

Report of:	The Mayor Chief Executive
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	18 October 2022
Title:	Town Centre Strategy (targeted support)
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	Town centre
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will incur expenditure or savings above £150,000
Urgent:	No
Why:	Not Applicable

Executive summary

High streets and town centres have long been subject to a range of issues, such as the 2008 economic downturn, changes in consumer behaviour, and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic. Across the country rises in anti-social behaviour, begging, street crime and other nuisance are evident and as the most significant town centre in the Tees Valley, Middlesbrough is not immune to these issues.

We have ambition to create a bright future for our town centre, transforming it by providing more reasons for people to use the town centre to live, work, learn and enjoy leisure. Alongside the many exciting developments that are underway to achieve this it is vital that the town centre provides a clean and safe environment that encourages people to return.

Perceptions of safety and crime rates significantly influence the vitality and viability of a centre. Stable major brands and independent businesses are affected by these and if

left unattended there is a risk that this will damage our progress in transforming, adapting and recovering the high street economy.

It is therefore critical that these issues are addressed by introducing additional, co-ordinated and dedicated resources under a single point of authority and responsibility. Working with partners and utilising available Tees Valley resource, it is proposed that a pilot programme is delivered at a cost of £1,120,000 over 2 years. Funding would be derived through a combination of Shared Prosperity (£520,000) and Indigenous Growth Funds (£600,000), with no call on core Council funds.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek Executive approval for a new partnership approach to tackle town centre anti-social behaviour and crime to sustain and to protect the transformation of Middlesbrough Town Centre. The report also seeks executive approval to secure circa. £1.1 million from Tees Valley external funding resources to aid the delivery of this ambition.

Background and relevant information

2. Like many high streets across the country, Middlesbrough town centre is vulnerable. The Covid 19 pandemic, coupled with deep-rooted consumer behavioural changes, means that town centres must **diversify their offer to remain relevant in the modern world.**
3. Middlesbrough has a strong strategic vision to transform the town centre economy through a process of giving more reasons for people to use the town centre to live, work, learn and enjoy leisure but we **must** get the basics right and tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime is key.
4. National economic forces have contributed to some of the recent departures of major brands from the high street, but we cannot hide behind this. Stable major brands and independent businesses are questioning whether they continue to trade in Middlesbrough and these economic issues are being exacerbated by very poor perceptions of crime, nuisance and antisocial behaviour. Left unaddressed will be no hope to transform, adapt and recover the high street economy.
5. Perceptions of safety and crime rates significantly influence the vitality and viability of a centre. For example, high ASB and crime rates can not only impact on public health and admissions to A&E, but lack of safety can also affect the economic health of a centre as visitors may refrain from staying late or venturing to the centre at all.
6. Statistics help, but they only go so far. On paper, Middlesbrough Town Centre ASB and crime rates have reduced in recent times, but this is absolutely irrelevant if visitors, businesses and residents have a perception that crime and ASB is prevalent. A number of meetings have taken place with a selection of town centre businesses and it is clear that business confidence requires improving.

Current Town Centre ASB Resource

7. Middlesbrough Council has not allowed this to happen without a response, but it is clear that the approach needs to be radically changed to address current issues.

8. Currently, Middlesbrough Council directly funds a dedicated resource of:
 - a) 4x Street Wardens
 - b) 2x Police Officers (Funded via IGF until March 2023)
 - c) Cleveland Police match this provision with 2 officers
9. Whilst this resource is directed to the town centre, it can be inconsistent. Similarly, the Police Officers can be drawn out of the centre in response to urgent or major issues. It is clear that a greater level of cover is required.
10. In addition, this resource is spread thinly over a significant area and largely covers office hours. Of course, issues extend beyond daytime periods and this needs to be properly reflected in any new planning.

Strategic Stakeholders

11. Whilst everyone looks to Middlesbrough Council to lead on the response to town centre perceptions, it is the responsibility of all town centre stakeholders to play their part. Working with strategic institutions and partners, we aim to deliver a coherent and collaborative response. As a minimum, we need constant information and dialogue with businesses so that all issues are reported and acknowledged.
12. To ensure there is dialogue between town centre businesses, partners and Middlesbrough Council, quarterly crime and ASB meetings have been set up and a monthly E-newsletter is now published.
13. In July 2022 Middlesbrough Council hosted an ASB and Crime Workshop with town centre businesses to explore new approaches to tackling town centre issues. The output is an action plan that seeks to divert, reduce and better enforce issues that affect business confidence.
14. Together, these partners can align intelligence, resources, communications and assets to tackle crime and ASB in Middlesbrough, through an agreed, and accountable, plan of action.

Feedback and Action Plan

15. Having listened to strategic partners and stakeholders, the Council has developed a coordinated action plan, based on the key issues, as identified by businesses and partners. This forms the framework for US ALL to follow, not just for Middlesbrough Council to deliver.

16. This plan has been costed and will provide the basis for some dedicated investment in dialogue with TVCA, to fund the required measures for a minimum of the next two years. This period will allow the plans, priorities and actions to be refined and adapted to ensure that they are as effective as possible. This will then provide the groundwork for a more permanent response and solution.

Impact and evaluation

17. We need to agree on a set metrics to demonstrate performance and impact. These need to benchmark current performance and perceptions prior to these interventions and can be easily measured throughout the lifetime of the project.

18. The new working arrangements, if successful could provide a proof of concept for the implementation of a Business Improvement District (BID), which would provide future funding. To enable this we must ensure that measurable impacts that have a tangible value for businesses and demonstrate real additional value are developed.

Proposed enhancements

19. Building on the outcomes and understanding of the dedicated focused operations in the town centre, an enhanced enforcement model has been developed in order to enhance responses to crime and ASB. This will be a mix of dedicated police resource and newly created town centre enforcement staff who will have a greater range of powers than those currently held by Street Wardens. The use of enhanced mobile CCTV will be part of this approach.

20. The town centre has one of the highest rates of youth-related ASB in the borough and as such, the plan includes the introduction of a floating youth service resource to work with young people who are involved in inappropriate activity within the town centre.

21. The new approach will also see an increase in cleaning activity that will also include deep cleans of the town centre. The cleaning team will be expanded to include additional staff who will undertake “concierge” type activity and other functions such as the jet washing of areas.

22. A range of cultural activities will be introduced into the town centre to encourage further footfall; animate unused or unlit spaces and create vibrancy and interest.

23. A focused programme of marketing and communications as well as promotions that build on successful events such as restaurant week will be developed to increase the awareness of the offer of the town centre and encourage new visitors and increased visits by those who already use the town centre.

24. A range of physical improvements to the town including enhanced lighting will be explored.

25. After this time, and having refined the operational model, these working arrangements aim to demonstrate efficacy and value for money; with the further aim of demonstrating the benefit of this approach to businesses and residents, as a potential basis of a BID.

26. A summary of the enhancements is provided below:

Resource	Cost (over 2 years)
Reshaping the existing town centre team to include a Strategic Town Centre Manager role to steer town centre activity and influence all town centre service delivery	Any additional costs to be met by existing Economic Growth and Infrastructure budget
3 extra PC's Working: Monday-Saturday: 8:00 am – 6:00 pm Sunday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm	£340,000
4 new Town Centre Enforcement Officers and re-designation of existing town centre street wardens x 8 Working: Monday-Saturday: 8:00 am – 6:00 pm Sunday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm	£280,000
New Caretaking Team staff x 2	£128,000
Extend public spaces protection order (PSPO) in town centre	£2,000
Launch promotional campaign focused on not to give money to beggars	£5,000
Increase CCTV in the town centre	£15,000
Marketing and Communications budget for dedicated town centre marketing and communications	£20,000
Implement floating youth support	£60,000
Light key routes and arrival points	£30,000
Small grants programme for business-led initiatives to deal with causes of ASB	£20,000

Orange Pip and other market development	£50,000
Annual deep clean of town centre	£40,000
Cover cost of Middlesbrough Retail Crime Partnership (MRCP) Membership for 100 town centre businesses	£20,000
Programme of initiatives offering discounts/promotions i.e. Teesside Restaurant Week	£10,000
Implement culture and arts programme to animate town centre and increase footfall	£100,000
TOTAL	£1,120,000

What decision(s) are being recommended?

That the Executive:

- endorse the approach of the pilot scheme over 2 years
- approve Middlesbrough Council being the accountable body for Tees Valley external funding.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

27. Detailed engagement and consultation with town centre businesses, residents and stakeholders have made it clear that perceptions of ASB and crime are considered a significant barrier to existing businesses and inward investment. Left unaddressed will mean no hope to transform, adapt and recover Middlesbrough's Town Centre economy.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

28. n/a

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

29. The only legal impact is the extension of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in the TS1 area. Following consultation with businesses, residents and visitors, a separate report will be taken to single member executive for decision in November 2022.

Strategic priorities and risks

30. The aim of a co-ordinated town centre team is to provide additionality by establishing new capacity and resources to deliver Middlesbrough's strategic ambitions.
31. This approach underpins the emerging Mayoral Development Company (MDC), which will open new funding opportunities to maintain regeneration momentum and make central Middlesbrough a strategic priority for the entire Tees valley.
32. The MDC is anticipated to deliver major regeneration schemes only. Day to day support and administration of the Town Centre is anticipated to stay with Middlesbrough Council. Specialist capacity and resources will supplement the regeneration service and its functions, with significant and major regeneration initiatives continuing to be delivered in-house.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

33. No Human Rights, Equality or Data Protection issues arise from this report. Any equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the PSPO extension report.

Financial

34. The pilot will not impact on core Council budgets. £600,000 will be sourced from the Indigenous Growth Fund provided by Tees Valley Combined Authority to aid economic growth and a further £520,000 from the community allocation of the Tees Valley Shared Prosperity Fund, which is specifically targeted at town centres.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

See appendix A

Appendices

1	Appendix A: Town Centre ASB and Crime Action Plan
2	
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

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