

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on Wednesday 9 November 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors C Dodds, D Branson, T Furness, A Hellaoui, B Hubbard, T Mawston, M Saunders and J Thompson

OFFICERS: Susan Lightwing and Stewart Muir-Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were submitted on behalf of Councillor R Arundale

22/33 WELCOME AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation Procedure.

22/34 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

In the absence of a Chair or Vice Chair, the Democratic Services Officer asked for nominations for a Chair for the meeting. Councillor Mawston was nominated and the nomination was seconded.

ORDERED that Councillor Mawston was elected Chair of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel for the meeting.

22/35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

22/36 MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 12 OCTOBER 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel held on 12 October 2022 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

In relation to Minute No 22/30 Councillor Branson confirmed that Middlesbrough Council would participate in any joint scrutiny investigation into shellfish deaths along the north east coast with other Tees Valley Authorities.

22/37 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

The Panel received a presentation from the Public Rights of Way Officer on the topic of Flood Risk Management. As a result of the Pitt Review in 2007, the Scrutiny Panel was required to receive an annual summary of actions taken locally and review works carried out, to manage flood risk.

Middlesbrough's drainage system was extensive and complex in nature comprising open and culverted watercourses and a surface water/combined sewerage system. Flooding could come from a variety of sources including surface water run off, ordinary watercourses, surcharging sewers and road gullies.

Surface water flooding occurred when intense rainfall, often of short duration, was unable to permeate into the ground or enter drainage systems quickly enough, resulting in ponding or overland flows. This could cause considerable problems in urban areas. During periods of heavy rainfall, standing water could accumulate even if the road gullies were in good working order. Some gullies could not drain the water away fast enough and therefore would surcharge during periods of intense rainfall. Such intense periods of rainfall often short in duration, and once over, the gully would usually drain away the water without needing any attention. Areas susceptible to surface water flooding had been identified by the Environment Agency (EA) and were shown on a map of Middlesbrough.

Middlesbrough Council worked with Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) to carry out strategic studies. The strategic studies highlighted and prioritised the areas of greatest risk from combined flooding within each of the catchment areas. Middlesbrough was covered by several catchment areas and each area would have a two stage study undertaken. Stage 1 focused on the collection, collation, analysis and prioritisation of information to identify areas of High Risk from Flooding. Stage 2 focused on identifying opportunities within the top three or four high risk areas to reduce or prevent flooding. The Environment Agency also contributed to this work.

A strategic study of Middlesbrough East, which included some of Redcar and Cleveland had been undertaken. Stage 1 was completed in 2018 and ten flood risk areas were identified. Three or four of those areas were taken to a Stage 2 study which was completed in 2021. Some of the issues were for the NWL network and others related to surface water flooding. When an area was identified for a scheme it was added to the EA's Forward Work Programme for funding. If a scheme was to address surface water this would be eligible for EA funding.

Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA): the EA's Medium Term Plan was a rolling list of schemes which were refreshed annually and were funded from Government funding allocation. The funding set by the Government was for six years and the current funding would run from 2021/2022 to 2026/2027. Councils could put forward schemes of areas susceptible to surface water flooding, with an indication of how many areas might get flooded. Then carry out studies and modelling would be carried out to justify whether to take it further or whether it was not merited. On a basic map it might look as though ten properties could be protected from flooding, but following modelling this figure could potentially reduce.

Following a recent refresh of the EA's Medium Term Plan, eleven potential scheme areas were included that could protect 636 Middlesbrough homes.

Further details of two current schemes: Saltersgill Fields and Ormesby High Street were provided.

Construction of the Saltersgill Fields Scheme started in 2019 and was completed in 2021. The finished scheme was larger than originally planned and involved the creation of ponds and scrapes between Saltersgill Road and the allotments, and a bund around the open space between the allotments and Marton Road. It was envisaged that around 306 properties were now better protected from flooding. Additional benefits were realised as part of the scheme which included the provision of a number of surfaced footpaths, one of which provided a shortcut to a nearby school. The site was also protected from vehicle trespass.

Work was currently being undertaken on the Outline Business Case which for the Ormesby High Street Scheme which was due to be completed in early January 2023. A second surface water flow from the fields had been identified and as such the scope of the scheme was expanded. The scheme could involve the creation of a bund within the National Trust land and so further discussions with the National Trust were taking place. The scheme looked to capture overland flows from the Farm Land to the south of the National Trust property. Potential flood risk from the culvert under the High Street was identified and improvements had been made by the EA to the trash screen to prevent obstructions to flow.

The EA had also completed a major scheme on Marton West Beck that had started in summer 2020 and completed earlier this year. The scheme had better protected around 500 homes and businesses. The trash screen at Albert Park had been improved and extended, with new flood walls and a surface water storage area installed. New flood walls had also been added at Borough Road. A new drainage system had been built and a surface water storage area had also been created in Acklam behind Teesside Crematorium.

It was highlighted that the water storage area behind the Crematorium had been improved with wildflowers and trees planted. The Officer explained that additional funding was provided for increasing biodiversity alongside flood management schemes.

The Ormesby Beck Restoration Scheme began in early August 2022 and was due to be completed by the end of the year. The scheme would remove the existing tidal structure which was often over topped by high tides as well as the screen near to the Navigation Public

House. The grills from the structures would be kept to reuse at a different location at a later date.

In addition to flood prevention schemes the Council continued to investigate the highway drainage system, which had not previously been recorded or mapped, to increase knowledge of the system and the interactions with sewers and watercourses. The Council could then repair and cleanse the system where required.

The Council also worked with Developers to ensure that Sustainable Drainage (SuDs) techniques were included in all major developments.

In January 2022, Gully Smart, an asset management software programme was purchased. The aim was to enable both a proactive and reactive response to tackling flood risk and help with the management of the highway drainage network. The Panel received a demonstration of the main features of the software programme at the meeting.

The Council was starting to build up a knowledge bank of watercourse locations and resolve some long standing issues. All roads with gullies had been surveyed and silt level tests had been carried out. It was noted that silt would block gullies whereas water could still pass through a build up of fallen leaves. Information was inputted by the Rights of Way Officer or the surveying personnel. It was anticipated that there would eventually be link to Firmstep to enable members of the public to report issues directly.

Members voiced concerns in relation to the Council's tree planting programme and whether it was a sensible policy to plant trees along the roadside. The Officer confirmed that he was consulted by Area Care and could advise not to plant trees near culverts. In addition, he was consulted on any new developments or planning permissions to ensure that allowance was made for urban creep – where grass was being replaced by concrete.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his attendance and presentation.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

Post meeting it was confirmed that the Council currently owned two Gully Suckers and had one permanent gully crew. One machine was kept as a spare to cover times when the main vehicle was being repaired/serviced. The service tended to be responsive and the work with Gully Smart would enable specific areas of concern to be targeted with routine maintenance on those gullies that required regular cleansing.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023

Members discussed the current Work Programme as follows:

Following receipt of an overview of Nutrient Neutrality at the last meeting, the Panel agreed to put this scrutiny investigation on hold until 2023. Following recent changes within Government there was some uncertainty as to possible changes to national planning policy and legislation. It was agreed it would be prudent for the Panel to await clarity from the Government on this issue before proceeding further with its investigation.

In relation to the Prevention of Damage to Grass Verges, the Panel agreed that the information provided and discussed at the last meeting was sufficient and no further investigation was required at this time.

It was suggested that the issue of School Transport should be added to the current programme, given that it was a statutory requirement and an ongoing spending pressure due to a greater number of children qualifying for home to school transport, new schools, and an increase in costs to transport children out of the area.

A further suggestion was that the Panel should look at a scheme operating in Greater Manchester where 100% of Business Rates were retained by the Authority and redistributed between the different authorities in the Greater Manchester Council according to need, and whether there was potential for a similar scheme in the Tees Valley area.

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The Panel also requested an update on the Linthorpe Road Cycle Lane and the changes proposed since the Panel last discussed this in September.

The other topics previously approved by Overview and Scrutiny Board would remain on the Panel's work schedule to be programmed in when timely. The topics were:

- Housing: Impact on Health and Wellbeing AND Income to the Council/Potential Impact of Increased Development Costs.
- Enforcement of Planning Conditions.
- New Pest Control Service – currently on hold due to the service not yet being in operation.
- Local Plan Update – currently on hold due the Council agreeing to commence work on a new Local Plan in October 2022

AGREED as follows:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. A request would be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to approve amending the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme 2022-2023 to include School Transport and Business Rates.

22/39 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 7 DECEMBER 2022**

The time and date of the next meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was confirmed as 7 December 2022 at 10.30 am.

22/40 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on agenda items from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 25 October 2022 which included updates from the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health, Public Protection and Digital Inclusion, Scrutiny Chairs' and in relation to the Executive Forward Work Programme.

In relation to the Executive Member's presentation, the Overview and Scrutiny Board had resolved 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.

22/41 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED**

None.