

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Thursday 14 January 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors J Thompson (Chair), M Storey (Vice-Chair), C Cooke, B Cooper (as substitute for Councillor Hill), D Coupe, L Garvey, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, T Mawston, C McIntyre, J McTigue, J Platt, M Saunders and Z Uddin.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: D Best - Independent Chair, Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
Councillor D Davison - Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
A Preston (The Mayor).

OFFICERS: M Adams, S Bonner, C Breheny, G Cooper, A Glover, A Humble, C Lunn, T Parkinson, S Reynolds, J Savage, E Scollay, P Stephens and I Wright.

APOLOGIES

FOR ABSENCE: Councillor S Hill.

20/61 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

20/62 MINUTES - OSB CALL-IN - 20 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (Call-in in respect of Future Accommodation) held on 5 November 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/63 MINUTES - OSB - 3 DECEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 3 December 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/64 EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive submitted a report which identified the forthcoming issues to be considered by the Executive, as outlined in Appendix A to the report. The report provided the Overview and Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to consider whether any item contained within the Executive Forward Work Programme should be considered by the Board, or referred to a Scrutiny Panel.

NOTED**20/65 MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The Chief Executive, the Director of Public Health and the Head of Revenues and Benefits were in attendance to provide information to the Board regarding the Council's response to COVID-19.

The Director of Public Health delivered a presentation to the Board.

Regarding the latest COVID-19 position and the rolling seven-day rate of cases per 100,000 of the Middlesbrough population, as at 12 January 2021: 72 new cases had been added to the system; 675 new cases had been diagnosed; 478.8 rate per 100,000 population; and 177.30 COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 population, which reflected a predicted post-Christmas spike. Increases were a result of the new

variant that had been identified (between 65-70% of cases were of the new variant, which was more infectious) and also the extent of mixing on Christmas Day when the restrictions were relaxed. Lockdown seemed to be having a positive effect, with numbers reducing significantly, but the peak was important when considering the impact on hospitals.

The number of people admitted to hospital with a COVID-19 diagnosis had increased from around 28/29 December 2020. There was currently 185 in-patients (the figure did not include positive cases from within the community detailed previously); 28 of which were in Critical Care. There were significant operational pressures for the hospital, which would get worse; current modelling was based on a potential peak of 300 beds occupied by people with COVID-19. It was highlighted that figures would start to increase further as a result of those infected over the Christmas period, which was a significant concern for professionals across the system.

In terms of COVID-19-related deaths across Middlesbrough, the current statistics (as at week ending 1 January 2021) reflected the significant steps that had been taken to protect care homes and populations in general; whilst there had been an increase in cases in the community, the number of deaths had been significantly lower. Protection activity had included additional testing; ensuring that people were not discharged with a positive diagnosis from hospital into care homes, or from the community into care homes; and additional support for vulnerable people in communities. Unfortunately, however, it was anticipated that the increased activity at James Cook University Hospital, as described previously, would cause an increase in these figures over the coming weeks and months.

Regarding lockdown three response activities and the support provided to businesses and residents, details would be provided as part of the Head of Revenue and Benefits' presentation to the Board.

It was indicated that all Council services had been reviewed to understand where provision would be impacted further by lockdown three restrictions.

Lockdown three guidance / regulation implications for those attending education settings, such as primary or secondary school would see Early Years (nurseries, etc.) registered child care and other supervised child care activities continued, and childcare bubbles were permitted. Primary and secondary schools were now closed until at least 15 February 2021, but primary schools were open to vulnerable children and children of key workers. The number of those children was higher than in comparison to previous lockdowns, with schools needing to support both this and the planned testing programme that would be initiated in schools. Support in respect of the testing programmes had been provided by Public Health and Teesside University. The aim of the testing was to minimise the impact of a positive case by reducing the number of bubbles that would be required to isolate.

Additional funding was expected to support schools to provide food parcels / meals to those eligible children. Where this was not possible, a national voucher scheme would be accessible for the duration of school closures.

For vulnerable children and adults, the guidance issued for lockdown two / tier four had been reviewed and would continue for lockdown three.

The Public Protection Service was monitoring compliance with business restrictions and responding to requests for advice and to complaints. Mention was made of work that would be undertaken in relation to supermarkets (including the wearing of face coverings and the number of people allowed into retail space at any one time), which would commence shortly.

In terms of shielding support, this varied from that provided during the previous lockdown; Government direction was to encourage the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to access existing channels of support i.e. registering for online shopping priority slots, rather than Local Authority provision of food parcels, etc. Help Boro call handling demand during lockdown two was low, although longer term arrangements for Help Boro were being developed.

In terms of the vaccination programme, as at 6 January 2021, over 6,000 first vaccines had been administered to Middlesbrough residents and, to date, the North East had had the highest number of vaccines delivered. The programme currently focused on Health and Social Care Workers and people aged over 80, but was now moving into the over-75s. Vaccination sites in Middlesbrough comprised James Cook University Hospital, North Ormesby Health Village and Thorntree Surgery. Mass roll-out sites within Middlesbrough were also currently being explored, which would significantly increase access to vaccines.

Regarding community testing, the target population for testing was approximately 10-20% of residents aged 11yrs+, and equated to 11,985 -23,971 of the Middlesbrough population.

The proposed testing approaches would mitigate inequality, protect vulnerable people and reduce transmission in high risk settings. These approaches included routine testing of key workers; and testing in large high risk work places with a larger proportion of low paid jobs (e.g. food processing plants), as employees were more likely to live locally in areas of greater deprivation and therefore more susceptible to COVID-19.

Three targeted community testing sites had been identified initially: Newport Community Hub, North Ormesby Hub and Marton Sports Village. It was explained that as there was only one pool of staff available, support for testing sites would be off set against support for vaccination sites, which was the more important endeavour within the programme. Work was currently underway to address the staffing requirements which would, in the main, be met by Local Authority employees, i.e. casual staff and those able to be redeployed into alternative roles. Key partners, including the Fire Brigade and local Voluntary Community Support organisations, had offered support in terms of assisting local people to access testing and understand the provision available should they be required to isolate.

Targeted community testing would be deployed over a six-week period from early February 2021 and would consider economically deprived areas, BAME communities and areas with high positivity (factors that tended to overlap), but which had low testing rates. Circa. 500 tests per week were anticipated in those settings based on work undertaken in Grangetown, where just under 400 people had been tested in almost a one-week period. Targeted community testing was also about holding conversation and building community capacity on what people could do to protect themselves and their families, and increase understanding of COVID-19.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits delivered a presentation to the Board.

Revenues and Benefits were privileged to have access to all Middlesbrough residents and businesses, which consisted of 65,000 Dwellings and 4,500 Businesses.

Since the onset of COVID-19, the service had been a key player in delivering over £34.6m of financial support to both residents and businesses. A further circa. £11.5m would be provided from 5 January 2021. The Council had been both a key driver and player in ensuring the success of Middlesbrough's business community over the course of the pandemic, and was very keen to work closely with the community.

The service was currently delivering / had delivered 16 initiatives (a further three to follow), which cut across a number of services. These amounted to more than 12,000 additional hours of activity; providing financial support to partnering organisations to reduce food poverty. Circa. 3000 businesses had been supported, with additional funds to support circa. 2000 businesses in January 2021 and over the coming months. Circa. 40,000-plus residents had been provided with, or were due, additional financial assistance (e.g. a top-up to Council Tax reduction; funding for food hampers; free school meals, etc.); and provided funding to 12 partnering organisations to help them deliver solutions that underpinned what the community needed at the present time.

The service had paved the way in developing numerous policies, which were progressing at speed. It was highlighted that in a number of instances, the service was the first in the Tees Valley to launch and pay schemes. There had also been national recognition / press recognition for innovative ideas. A number of policies and reports had been prepared that sought Executive approval, and the Council was being compared to City counterparts due to the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes being put in place.

Details of the various support schemes / initiatives provided to businesses and residents were outlined to Members, which included: Mandatory and discretionary business grants; Lockdown grants; Council Tax support payments to 16,000 residents; Free school meals (i.e. turning around a solution for circa. 7600 children in 48 hours, with excellent feedback being received from the local community); and Winter fund payments (aimed at over 12,500 children, this was currently on phase three after two very successful phases, which had been opened to further families as a consequence of responding to local feedback). A seven stage scheme had also been devised to support couples and single individuals impacted financially by COVID-19, and 80 Community Support Crisis payments of £500.00 had been made. Some of the schemes had been delivered, whereas others were currently open. A process flow to assist businesses had been designed in order to facilitate their access to support. It was indicated that three further support schemes / initiatives had commenced from 5 January 2021: 'New Tier Four'; 'New Closed Scheme' (linked to tier four); and 'New Lockdown Grant'. With regards to the tier four grant, guidance had been issued on 13 January 2021, the Council went live with the solution yesterday, and made the first payment today, which was excellent. To date, 150 applications had been received.

Revenues and Benefits had been working with partnering organisations to reduce food poverty and the strategy focused on initial, mid, and longer-term solutions. A budget of £244,000 had been made available to fund a number of food / essentials programmes across the town, with such partner organisations as: Middlesbrough Foodbank; Together Middlesbrough; Middlesbrough Environment City; Echo Shops; and Cleveland Fire Brigade. Examples of activities undertaken were provided to Members.

The Revenues and Benefits Service had held Customer Services Excellence for over 18 years. On 7 and 8 January 2021, the service had been fully re-assessed for further three-year accreditation; the result was currently pending.

Following the presentations, the Chief Executive and the Mayor thanked all of the teams involved in the delivery of this work and commended the activity undertaken.

Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions of the Chief Executive, the Director of Public Health, and the Head of Revenues and Benefits.

A Member made reference to the 80 crisis payments paid out and queried how many applications were made above the 80 that were given out. In response, it was

explained that if individuals did not qualify for a crisis payment, i.e. they did not meet the policy, those individuals were allocated to a separate funding stream, and therefore most of those payments were processed via another scheme.

A Member referred to the vaccine rollout and raised concerns in respect of harder-to-reach communities / individuals who were not registered with GPs, and who may not understand the process. It was queried how all communities would be encompassed within the programme. In response, the Director of Public Health advised that work was currently taking place in this regard, with consideration being given as to how access into those communities could be achieved and information / support provided. It was critical that all communities were safe and highlighted that, should any Members have any concerns when vaccines were roll-outed to more general communities, to please raise them, as it was important to understand and address any potential barriers to vaccine take-up.

A Member made reference to vulnerable children and key workers currently attending and working in Middlesbrough's schools and queried the current position in terms of their progress and health. In response, the Director of Public Health advised that he was not aware of any particular issues. It was explained that teams based within Public Health and Education were supporting schools with the mitigation measures to be put in place around social distancing, wearing masks, etc., and assisting schools with local contact tracing details to minimise the size of bubbles when people needed to go home. The Director of Public Health would liaise with the Director of Prevention and Partnerships to determine whether any specific issues had been raised in relation to this, and feedback further information as applicable.

Members commended the work undertaken by the Revenues and Benefits Service and congratulated all involved for the achievements made and recognition received.

A Member made reference to lockdown three guidance in respect of education, and queried whether there were now more primary school children in Middlesbrough being identified as essential workers' children and vulnerable children. In response, the Director of Public Health advised that specific figures could be obtained, although it was understood that the numbers were higher during this lockdown than in the original lockdown. It was anticipated that there would be some national restriction implemented to address this.

A Member made reference to business grant funding and queried whether businesses were actively being contacted and advised as to the types of support available. In response, the Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that an email account had been set-up for the majority of these customers; reference was made to an email that had been circulated earlier in the day to over 600 businesses. Contact was also made via telephone and social media, with a very high success rate being achieved. The approach had been tailored to meet the needs of the businesses, which was based on the feedback received from them.

A Member made reference to supermarkets and small stores and commented upon the enforcement of wearing face masks. It was felt that support from the Police would be required to ensure compliance. In response, the Director of Public Health advised that the Public Protection Team would be commencing visits to supermarkets to determine compliance and take action as appropriate.

In response to a query regarding the number of Council employees testing positive for COVID-19, the Chief Executive advised that of all sickness at present, 15% was COVID-19 related. There had not been any major staffing issues arise as of yet; there had been some difficulties experienced in Adult Social Care and Children's

Social Care with COVID-19, but to date, there had been no operational problems encountered.

A Member made reference to Cleveland Police Officers and queried whether front-line Constables could be prioritised for the COVID-19 vaccination. In response, the Chief Executive advised that a very clear national priority list was being worked through. It was explained that within the staff groups, there was a group called 'other' - it was currently being looked at as to which roles this could include. It was explained that a number of different occupational groups were putting cases forward, but the programme was NHS-led and therefore outside of the Local Authority's control. The current focus in terms of the priority list were Health and Social Care-based roles. The Director of Public Health advised that the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations had a list of nine priority groups based on age and underlying health conditions; the only staff groups were Health and Social Care-based because they supported the vulnerable people. There was a move to move to other key work areas, such as Police and Fire personnel, with a national advice document recently being released. This would be reviewed to determine the level of influence that the Local Authority could bring. The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration advised that one of the top four priority groups that the Government planned to work through by the end of February was frontline Health and Social Care workers; a current vaccination programme involving the Council's Health and Social Care workers was currently underway at James Cook University Hospital. In Middlesbrough, there were approximately 4500 Health and Social Care workers, with reference being made to the new booking system that had been established.

A Member made reference to testing and high risk workers and queried whether school staff would be included within this. In response, the Director of Public Health advised that testing in schools was a national programme; school staff would be tested twice per week. The programme was currently operating in secondary schools and would be rolled-out to primary schools shortly. Mention was made of work undertaken with Teesside University in providing support to schools.

A Member made reference to schools and the ways in which the pandemic was being dealt with. It was queried whether uniformed guidance / policies / practice should be provided to schools to provide operational consistency. In response, the Director of Public Health advised that work was being undertaken with schools in order to share good practice; visits had also been undertaken to advise on mitigation measures and improve those as required. Schools were independent, but officers were advising and assisting as much as possible.

A Member raised a query regarding the varying strains of the virus and the effectiveness of the vaccination. In response, the Director of Public Health referred to the flu vaccination and the ways in which it targeted different strains of that virus. In 2017/2018, the vaccination did not align with the strains presented in that year, and therefore the respective mortality rate was particularly high. Vaccinations were developed on current strains and predictions made as to how they could mutate. COVID-19 would continue to mutate in the same way as flu did. It was understood that the vaccines currently available were as effective against the new variants that had emerged. Consistent review of this was undertaken by Public Health England and pharmaceutical companies.

Following a request for clarification in respect of a five day business grant payment, the Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that this related to a tier four payment (classed as a closed scheme). It was explained that when the Local Authority moved into tier four, there was a small amount of payment covered for that period. This was followed by a further payment for the lockdown period, and then a further

supplementary payment (therefore three payments linked to that one element).

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive, Director of Public Health and Head of Revenues and Benefits for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

AGREED that the information provided be noted, and the agreed action be undertaken.

20/66

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Councillor D Davison, was in attendance at the meeting to update the Board on her aims and aspirations, progress made to date, and to highlight any emerging issues relating to her portfolio. The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration, and the Director of Public Health, were also in attendance at the meeting.

The Executive Member explained that her portfolio area had been exceptionally busy since March 2020 due to COVID-19; a strategic plan had been put in place and would be progressed.

It was intended that Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough would be further developed to support those with dementia and their carers, and to further connect with businesses and the community. Work had commenced prior to the onset of COVID-19, with Marton Community Centre being approached during the initial stages (the Centre now held Dementia Friendly status). A training session for those Members involved in the operation of the Centre would be undertaken in the near future.

The Executive Member wished to pursue Age Friendly Community Status for Middlesbrough in order to reduce the prevalence and impact of loneliness and isolation, with support potentially being sought from other Elected Members to provide assistance in local communities.

It was intended that an integrated model of support for Middlesbrough, bringing together services of domestic abuse, homelessness, substance misuse and mental health to a vulnerable person's model, would be launched and delivered from 1 April 2021. Procurement of Public Health services had been completed; core teams would be placed within community settings in Newport and North Ormesby.

A virtual wellbeing network would be established to support communities. Three training sessions would be held and it was envisaged that all Elected Members would be invited to attend.

The Health and Wellbeing Regional Board had been established, of which the Executive Member had joined. Sessions allowed Local Authorities in the North East to share experiences and best practice.

The Executive Member attended regular safeguarding meetings; Middlesbrough held green status in this regard.

The work of the two directorates, Adult Social Care and Public Health, was commended by the Executive Member.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member made reference to dementia training that they had previously attended and commented that they would highly encourage others to attend wherever possible.

A Member made reference to Dementia Friendly Status and queried how this would be expanded to achieve more businesses / organisations signing up. In response, it was indicated that planned activities would include working with Elected Members and looking at areas, such as groups of retail units, to have all respective businesses signed up. In follow-up, the Member felt that a strategic and wider-ranging approach was required to ensure that a greater variety of organisations could be signed up, and indicated their support to assist with this.

In terms of a holistic approach to issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence and vulnerable people, clarification was requested as to which Executive Portfolio these aligned to, as some matters were believed to fall under the Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children's Services portfolio area. In response, it was explained that the two Executive Members had shared the work in this regard.

A Member raised concerns regarding the grouping together of substance abuse, domestic violence and homelessness, with consideration being given towards those accessing the facilities and the provision of safe space, and queried whether separation could be achieved. In response, the Executive Member advised that service delivery would be provided by different people; working together facilitated referrals from one service to another where required. The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration assured the Member that this point had been recognised. It was explained that bringing these services together and utilising a shared information system and process minimised the requirement for the same individual to access multiple settings to answer the same questions; reduced the safeguarding risk around information; and allowed adoption of a methodology across all of these groups based on response to trauma. In follow-up, the Member referred to perceived views of individuals accessing such support services; mention was made of an existing service that provided support from female members of staff to victims of domestic violence. It was felt harder to achieve this where, at the point of entry, there were multiple-facets, as opposed to specific services within one locality. In response, this was acknowledged: different services had been commissioned, but thorough consideration would be given as to how this would be branded and identified to avoid any negative perception.

A Member thanked the Executive Member for the assistance provided with enquires that had been raised on previous occasions.

A Member referred to dementia care training previously undertaken and requested that training for Elected Members (whether new or refresher) be undertaken, virtually if required. In response, the Executive Member advised that this would be looked into.

A Member queried how the process of signing more organisations / businesses up to Dementia Friendly Status would be achieved. In response, and to provide an example, it was explained that the Executive Member and an officer from Public Health had visited several retail businesses in Marton, provided details, and asked them to register as dementia friendly. A training session for staff would be arranged in due course. It was hoped that Elected Members would assist by approaching different businesses / organisations / venues and request that individuals register and undertake training. The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration advised that the basic Dementia Friendly training module focused on raising awareness; for businesses, the training focused on recognition and support provision for those with dementia. The Executive Member explained that when businesses applied to be dementia friendly, visits to the premises were made to determine suitability for those with dementia, with aspects such as entry points and flooring being looked at.

A Member referred to the Executive Scheme of Delegation and noted that there were 79 different items assigned to the portfolio area, which was significant. It was

commented that additional information could perhaps have been provided in relation to other areas not covered during the initial presentation, such as workplace health, obesity, physical activity strategies and mental health. In terms of COVID-19, it was felt that these areas were critical. In response, the extent of the portfolio was acknowledged. The Chair indicated to the Board that a copy of the Executive Member's portfolio remit had been provided in advance of the meeting, and therefore opportunity had been made available for specific areas to be identified in advance of the meeting.

A Member referred to the BAME community and difficulties encountered in working with individuals in respect of COVID-19. Support to assist the Executive Member in this regard was offered, which was gratefully accepted.

A Member referred to boarded properties being inhabited, which impacted upon physical and mental health, and queried whether any work was being carried out to audit these properties and make sure that landlords were held to account. In response, the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration advised that different routes would need to be taken to address specific circumstances, i.e. whether this referred to individuals whose property was in a state of disrepair and was therefore boarded-up; whether it was individuals who had broken into a previously boarded-up property and the landlord was therefore not aware; or whether it was about the poor condition of a rental property.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration, and the Director of Public Health, for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

AGREED that the information provided be noted, and the agreed action be undertaken.

20/67

STRATEGIC PLAN AND QUARTER TWO OUTTURN REPORT

The Head of Strategy, Information and Governance was in attendance at the meeting to present the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 – Progress at Quarter Two 2020/2021 report. The Head of Financial Planning and Support was in attendance to present the Revenue and Capital Budget – Projected Outturn Position as at Quarter Two 2020/2021 report. The Director of Finance was also in attendance.

The Head of Strategy, Information and Governance delivered a presentation to the Board.

The submitted report updated on the Strategic Plan approved by Council on 15 January 2020. As previously raised at OSB, COVID-19 had resulted in a serious impact on the Council's planning, which had resulted in a currently ongoing refresh of the Strategic Plan, with consultation activity being carried out. A revised document would be submitted to Council at the end of February 2021, and a Strategic Plan work plan to Executive in March 2021.

Details were provided in relation to the Council's 'People' Strategic Objectives, with reference being made to the impact of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and the trends that had been seen in Middlesbrough, which were reflected nationally (i.e. crime had decreased during lockdown and increased post-lockdown; the opposite had been seen in respect of ASB). It was difficult to take a long-term view of crime and ASB in Middlesbrough, but various initiatives were being implemented to help reduce this, e.g. installation of additional CCTV cameras; granting of new powers to Neighbourhood Safety Officers; and a grant funding scheme for household CCTV.

A Green Strategy consultation had been launched, which would address how the CO₂ emission gap would be met in following the reversal of the decision to implement fortnightly residual waste collections.

Children's Services had continued to see the number of children subject to statutory intervention rise, although Looked After Children did peak in July 2020 and had been reducing since. Reference was made to the Ofsted improvement plan and the achievements made to date, with positive feedback being received from the Commissioner and Department of Education.

Recovery work within the Town Centre had been paused due to tier three restrictions and subsequent lockdown

With regards to the 'Place' Strategic Objectives, it was indicated that the Investments Prospectus remained on target, but there were potential risks to it due to the economic downturn following COVID-19.

Regarding 'Business' Strategic Objectives, the economic impact of COVID-19 was still awaited to be seen, but claims had increased between May and September 2020.

Reference was made to the 'End Child Poverty Campaign' report, which had identified Middlesbrough's Local Authority area as the one where child poverty had increased most significantly in the years since 2014.

It was highlighted that all of the matters raised had been picked up as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

In terms risk management issues, a risk review had been undertaken. Reference was made to the Brexit trade and security deal, the impact of which would continue to be monitored and reviewed.

The Head of Financial Planning and Support delivered a presentation to the Board.

Regarding the revenue position, the total projected outturn at Quarter Two was £4.405m; COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 elements had been split to enable the effects of COVID-19 to be seen. There was a £9,000.00 underspend on the non-COVID-19 elements and an estimated financial effect in 2021 of £4.414m. The report detailed the non-COVID-19 elements of this, with the main variances per directorates being illustrated.

The main non-COVID-19 area was Children's Services; details of the current position were provided in the report.

COVID-19 spends pertaining to both Government funding and the costs were detailed in the report, however, it was noted that these figures did change rapidly.

Pressures / reductions on income to the Council, such as car parking and culture activities, were indicated, with details being provided in the report.

The Council had not been able to achieve some planned savings and there were also some pressures on Council Tax and Business Rates income.

In terms of the capital position, there was an underspend of circa. £4.6m against a revised budget of £55m, which was largely due to a delay in schemes as a result of COVID-19.

Details regarding reserves and borrowing reserves were provided. In terms of borrowing reserves at Quarter Two, the Council had £27.4m total reserves. It was

highlighted that not all of this was available for use; the figure to observe concerned the general fund, which was £10.6m. A minimum level of £9.4m had been set for 2020/2021. Reference was made to a report to Full Council on 2 September 2020, which detailed planned coverage of the projected overspend on COVID-19, and the use of the general fund reserve in that regard.

Appendix 1 of the report detailed virements, and Appendix 2 provided details of the schemes on the investment strategy.

The Director of Finance indicated that the position will have progressed since the end of Quarter Two; work was currently taking place in respect of Quarter Three, which would be submitted to Executive on 16 February 2021. It was noted that an Extraordinary OSB meeting would be taking place to consider the current budget consultation.

Following the update, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member queried the process and flexibility of transferring funds between different budgets. In response, the Head of Financial Planning and Support explained that the mechanism to achieve this would be to either identify the transferred fund as a virement appended to Executive reports, or to action it as part of the Council budget report, which was submitted annually in February.

A Member referred to Children's Services and expenditure in relation to Looked After Children, and queried progress regarding the expansion of the Authority's own care homes. In response, the Head of Financial Planning and Support explained that there had been a slight delay due to COVID-19 in some instances; reference was made to one care home that currently supported five children although had provision for nine. It was anticipated that nine children would be supported by 30 April 2021, which was positive progress. Reference was made to the recent declining number of Looked After Children, which was also positive.

The Director of Finance advised that the impact on Children's Services was a good example of how uncertain the impact of COVID-19 had been on individual budgets. Consideration was given to vulnerable families and individuals and the variables involved in providing support, particularly during the pandemic. It was indicated that the opening of new facilities was delayed by the first lockdown when all building work ceased, but all were now up and running, e.g. Daniel Court and the Future for Families Hub. Reference was made to Quarter Three results, which were currently being processed, which appeared to show a sustained reduction in the number of Looked After Children, and in the cost of placements of children. It was felt that this was reflective of the improvements in practice that had been achieved. Members were advised that when the budget was set, a £2.913m central demand pressure reserve had been allocated, which was part of the underspend on central budgets. This had been held against Children's Services as required, therefore those figures would vary slightly at Quarter Three.

A Member referred to page 38, paragraph 53 of the report, and raised concerns regarding the Council's estimated payment of £1.1m to SLM. It was explained that because SLM was a Leisure Trust, the Council would not be able to claim reimbursement from a Government fund. In response, the Head of Financial Planning and Support explained that this situation had now changed and the Council would be eligible to claim under the DCMS (and therefore that figure would reduce at Quarter Three). In follow-up, the Member queried the Council's responsibility for the buildings if SLM could not manage the three leisure centres. In response, the Chief Executive advised that the buildings were still under the Council's ownership; SLM purely managed the delivery of leisure services under a Council-issued contract. If SLM went out of business, those services would either be re-contracted or returned

back in-house. Restrictions set by the Government had forced closure of the centres, which had affected income levels; there were no operational issues.

A Member referred to paragraph 15 of the report and Public Health's projected budget savings of £266,000 due to reduced activity for demand-led services, such as stop smoking, etc., which was felt to be a large figure. It was queried whether any concerns had been raised in relation to this reduction, and whether there were any wider Public Health impacts anticipated through reduced uptake. In response, the Head of Financial Planning and Support advised that services had not been taken up due to COVID-19 restrictions; this was an issue that would need to be monitored by the service area. The Chief Executive noted the impact from both a financial and health service perspective. Reference was made to the COVID-19 Recovery Plan; a six-month piece of work to understand the impact of COVID-19 on public health outcomes, particularly where already existing gaps had widened, would be undertaken as part of this. It was anticipated that the finalised report would be released in circa. eight months' times.

A Member referred to paragraph 87 of the report and queried the criteria and expectations around financial expenditure for the £235,000 that Middlesbrough Development Company had set aside for the Council's Empty Homes Initiative. A response from the respective service area would be sought.

A Member requested clarification in relation to budgets and underspends. The Director of Finance advised that, as a basic rule, this followed the rule for key decisions. If £150,000 was to be moved from one area to another, this required Executive approval; a process that could be undertaken throughout the year. From a financial perspective, the bottom line would be monitored to ensure that underspending did not result in a negative position.

The Chair thanked the Head of Strategy, Information and Governance, the Head of Financial Planning and Support, and the Director of Finance for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

The Chair reminded all in attendance of the Extraordinary OSB meeting in respect of the budget consultation, which had been scheduled for 27 January 2021.

AGREED that the information provided be noted, and the agreed action be undertaken.

20/68

TEESWIDE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020 AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020/2021

The Independent Chair of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB), and the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration were in attendance at the meeting to present information regarding TSAB's annual report 2019/2020 and strategic plan 2020/2021.

The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration provided an introductory overview of the TSAB, providing details in relation to structure and functioning. It was explained that this had been a particularly challenging year for TSAB in light of COVID-19, but work had continued remotely, with face-to-face visits being undertaken where risk assessments allowed. It was felt that this continued delivery was testament to the dedication and flexibility of the staff involved.

The Independent Chair introduced himself to the Board and outlined details of his professional background and experience. Members were appraised of the Chair's intentions for the TSAB over the coming year, which would focus on the examination of cross-cutting issues, such as health, community safety and safeguarding, and

consider how these could be progressed to further the Board's efficiency and effectiveness. The report to be presented today was retrospective rather than forward-looking, but feedback from Members in respect of the Board's priorities for 2021/2022 would be welcomed.

The Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration explained that there was a statutory requirement within Adult Social Care to have a Safeguarding Adults Board; TSAB comprised six statutory partners (i.e. Cleveland Police; Hartlepool Borough Council; Middlesbrough Council; Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council; Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council; and South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group and Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group), as well as 18 non-statutory partners.

Reference was made to the range of sub-groups that operated under the main Board. These were: Communication and Engagement; Learning, Training and Development; Operational Leads; Performance, Audit and Quality; and Policy, Practice and Procedure. The Audit and Quality sub-group was chaired by the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration. It was acknowledged that although there was one shared over-arching group of policies and procedures, safeguarding was undertaken slightly differently across Tees, and therefore there was merit in the partners committing to work in a more consistent way to achieve a greater utility from the data available.

Members heard that in terms of investigative work and adult safeguarding, statutory investigations entitled Section 42 Enquiries were carried out. There had been a 66% increase in the number of Section 42 Enquiries for adults aged 18-24 in the last year.

There had been a decrease across the locality in respect of Safeguarding Concerns received from care homes. Although this was welcomed, it also raised some questions as to why this was the case. Consideration was given to COVID-19 and related restrictions that had resulted in fewer staff entering care homes/settings. Work was currently taking place to determine reasoning around this.

There had been a 70% increase in Safeguarding Concerns received from NHS secondary care settings, and more cases identified from Social Care itself. It had been a busy year, and it was indicated that the numbers would stand out as being anomalous when the year was looked back on in the future.

The report detailed a variety of statistics in relation to the type of abuse being reported, including neglect; acts of commission; physical abuse; financial abuse; and modern slavery. A Breakdown of the number of Safeguarding Concerns raised in each Local Authority area was also provided.

A business plan was included in the report, which detailed aims around protection, prevention, partnership and professional accountability. The TSAB documents were public and available on the TSAB website.

It was highlighted that the purpose of the Board was to educate and raise awareness around adult safeguarding. A Quality Assurance Framework operated on an annual cycle, which provided opportunity to assess whether a satisfactory safeguarding service was being delivered; a key aspect of the Independent Chair's role was to hold the statutory partners to account. It was indicated that there had been an improvement in Middlesbrough's Quality Framework returns this year.

The Independent Chair referred to the TSAB website and highlighted the array of information available for people to access. Mention was also made to the live consultation activity currently taking place, which was concerned with TSAB's 2021/2022 priorities. It was felt that, in particular, large change would relate to

COVID-19 and how the Board responded to that.

In response to an enquiry regarding the discharge of individuals with COVID-19 from hospitals into care homes, the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration advised that in the early stages of the pandemic, there had been some individuals discharged from hospital without clarity on their COVID-19 status. This had been in response to direction from Government, which was concerned with getting people out of hospital, and was at a time when adherence to normal barriers and PPE was a sufficient response. This had changed over the course of the pandemic. It was explained that the instruction from the Department of Health and Social Care prior to Christmas was that anyone being discharged with a positive COVID-19 status was to be transferred to a designated setting, which was a care home that had particularly been assessed by the CQC as being safe to accept individuals who were COVID-19 positive. These had been set-up in Middlesbrough, and still operated, although they had not been widely used. It was felt that the reasoning for this was that if individuals had been COVID-19 positive and released to a care home, in most instances they had been quite unwell, and by the time they were fit enough to be released from hospital, the isolation period would have passed. The situation was far more stable now than it was previously.

Following an enquiry raised in relation to restrictions around care home visits, consideration was given to the impact that this had had on residents, their families and care home staff. A number of elements were noted, including: the need for care home staff to balance individuals' rights against collective safety; infection prevention control and associated provisions; and focus upon the vaccination programme in moving forwards.

The Chair thanked the Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration and the Independent Chair of TSAB for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

NOTED

20/69 **FINAL REPORT - CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - SOCIAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION**

Item deferred.

20/70 **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Chairs / Vice Chairs provided verbal / written updates in respect of the work undertaken by their respective panels since the last meeting of the Board.

An Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel meeting in respect of Members' Communications had been scheduled for 27 January 2021.

A discussion ensued in relation to the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel's investigation into the topic of pest control, with consideration being given to such matters as: Issues raised across Middlesbrough; Payment for pest control services; Enforcement around pigeon feeding; and Potential facilitators for infestation.

NOTED

20/71 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 4.00 P.M.**

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had been scheduled for Thursday, 11 February 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

NOTED

20/72

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

Additional Scrutiny Meetings

The Chair advised that an Extraordinary OSB meeting in respect of the Council's budget consultation had been scheduled for 27 January 2021 at 4.00 p.m.

The Call-in meeting in respect of Nunthorpe Grange Farm Disposal, which was adjourned on 18 December 2020, would reconvene on 29 January 2021 at 1.00 p.m.

Following the reversal of the decision to implement fortnightly residual waste collections, the Call-in meeting to consider this, which was adjourned on 18 December 2020, would no longer be required.

NOTED