

EXECUTIVE

A meeting of the Executive was held on Tuesday 11 January 2022.

PRESENT: Mayor A Preston (Chair) and Councillors B Cooper, TA Grainge, S Hill, L Mason, E Polano and M Smiles

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D Coupe, Councillor J Thompson and A Morely

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, G Field, R Horniman, T Parkinson, S Reynolds and I Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors C McIntyre, M Saunders and S Walker

21/86 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/87 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 7 DECEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 7 December 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/88 **DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY**

The Executive Member for Regeneration and the Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide information on the Digital Inclusion Strategy and request its adoption.

A lack of digital skills and access could have a huge negative impact on a person's life, leading to poorer health outcomes, a lower life expectancy, increased loneliness, social isolation and less access to jobs and education.

It was planned that the DIS would be used by the Council to help shape the future of digital inclusion in the borough, to ensure that all residents were supported to overcome digital barriers and maximise the social, health, education and economic benefits of enhanced digital access. The annually-reviewed action plan would enable the Council to target its leadership response, along with its key strategic partners, to emerging local needs, opportunities and priorities towards the ultimate aim of achieving parity with national digital inclusion standards.

The key aspects of the DIS were:

- The Vision - Middlesbrough would be brought in line with national digital inclusion standards.
- The Strategy - centred around the 5 digital inclusion Key Objectives, with issues and emerging opportunities for each:
 - Objective 1: Ensuring children and families were able to access digital learning and no pupil missed learning due to digital DISarity.
 - Objective 2: Ensuring job seekers were able to access digital skills and employability support.
 - Objective 3: Ensuring individuals (particularly elderly people) were able to engage with others to reduce isolation.
 - Objective 4: Ensuring local businesses were supported to trade digitally.
 - Objective 5: Ensuring town-wide connectivity plans supported Middlesbrough's digital ambitions.

The DIS was accompanied with an action plan, which identified a series of 10 Practical Actions required to launch the coordinated digital inclusion programme and attain tangible improvement, over the next 12 months, against the Key Objectives. Those Practical Actions were detailed at paragraph 11 of the submitted report.

In addition, the Action Plan identified 4 pledges with associated Strategic Actions to ensure the Council provided the necessary local strategic leadership. Those pledges and Strategic Actions were detailed at paragraph 12 of the submitted report.

The DIS had been finalised, taking into account the contributions from the cross directorate Steering Group, plus all of the comments received during the stakeholder consultations and workshops. The final version of the DIS was attached to the submitted report at Appendix 1.

Following its adoption, the DIS would be used as part of the evidence base for the Strategic Plan, to inform the Poverty Strategy and to support relevant local and regional digital projects.

OPTIONS

Not to adopt the Digital Inclusion Strategy. That would have meant that the Council would not have had a clear strategy for delivering a coordinated local action plan for reducing exclusion and maximising local digital access. It would have been more challenging to deliver the digital infrastructure, skills, devices, services and support, of the right quality, to support current and future needs.

ORDERED

That the Digital Inclusion Strategy be adopted.

REASON

The DIS set out the key digital inclusion priorities and opportunities to help deliver the Council's Strategic Plan and ensure that barriers in the way of maximising the social, health, education and economic benefits of enhanced digital access were reduced for existing and future residents.

21/89 FINAL REPORT OF THE CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - CULTURAL EVENTS IN MIDDLESBROUGH: THEIR IMPACT AND FUTURE - SERVICE RESPONSE

Item deferred due to the absence of the Scrutiny Chair.

21/90 FINAL REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - MIDDLESBROUGH REGENERATION POST COVID-19 - SERVICE RESPONSE

Item deferred due to the absence of the Scrutiny Chair.

21/91 CORPORATE CRISIS POLICY

The Executive Member for Environment and Finance & Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to request approval of a Corporate Crisis Policy.

The general principles of the policy were as follows:

- To ensure a professional, consistent and timely approach to dealing with crisis and its associated support across all of the Council's functions.
- Where Data Protection legislation allowed, promote a coordinated approach towards sharing information internally and managing multiple awards connected to crisis across the whole of the Council.
- To ensure that crisis was managed in accordance with legislative provisions and best practice.
- To ensure that any steps taken to deal with crisis were in line with the Council's corporate policies on surveillance and data protection, and to ensure compliance with RIPA and GDPR legislation.

The policy provided a definition of crisis and what was considered a disaster, and had certain criteria which had to be met in order to receive support. The policy also outlined circumstances which were not considered to be a crisis.

Should a resident trigger support under crisis or disaster, the policy provided levels of support based on differing circumstances.

When a payment was triggered, awards would be made through electronic means rather than cash awards, with payment methods outlined in the policy.

Resident and Business Support's Community Support Team planned to work collaboratively with all services to ensure residents who met the requirements of the policy were signposted appropriately.

ORDERED

- 1. That the Corporate Crisis Policy be approved.**
- 2. That delegated authority be provided to the Section 151 Officer to approve any future modifications to the policy.**

REASON

The policy planned to allow Middlesbrough Council to provide a coordinated and fair approach to the definition of crisis and disaster, make support payments where they fit the Council's definition, and ensure any such payments were in line with expected expenditure to the situation which warranted the need for support.

21/92

ELECTED MEMBERS SMALL SCHEME ALLOCATION 2021/22

The Executive Member for Environment and Finance & Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to provide information on the proposed Elected Members Small Scheme Allocation for 2021/22.

Members had previously approved funding within the capital programme for the Elected Members Small Scheme (EMSS).

A total of 16 applications had been received with a total value of £167,660, against a budget of £113,000.

The schemes had been scored against the following criteria with a maximum of 80 points:

- strength of links with Council's Strategic Plan;
- outputs, benefits and social value;
- savings payback achieved and value for money; and
- project risks

The scored schemes were detailed in the table below paragraph 6 of the submitted report.

Not all the applications had identified match funding. Where a contribution on match funding was required, that had been agreed with the budget holder for the Local Transport Plan.

Not all the applications identified projected maintenance, or running costs, for future years. However, respective service area budget holders had indicated that those costs were minimal and could be absorbed within existing budgets.

All applications relating to traffic calming would require further public consultation before they could be delivered.

All applications relating to CCTV would be subject to a more detailed technical assessment, as part of the wider Community Safety Strategy.

The Mayor commented that public objections to one element of Councillor Wilson's scheme had been received. Therefore, it was proposed that the scheme be agreed in principle, subject to further consultation.

OPTIONS

Members could have agreed to one of the other options at point 23 of the submitted

report. That was not recommended, as they were a less effective use of resources.

ORDERED

- 1. That the Elected Members Small Scheme allocation 2021/22 be approved, subject to further public consultation being undertaken in respect of an element of Councillor Wilson's scheme.**
- 2. That, following consultation, delegated authority be provided to the Mayor to agree said element of Councillor Wilson's scheme.**
- 3. That option 4 from the table at point 23 be agreed.**

REASON

The option planned to allow for all approved schemes to be funded direct from the EMSS 2021- 22 and 2022-23 allocation, negating the need for a further bidding round in April 2022 and allowing for the Ward Initiatives scheme budget and PSPO & CCTV Provision budget to be utilised for other priorities.

21/93

WHORLTON ROAD - DISPOSAL [PART A]

The Executive Member for Environment and Finance & Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to consider the proposal to dispose of the Council's freehold interest in Whorlton Road Industrial Estate.

Shown edged on the plan, attached at Appendix A of the submitted report, the subject property was situated on Whorlton Road and occupied a rectangular shaped site measuring @ 2.18 Acres [0.88 Ha] in a prominent position on Riverside Park.

Whorlton Road Industrial Estate was relatively modern in its appearance, comprising several terraced industrial units of steel frame construction with blockwork to the lower sections, sheet metal cladding to the upper walls and a half pitched roof.

Whilst the Council was the freehold owner of Whorlton Road Industrial Estate, the property was subject to multiple leases and the Council currently also leased back the entire estate from Borough Properties.

In 1982 the Council entered into a 125 year headlease with Woodhead Construction Ltd, where the Council let vacant land to Woodhead Construction Ltd for the purposes of developing Whorlton Road Industrial Estate. Simultaneously, the Council also entered into an underlease with Woodhead Construction Ltd, agreeing to leaseback the completed development for a term of 35 years.

Borough Properties subsequently acquired those leases, and were now held on the headlease as a tenant, which had a term of 86 years remaining, and also on the underlease as the Landlord, due to expire in 2026. The underlease, which held the Council as the tenant to Borough Properties was due to expire in 2017, but in 2008 the respective leases were varied, extending the Council's term as tenant up until 1 January 2026.

As well as the term being extended, other variations were made to the lease, which with the passage of time had considerably increased the Council's liability and would continue to do so up until the end of the lease term, in January 2026.

An Asset Disposal Business Case confirming the status of the subject property, as surplus to operational Council requirements, was attached at Appendix C to Part B of the submitted report.

OPTIONS

Re-use for operational purposes - No Council operational service requirement had been identified.

Other uses - Given the property's location and make up, no use other than light industrial would have been suitable.

Do nothing - The Council would have remained as a tenant under the existing terms, subject to the full obligations and associated costs of the Underlease until Jan 2026. Following January 2026, the Council would not have had the benefit of the asset until the Headlease came to an end in January 2107.

ORDERED

1. That the information contained in Part A of the report be noted.
2. That the decision be taken once all the financial or exempt information contained in Part B of the report had been considered.

REASON

In order to meet the Council's requirements to generate capital receipts, increase annually recurring revenue streams, reduce future expenditure and liability, and to see the subject property regenerated in the future.

The disposal of the subject parcel of land as proposed supported delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

21/94 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The resolution to exclude the press and the public was agreed.

21/95 **EXEMPT - WHORLTON ROAD - DISPOSAL [PART B]**

The Executive Member for Environment and Finance & Governance and the Director of Finance submitted a report for the Executive's consideration.

ORDERED

That the recommendations of the report be approved.

REASONS

The decision was supported by the following reason:

For reasons outlined in the report.

The decision(s) will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) was published unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures