

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR THEO FURNESS

DATE OF MEETING: 17 July 2024

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on areas of activity within my portfolio including performance against strategic priorities.

Newbridge Court

1. The apartments are being let on a commercial basis through Michael Poole, with many expressions of interest received following an initial marketing exercise. One open day has already been held with another planned before tenants will be confirmed. Demand has been very strong, and it is expected that the building will be fully let in the near future. This shows the demand for this kind of housing need. If given the right funding, it shows what a council can do to step in to build and supply product that is needed within Middlesbrough. Turning a derelict shopping parade into a brand new modern energy efficient and better built for purpose building for housing and retail.

Captain Cook Square

2. The opening of Wendy's has seen significant footfall into the Square, producing excellent trading figures. Work on new restaurant Bazaar is nearing completion and preparing for opening, which will be a further addition the food offering in the town centre. Funshack is also nearing completion, so the summer offer will be significantly increased attracting families into the town centre. A major 'Dino' event was planned for the 6th/7th July that is being widely promoted as part of a programme of co-ordinated centre/tenant publicity it was a great success pulling in lots of people into area. At Captain Cook Square we are hoping to be a one stop shop leisure area for Teesside, attracting people from far and wide into the town centre. As the highstreets are dying and shrinking across the country this is a part of our vision to change the dynamic of which the current layout of the town is based upon.

Cleveland Centre including our employment hub and live well centre.

3. Work is fully underway on the redevelopment of units within the Cleveland Centre for the relocation of the Live Well Centre. Following an initial refusal from the Mayoral Development Corporation's Planning Committee, a solution has been found that allows the work to be undertaken as 'Permitted Development'. This has enabled the work to commence with a view to moving the Live Well Centre across before the end of 2024. Physical work on the Employment Hub that will sit alongside the Live Well Centre will follow shortly, as designs are currently being finalised. This will further add our strategy to condense the offering in the town centre to increase footfall in a concentrated area and have more coherent plan for the centre of town.

Historic quarter

4. Middlesbrough's Historic Quarter was designated a conservation area in 1989. It is a key part of the town centre between the retail core and Middlehaven and the first place visitors see when they arrive at the railway station. The Historic Quarter's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) four-year programme concluded in March 2024. During the HSHAZ Middlesbrough Council and Historic England invested over £2m. Highlights included:
 - Repairs to four historic properties, helping to bring vacant floorspace back into use. This has been a catalyst for further private sector investment, particularly at 2-3 Exchange Place and 1 Albert Road (Bloom) where an additional £4.8m has been expended
 - Restoring and upgrading the public realm at Exchange Square and Zetland Road, complementing the local architecture, railway station development and improving the commercial appeal of the area;
 - 4,500 people attending HSHAZ community engagement events such as site tours, exhibitions, walks and talks; and,
 - Creation of a HSHAZ community steering group, website (www.historicquarter.co.uk) and publication of regular newsletters.
5. Historic quarter will become the crown jewel of the town centre showing off our proud industrial past and grand architecture of our industrial past.

Asset Review

6. The sale of TeesAMP is nearing completion as the final elements of due diligence are undertaken by the buyer. The Council will receive the capital receipt in this financial year which will contribute to funding the Council's Capital Investment Programme and the wider Council Transformation Programme. Further sales of land and property are progressing and will be brought forward for Executive consideration where appropriate. It is expected that the 2024/25 target for asset sales will be achieved.

Housing sites and the current build rate including thirteen sites

7. Over the last four years 2,218 new homes have been built in the town across several highly successful development sites. The Grey Towers Village site will see the development of 452 new dwellings by Barratt/David Wilson Homes with the scheme progressing well. At Hemlington Grange it is anticipated that Taylor Wimpey will complete their development of over 500 new homes this year, with Persimmon Homes also on site delivering a further 500 plus homes. Persimmon are also making good progress on their development at Orchid Gardens, with over half of the 466 now complete. Gleeson Homes are expected to complete the development of 304 units at the popular Acklam Gardens site in the next couple of years. The bracken Grange development of 350 units is also expected to complete soon with Linden Homes building the last of the units for market sale. The Miller Homes development of 72 units at Rowan Park is also on site with half of the units now complete. Thirteen are currently on site at Union Village (Gresham), Grove Hill and Kedward Avenue and will deliver a total of 546 units of affordable housing over the next four years. The Q1 housing completion numbers for 2024/25 have yet to be compiled but current projects indicate that the annual target of 450 completions will again be achieved.

MDC asset transfer hold up.

8. The transfer of assets from the Council to the Mayoral Development Corporation has been on hold due to the General Election and will be considered further by the new incoming minister. The Council and the Mayoral Development Corporation continue to work together on any investment/development opportunities that arise until this is resolved.

Teesside Park Leisure side.

9. The Ninja Warrior venue at Teesside Park is due to open in mid July that will add to the overall leisure offer in Middlesbrough. Although situated at Teesside Park, the Middlesbrough boundary includes the leisure element of the site, and the business rates are collected by Middlesbrough Council. Its great to see investment in this side of the Teesside Park and the attraction to the area they will bring.

Local Plan

10. Following the conclusion of the consultation on the Draft Local Plan, the Council has been considering all comments received. There were a large comments received raised issues relating to the proposed Gypsy & Traveller Site, and significant others relating to proposed housing sites. A full report of consultation will be prepared later in the year to set out the issues raised. In response to the consultation, and also to meet national policy and legislative requirements, further work is ongoing to strengthen the evidence base to ensure the next stage of the Local Plan is robust. This includes:
 - A Transport Study to look at the impact of the Local Plan on Middlesbrough's road network and to identify mitigation measures;
 - A Gypsy & Traveller Site Assessment to further look at site options to meet future housing needs for our Gypsy & Traveller community;
 - A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to understand the issues relating to proposed development and avoiding flood risk;
 - A Habitats Regulations Assessment to assess the impact of the Local Plan on important wildlife designations; and
 - A Viability Assessment to asses the viability of the proposed sites and the impact of the policies on their delivery.
11. This body of work is more substantial that previously envisaged, and will take longer to complete than originally timetabled. Therefore, a new timetable will be set out in the Local Development Scheme for the next stages of the Local Plan, with Publication expected to take place early in 2025.