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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 25 February 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe, B Hubbard (Substitute) (Substitute for M Saunders), J Kabuye, L Lewis, I Morrish, J Platt, G Wilson and J Young

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors T Furness

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Bonner, R Horniman and E Scollay

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors T Mohan, M Saunders and Z Uddin

25/62 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

25/63 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 28 JANUARY 2026**

A Member stated they had identified several changes in the minutes and had spoken to the Democratic Services Officer about them.

With the Board's approval, the Democratic Services Officer agreed to implement the changes.

Notwithstanding the proposed changes, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 28 January 2026 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

25/64 **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair of the Place Panel advised that at the last meeting of the Panel on 16 February updates were received around flood risk assessments and RIPA. The Panel also finalised the recommendations of its Barriers to Regeneration Report and discussed the town's bicentennial celebrations.

The Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel's next meeting was to be on the 9 March where the updates would be received on its review into Out of Area Placement and a recent Ofsted inspection.

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel had last met on the 23 February where information had been received relating to its review into Violence Against Women and Girls. The Panel had also considered its final report into Healthy Placemaking and would be submitted to the next meeting of OSB. The Panel had also received updates relating to CQC updates.

25/65 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair presented the Executive Forward wWork programme and sought questions from the Board.

Members requested more information relating to the forward plan entries relating to Pest Control and Bereavement Services.

25/66 **FORWARD PLAN ACTIONS PROGRESS**

The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that an email had been circulated to the Board providing an update.

25/67 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - DEVELOPMENT**

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Development to the meeting and invited him to deliver his presentation.

- The Executive Member for Development delivered his presentation to the Board and made the following points.
- The Development portfolio contributed to the Mayor's priorities which included fair access to high quality homes, securing well paid jobs, strengthening the local economy and strengthening local transport links.
- Key staff within the Regeneration and Housing Directorate were provided to the Board.
- In terms of progress over the previous 12 months, all scheduled projects had begun which included construction of the Nunthorpe Community Centre, redevelopment of the Old Town Hall and Outwood Riverside Academy. It was clarified that, so far as was known, all school years would move into the new school together rather than on a phased basis.
- With regards to the Town Centre the Council had limited control over this other than creating a suitable environment for businesses to grow. Members discussed the status of several units in the town centre which included the provision for seating outside those units and that Stack had extended its lease.
- It was clarified that footfall within Captain Cook Square was excellent which, in turn, helped attract inward investment.
- It was clarified that Stack opened in approximately Christmas 2024.
- Members discussed the possibility of small-scale events in Captain Cook Square and how some seasonal events had already taken place.
- In terms of housing, there was a public examination of the Local Plan taking place during the following month which provided residents the opportunity to comment on the Local Plan.
- A Member queried the status of an access road on a housing development. It was clarified that the road was to be used for site access only and had no definitive opening date.
- Church House was also cited as an example of housing development as this was being brought back into use. However, it was unclear how much of the building had been occupied.
- The Chair queried if the same developer for Church House had plans for other properties they owned in the town. It was clarified that a report was scheduled for consideration by Executive regarding how the Council engages with partners in this regard.
- The status of the Gresham Development was queried and it was clarified this was a TVCA led development, but it was understood that the scheme was considering a mix housing types on the site.
- The Council was also working with strategic partners to improve bus routes in the town.
- Looking forward to the next 12 months several important developments were planned. These included Middlehaven which had seen a credible developer with access to investment opportunities, taking interest in the site to develop the area with the Old Town Hall as the centre piece. Members discussed the possibility that some of the land on the Middlehaven site was contaminated due to its industrial heritage. It was clarified that much of the land had been cleaned up but there was still work to do.
- More development was underway in the town centre which included BohoX and the employment hub.
- A discussion took place about what enforcement powers the Council had in terms of acquiring empty properties and redeveloping them. It was clarified the Council's position on such properties was limited. Following a question about the status of the former Junction Pub, it was confirmed there was no information about this.
- The Chair asked if there was a stakeholder strategy for development in the town and used Stockton Council's development of the riverside as an example of a strategy at play. It was commented that developments in Stockton were on a larger scale to those in Middlesbrough. It was also commented that the MDC had a role to play in certain developments in Middlesbrough over which the Council had little control.
- It was confirmed there was no further development to be undertaken in Centre Square. However, there was some redevelopment work around the lake area, but this was in keeping with the lake. It was also hoped that significant lettings would be made for Centre Square one and two, respectively.

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- The Chief Executive commented that work was being carried out to improve the way in which the Council engaged with external partners. This work was, in part, informed by the recent LGA peer challenge. It was important that all the elements of development in the town linked together, such as improved housing for younger people and for an improved nighttime economy.
- Following a query about incorporating a casino into such developments it was confirmed there were no plans for this.
- The Chief Executive and Executive Member commented that development plan needed to be managed rather than too tightly controlled as this may stifle effective development. It was also important that development plans move beyond political terms and had longer term outlooks such as investment in Family Hubs.
- Members discussed the possibility of using heritage assets to attract visitors to the town, with the Transporter Bridge used an example. However, it was acknowledged there was a lot of competition from other areas this regard.
- It was clarified that of the 3,500 houses proposed as part of the Middlehaven development, there would be a broad mix of housing to suit a variety of need and tastes, including flats and maisonettes. This would be delivered in three phases over 10 years.
- A discussion took place about the need to improve road networks alongside development opportunities to ensure business growth. It was acknowledged there was a need to balance effective road networks with development works and that Place Leaders Partnership would consider this.
- A Member commented that developments in the north of the town could potentially ease pressure on the south of the town where the majority of development was taking place.
- The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Development for his presentation.

AGREED that the information presented be noted.

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OSB REVIEW - POVERTY, ITS IMPACT, AND EFFORTS TO TACKLE IT

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive to the meeting and invited him to provide his information.

The Council conducted a poverty sprint which brought key staff together to understand what the key issues were concerning poverty. Following this, an action plan was created with associated recommendations. An updated version of the action plan showed that good progress had been made against the actions, but that it was sometimes difficult for work to develop traction. This was not a lack of will from officers, it was more about confusion on how to proceed.

The current Council Plan, introduced in 2023, followed a standard format. At the time of the Plan's creation, it was discussed if the Council Plan should have been thematic or not. Leeds Council was used as an example whereby it was decided that all Council activity was undertaken with a view of improving the lives of Children and Young People. Adopting this approach gave the Council a clear lens to view their activity. Middlesbrough adopted a pillar approach to its Council Plan, which meant Council business was delivered according to themed pillars. While this meant business was undertaken in the correct manner, it led to a question of whether the Council should adopt a poverty strategy.

There was also a need to question how the Council framed poverty, namely should it be viewed via social value and childhood enrichment. Many actions arising from the Council Plan applied to all of these. Part of the confusion for officers was the number of policy lenses available, oftentimes these were viewed simultaneously.

There was a need to corral this issue in a language that was understandable. The example of the Blair governments was cited during which language was changed which showed poverty was not just about a lack of money. This included the concept of social exclusion which included if a family bread winner lost their job, money would still be available, but that family would experience more challenging times and could lead to a lack of social participation. Adopting this approach encompassed a range of other factors associated with poverty.

How was approach was articulated involved political choice. The Executive Forward Plan was not quite where the Chief Executive hoped it would be, and some systems did work in the way they should. As such, reports were scheduled for Executive consideration about refreshing the Council Plan and how to enhance the Council's performance framework, with the reintroduction

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of balanced score cards cited as an example. There would be regular performance clinics with individual departments and part of this would be contributions to thematic pieces of work. There was a question about how the Council simplified the number of lenses the Council looked through.

At this point in the meeting the Chief Executive invited questions from the Board.

A Member queried how integrating poverty into a thematic approach could be applied to all Council functions, using Planning and the current emphasis of building executive homes rather than social housing. The Chief Executive commented that while there may not always be perfect fit, there were areas it could work such as working in partnership with external stakeholders to secure empty properties and bringing them back into use.

It was commented that addressing poverty affected all aspects of Middlesbrough and queried how this could be embedded effectively. It was clarified that, regarding anchor institutions, they would always have their own approach to this issue, but that working in partnership with them was important. This also involved political direction and that a range of work was being undertaken to capture the impact of this work but there was no one solution.

A conversation took place about how communities were planned and how this could contribute to alleviating poverty, with Coulby Newham used as an example as this area was based on a mix of income levels.

Members discussed how the work of the Integrated Care Boards could support the poverty agenda. It was also commented that Integrated Care Boards were undergoing significant reorganisation and as such there was some uncertainty around them.

A Member queried if the Council was embedding a Poverty Strategy and had the Council spoken to key partners around this. The Chief Executive clarified that improved working with outside organisations was a key outcome of the corporate peer challenge. As such the Council was engaged with a consultancy about it can best engage with young people as this was a key component of the Council's work.

A Member queried if Council Planners were considering green spaces as part of the Poverty Sprint. It was clarified that the Poverty Sprint did not discuss green space specifically, but rather about housing capacity. It was commented that caution should be used when using the term "poverty", as some individuals may have met a definition of poverty but not identified as such.

A Member commented that it would be useful for the Board to have access to Leeds Council Plan.

ORDERED that

1. The Leeds Council Plan be circulated to Members.
2. The information presented be noted.

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

None.