks for housing developers and provides the key reference document for Middlesbrough Council when shaping its own capital allocations and seeking external funding support. Strategic routes are regularly reviewed across Middlesbrough and this includes how active travel and public transport networks can be regularly improved. The Local Plan review, and preparation of masterplans, provides an opportunity to ensure that such network improvements are incorporated and integrated within developments from the outset. As such they will become a key component in assessing development proposals and planning applications.
9. Lobbying will continue with public transport operators to ensure that Middlesbrough is well serviced and that a comprehensive service is delivered. However, public transport operators have complete autonomy when it comes to delivering routes and are unlikely to deliver non-economic services. Having said that, the Council controls an element of subsidy for certain purposes and this, along with robust data and demand indicators will be used to encourage public transport providers to invest in routes and services.

B. Whilst it is acknowledged that there have been a number of impacts on the approval and publication of Middlesbrough's revised Housing Local Plan due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Scrutiny Panel asks the Executive to ensure that the revised Local Plan is adopted as soon as practicable and by no later than March 2022.

Service Response B:

10. The Local Plan review timetable has slipped as a consequence of a number of factors including having to deal with the consequences of Covid-19 in particular with regards to collecting evidence and undertaking engagement. This timetable is currently being reviewed and it is anticipated that a revised timetable will be published early 2022. The Local Plan has to go through a number of statutory stages in its preparation and adoption. Given these it is not possible for the Plan to be adopted by March 2022.
11. The adopted Local Plan remains a valid document that has considerable weight in the decision making process. This has been borne out by recent Appeal decisions published by the Planning Inspectorate. This provides an opportunity for officers to take a much fuller approach, and consideration, to tackling the impacts of Covid-19 upon the Town, its economy and its people in reviewing the current plan. This will enable a more robust and fit for purpose plan to be prepared.

C. In line with the Middlesbrough Council's ambition for the town to be net carbon neutral by 2039, use the Middlehaven developments as an opportunity to explore, promote and encourage the use of green renewable energy both with Developers and as a selling point for potential investors.

Service Response C:

12. Carbon Neutrality and climate change are anticipated to be of significant importance to the demographic of people who will be interested in urban living in Middlesbrough. Developments will be delivered to the highest achievable standard and in line with all extant planning and building control regulations. It is anticipated that green energy and efficiency will be of significant importance.
13. Towns Fund financial support for developments will be governed by expectations of the highest achievable design quality and environmental credentials. This will be a condition of financial support.

D. Consideration should be given to extending the Urban Pioneers Scheme, or encouraging similar developments, to provide more live/work accommodation in Middlesbrough, given the shift to increased home working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Service Response D:

14. Live / work accommodation will be encouraged as part of residential development at Middlehaven. Schemes such as urban Pioneers have been difficult to progress with individuals as the knowledge and capacity for self-designing a property is often limited. However, modern urban living is likely to include a component of live .work.
15. The Boho area in particular seeks a campus feel with space for collaboration and coworking. The demand for commercial space remains strong, indeed it is thought that an element of work-from-home fatigue is developing, albeit working from home needs to remain a key option for future pandemic control.
16. The extent of live / work units in Middlehaven will, ultimately, be a function of market forces, albeit provision of office / workspace is a common feature in designs.

E. The Council should ensure that green spaces around the Middlehaven developments are regularly maintained and attractive to prospective new residents and businesses. One suggestion is that hard-standing surfaces or laybys are built into development masterplans rather having grassed verges. This could also save the Council expenditure on maintenance of and/or repair of more traditional grassed surfaces next to roadways.

Service Response E:

17. The developments at Middlehaven will be established with regard to green space and surroundings. Many of the developments are likely to be subject to funded management and maintenance regimes by way of service charges to businesses and, where appropriate, fees to tenants in shared accommodation.

18. The most appropriate design and maintenance treatments will be designed with respect to best practice and planning policies. Developers will be encouraged to meet high standards of design and functional maintenance for long term sustainability and affordability.

F. The Council could consider collaborating with the local community to encourage ownership and maintenance of public spaces (if appropriate) in Middlehaven to promote pride in the area.

Service Response F:

19. Where appropriate, it may be possible for certain property owners and groups to actively adopt certain areas for ownership and maintenance. In practice, however, this is likely to be limited to specific property owners acting on behalf of residents or registered social landlords such as Thirteen Group.

G. By working closely with Broadband Providers, the Council should seek to ensure that all areas of Middlesbrough can have access to superfast broadband by 2025 at the latest, and that residents and businesses are not disadvantaged by lack of provision given the increased reliance on digital technologies post-pandemic.

Service Response G:

20. Council officers will continue to liaise with providers and lobby for the best provision possible, for both businesses and residents. Provision of broadband is a private sector-led supply chain and there are no powers to demand specific levels of provision for a given area or service.
21. The service will work closely with Tees Valley Combined Authority and services providers such as CityFibre, to make a compelling case for comprehensive service coverage across all of Middlesbrough.

H. The Council should consider developing a multi-purpose venue in the town, which can accommodate entertainment. A venue which attracts the best entertainers in the world will encourage people from across the UK to visit the area, stay and spend, boosting the local economy. The Captain Cook Shopping Centre would be an ideal location for an eSports gaming venue as evidenced by the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel in a recent Final Report on Cultural Events.

Service Response H:

22. The Regeneration directorate sees significant value in leisure facilities, as a way of enhancing and diversifying the economic offer of central Middlesbrough; and this accords with the strategic plan objectives. Captain Cook Square is actively engaging an esports gaming venue, with announcements anticipated imminently.
23. Middlehaven also lends itself to a multi-purpose venue and the feasibility of such activity is being worked upon presently. Any leisure uses or multi-purpose venues in Middlehaven must be carefully balance as to add value and not to detract from the town centre offer, this includes maintaining the viability of assets including Captain Cook Square, Middlesbrough Theatre and the Town Hall venue. The

findings of a feasibility study would inform next steps in terms of progressing a business case proposal for development or external funding support.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

24. It is recommended that Executive:

- a) approve the service response, and associated actions to the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel.

Why is this being recommended?

25. The delivery of the objectives outlined by the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel are consistent with, and form part of the work programme for, the departmental objectives for Regeneration.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

26. The other potential decisions that have not been recommended include:

- a) Do nothing. This is not recommended, as much of the activity outlined by the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel is planned as part of established service delivery priorities.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

27. The Local Plan is subject to planning legislation and compliance with The Business and Planning Act 2020.

Financial

28. The actions outlined will not require additional resources above approved budgets or external funding settlements.

Policy Framework

29. The decisions recommended within this report align fully with the Council's policy framework.

Equality and Diversity

30. It is not anticipated that any groups with protected characteristics will be impacted upon negatively as a result of implementing the Scrutiny Panel Recommendations.

Risk

31. Any matters arising will be delivered in line with the Council's established risk management protocols. Appropriate measures will be put in place to ensure that all risks associated with the scheme are minimised.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

32. Council officers will deliver and monitor the actions as at appendix B

Appendices

33. Appendix A – Final report of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel – investigating Middlesbrough Regeneration post covid-19.

34. Appendix B – action plan

Background papers

35. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report