

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Tuesday 29 April 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), C Cooper, J Ewan, D Jackson, T Livingstone (Vice-Chair), A Romaine and L Young

OFFICERS: S Lightwing, J McNally, H McShane and S Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Were received on behalf of Councillors J Cooke, and D McCabe

24/83 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present and read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

24/84 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

24/85 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 11 MARCH 2025**

The minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 11 March 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/86 **BARRIERS TO REGENERATION - SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Neighbourhood Officer and Neighbourhood Safety Officer were in attendance at the meeting and provided a presentation in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour in the town centre.

The Neighbourhood Officers worked closely with other Council services, Police, local business, other statutory organisations, the voluntary sector, community groups and individuals to address anti-social behaviour and criminal activity in the north locality of Middlesbrough.

Examples of anti-social behaviour taking place in the town centre included begging, street drinking and rough sleeping. The Neighbourhood Officers did not detect crime but they were an established source of information and worked well with other agencies.

The team's approach to the issues included both support and enforcement. The support offered included:

- Work with youth service providers and youth justice service to offer diversionary activities.
- Outreach work with Rough Sleeper Team (usually between 05.30 and 08.00 hours).
- Outreach work with Treatment services.
- Outreach in the Night Time Economy (usually between 22.00 and 02.00 hours).

Enforcement carried out by the team included:

- Issuing warnings.
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs).
- Community Protection Warnings and Notices.
- Civil Injunctions.
- Criminal Behaviour Orders.

In terms of youth anti-social behaviour the team would issue a warning, second warning, acceptable behaviour contract, and then potentially court action and a civil injunction. Before

that, at stages 1 and 2 the team would work with young people alongside The Junction. A recent example was a rap song written and performed by a group of young people with ABCs that had been aired on Radio Tees.

In relation to assisting parents whose children were involved in anti-social behaviour, the Officer stated that often parents were struggling to support their children. The Youth Justice Service would do family work with them and social care and schools to provide support.

The team worked also worked with those at risk of criminal exploitation and used their partnership approach to work with young people and parents. The team also made referrals to social care when appropriate and linked in with the Youth Justice Service and the Police to do home visits when ABCs had been breached.

A weekly outreach session took place every Thursday and someone from the homeless team and the Neighbourhood Officer would visit locations where begging and rough sleepers were located to try and give support. The Salvation Army and Streets Ahead also provided intelligence to the Neighbourhood Officers.

Prior to the end of 2023, the Council had taken a Civil Injunction approach to anti-social behaviour but were now using Community Protection Notices to tackle it. Where and individual's behaviour was persistent and having a detrimental effect on the area, a warning would be issued. If that individual did not engage with the support offered, this would be followed with a Fixed Penalty Notice. If there was no improvement, a Criminal Behaviour Order could be issued which made the anti-social behaviour an arrestable offence. The Police had also started using this power.

The team were also able to ask for licence reviews on commercial premises. An example was given in relation to a business in Newport Ward that was considered to be selling alcohol irresponsibly. Following a warning that the licence could be reviewed there had been no further issues.

Recent outcomes for the team included:

- 14 Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) active: Council-led: 9, Police-led: 5.
- 22 Criminal Protection Notices active.
- 52 Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) active.
- 5 First Warnings to young people.
- 3 Second Warnings to young people.
- 44 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) – The Council had taken a zero-tolerance approach in the town centre.
- 8 ABC Breaches.
- 1 Civil Injunctions.
- 1 Youth CBO.
- 2 Licence Reviews on commercial premises.

The team continued to work with businesses and make themselves known to them as a first point of contact with the Council. The team also continued work to reduce begging across the town and one of the most prolific individuals was currently in prison for a breach of CPO.

There was also a campaign in relation to street drinking with the most prolific offenders being identified and the areas where they congregated. Work was also ongoing with Licensing Officers to ascertain where they were purchasing alcohol. Where people were alcohol dependent the team tried to get them support initially and if unsuccessful would go down the enforcement route.

The team also liaised with other local authorities to identified individuals causing anti-social behaviour who might move from one area to another. It was highlighted that whilst people begging in the town centre could be banned, they would then move elsewhere. The Officer explained that within the CPO there would be an exclusion zone, where the begging was most prolific, and a second condition would be imposed that they could not beg in England and Wales. So wherever that person chose to go and beg would qualify as a breach of the CPO and they could be arrested. Rather than push the problem onto another area, the CPO would attempt to address the behaviour. A record of CPOs was held by the Police.

On a day-to-day basis, the amount of beggars in the town centre had reduced. However, it was important to continue to address the issue. Members discussed the importance of addressing perception against reality, in terms of promoting Middlesbrough Town Centre as being a safe place to visit. There were currently 8 North Wardens, 3 Police Officers and 1 PCSO operating on a shift basis.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

24/87

EMPTY PROPERTIES - DRAFT FINAL REPORT

A copy of the Draft Final Report on Empty Properties had been circulated with the agenda.

Members discussed the information provided and some minor amendments were suggested. Members also discussed recommendations for inclusion in the Final Report.

AGREED as follows that:

1. The following recommendations were included in the Final Report:

A. Introduce a charge of 100% Empty Property Council Tax Premium after year 1 instead of year 2 which it is currently.

B. Impose the maximum premium for properties which have been empty for 10 years or more.

C. Ensure that all enforcement powers available to the Council such as Completion Notices and Demolition Orders in relation to empty properties are utilised where appropriate and justify any failure to do so.

D. Produce a database of derelict empty properties and report annually to the Executive and/or the Place Scrutiny Panel.

E. Review empty properties across the town by carrying out data matching using the electoral register, council tax list and business rate list.

F. Make greater use of Compulsory Purchase Orders for residential properties and smaller commercial properties such as small shops below flats. For commercial properties investigate schemes such as the High Street Rental Auctions scheme.

G. Explore how the Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme can be made into less of a deterrent to letting out empty properties, by allowing landlords to pay the Selective Landlord License fee over 60 monthly payments instead of up front. Also by providing a waiver of future payments if the landlord sells the property.

H. Encourage Social Housing Providers to demolish uneconomical properties that cannot be brought back into use or encourage them to sell to other developers or owner occupiers and to reinvest any money generated into their current stock.

I. Investigate if CPOs can be issued for unsafe buildings so that they can be demolished by the Council and associated costs passed onto the owner.

J. Explore ways of getting long-term empty properties back into use through affordable rents/full market rents or owner occupation as well as social rent.

K. Investigate if empty social housing properties that are difficult to let could be used by the council to provide temporary accommodation.

L. Explore all possible channels of funding and work with more developers, social housing providers and private landlords to bring empty properties back into use, including office to residential conversions.

M. Explore alternative ways of dealing with non-residential empty properties that have been taken out of the rateable value ratings where the owner shows no intention of developing the property. Seek to ask Government to change rules on the valuable rating system so not to be

exploited/abused by landlords.

2. additional recommendations in relation to the value rating system for empty properties and the use of other regulatory powers would be drafted and added to the final report.
3. a final version of the report would be circulated to all Panel Members with an opportunity for further amendments/comments, with final approval delegated to the Chair of the Panel.
4. the final report would be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.

24/88 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on agenda items discussed at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 9 April 2025.

The Place Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on Home to School Transport was approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and would be submitted to the Executive for consideration.

24/89 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

The Crustacean Deaths Working Group's final report following the investigation into the mass crustacean die-off along the north east coast had been published.

The die-off had originally been attributed to dredging operations carried out during the construction of Teesport. However, the Working Group's investigations had concluded that whilst the dredging operations may have been a contributory factor, there were multi-causal factors for the die off.

Concern had been identified in relation to inadequate monitoring systems and the report had made some recommendations for future improvements.

A copy of the full report would be circulated to Panel Members and the next Overview and Scrutiny Board Update Report to Council would advise all Members of the outcome of the investigation.

NOTED