

REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel was held on Wednesday 19 July 2023.

PRESENT: Councillors I Blades (Chair), N Hussain (Vice-Chair), J Ewan, L Hurst, D Jackson, J Kabuye, I Morrish and J Ryles

OFFICERS: R Horniman and S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were submitted on behalf of Councillor S Hill

23/1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

23/2 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 22 MARCH 2023**

The minutes of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 22 March 2023 were received and noted.

23/3 **OVERVIEW OF REGENERATION DIRECTORATE**

The Director of Regeneration provided an overview of the Directorate which was focussed on the economic health of the town and comprised Heads of Service for the following areas: Economic Growth, Development, Planning, Marketing and Communications, Valuation and Estates, Creative Programmes and Partnerships, Community Learning and Employability, and Sport and Client Relationship.

Economic Growth focussed on enabling the town to grow sustainably, encompassing the town centre, economy and business. This service area developed bids for project funding and worked with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Reports and presentations for Executive and Scrutiny also formed part of the remit.

Development concentrated on the front-end bidding and relationships with other organisations such as the Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park and Centre Square One and Two. Development also worked on the preparation of housing sites for sale. If the Council owned land that was an allocated site, Officers would be involved in the planning permission, masterplan and ensuring the land was developed properly. Design Services were also part of that team.

The Planning Service dealt with planning applications, building control and the Local Plan. Planning applications were assessed and either decided by Officers or taken to Committee for a decision. Building Control was a statutory function of the Council, although residents generally used private companies.

Culture managed various venues and developed the culture sector in Middlesbrough. Venues included the Town Hall, Dorman Museum, Newham Hall Farm and the Little Theatre. The service undertook outreach work with school and also liaised with the Arts Council. A £5 million development of Central Library was currently underway. At the present time, there was no Head of Service in post and the Head of Growth had taken responsibility.

Marketing and Communications promoted the Council and the Town via the Council website, press releases, internal staff communications and the Love Middlesbrough magazine.

Community Learning made provision for adults and children who were not in mainstream education settings and was based in the Multi Media Centre. There were also bases at Lingfield Farm and the Acklam Green Centre.

Valuation and Estates was the Council's property function for buying and selling. It was responsible for all Council owned buildings, including its commercial portfolio and their

maintenance. The Council had a long lease on Centre Square 1 and 2, and owned industrial units at Cannon Park, two shopping centres and Tees Amp. The commercial properties generated income for the Council but some were in poor repair and this would be a challenge going forward.

Whilst the Council supported the business community to thrive it did not provide business support generally. There were two officers with responsibility for the town centre to help businesses work together and provide support to key sectors including digital and advanced manufacturing. One individual worked in Boho to help the digital cluster develop.

The Council also built new commercial space and managed existing buildings. New building would likely be limited in future because the Mayoral Development Corporation would be taking on that responsibility. The Council still needed to provide new opportunities for houses to develop so that the town could grow. The Council would do the site preparation for Council owned sites and then go to the private sector for volume building.

Whilst the Middlesbrough Development Company (MDC) had completed two developments – at Middlehaven and Tollesby – it was due to be wound up. The way the MDC was set up was no longer fit for purpose although there was potential for another similar housing company to be established.

The Council controlled development to protect the town's future to ensure the population continued to grow.

The Council also provided cultural opportunities and focussed a lot of activity through the various venues. Big events were increasingly more difficult to provide due to budget constraints. However, the Orange Pip market remained one of the events still funded by the Council. The Council would still hire out spaces and venues and help others promote their events.

Sport and Leisure provision was managed by one Officer via a contract with Active Leisure. All sports venues and pitches were managed through the contract.

Regeneration had a direct impact on the Council by generating more Council Tax and Business Rates income through house and commercial building. Income was also derived from commercial lettings and sales.

One area where the Council received a lot of complaints was planning enforcement. An enforcement complaint could take months to address and there was an issue with recruiting and retaining Building Control Officers. Recruitment of Building Control Officers was a national issue. At any one time the Council could be dealing with around 300 enforcement complaints and the number that were resolved was quite low. Cases were prioritised on the basis of how many people they were affecting in the most significant way.

Responding to a query regarding reinvestment into property resources, the priority for repairs had traditionally been the Council buildings. The commercially properties had not been well maintained so when they deteriorated or needed new investment they had been sold. An asset review was currently being undertaken by the Council.

Middlesbrough Council had done a lot of town centre development but as it held the financial risk on buildings such as Centre 1 and 2, it was not able to borrow money to do more. The Council gained more from owning the buildings and having the income than it would from selling them. The Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) would be able to do those things that the Council could no longer afford to do.

A Member asked whether there was any concern that the MDC would redevelop and then hand properties back to the Council to maintain. It was suggested that MDC were more likely to do developments that were in private rather than public ownership.

The Chair thanked the Director of Regeneration for attending the meeting and providing the overview. The Democratic Services Officer outlined the next steps for the Panel to agree the Work Programme 2023-2024.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

23/4 **PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2023-2024**

A proposed schedule of meeting dates for the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year was submitted for the Panel's consideration.

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

23/5 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.