

Report of:	<i>Richard Horniman – Director of Regeneration and Culture Councillor Eric Polano – Executive Member for Regeneration</i>
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Submitted to:	<i>13 October 2021</i>
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Subject:	Tackling Eyesore Sites
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)
That the Executive approves investment of up to £1million to tackle eyesore land and property in Middlesbrough, including the possible acquisition of sites if the approved business case recommends it.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?¹
Decision	Yes	No	No

Contribution to delivery of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan		
People	Place	Business
Working with communities and other public services in Middlesbrough to improve the lives of local people.	Securing improvements in Middlesbrough’s housing, infrastructure and attractiveness improving the town’s reputation, creating opportunities for local people and improving our finances.	Promoting investment in Middlesbrough’s economy and making sure we work as effectively as possible to support our ambitions for People and Place.

Ward(s) affected
All wards.

What is the purpose of this report?

1. To ask that the Executive approves investment of up to £1million to tackle eyesore land and property in Middlesbrough, including the possible acquisition of sites, if the approved business case recommends it.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. The decision affects all wards and is a key decision.

Report Background

3. A previous report about addressing eyesore sites was approved by Executive in March 2020. It set out ambitious plans to address eyesore sites and this report is to ask for the investment to realise these plans.
4. Where acquisition of a site is being considered a business case will be drawn up on a site by site basis. If the business case is approved by the Directors of Regeneration and Culture and Finance then contact will be made with the owner to try and voluntarily acquire the site in accordance with the Council's Asset Acquisition Policy.
5. Where owners will not improve their eyesore sites or dispose of the site to someone who will improve it then the Council has a range of enforcement options that may be considered including the use of compulsory purchase powers.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

6. That the Executive approves investment of up to £1million to tackle eyesore land and property in Middlesbrough, including the possible acquisition of sites if the approved business case recommends it.

Why is this being recommended?

7. Pro-active action has been used to tackle eyesore sites in Middlesbrough since at least 2009 and significant progress has been made. The acquisition of sites will allow solutions to be found for the most prominent and/or problematic long-term eyesore sites. This supports the Council's Strategic Plan.
8. This report has not been examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or by a Scrutiny Panel.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

9. Taking no action – maintaining the status quo is not recommend as it will lead to eyesore land and property continuing to have a negative impact on communities, blighting the attractiveness of the town and preventing opportunities for Middlesbrough's economy.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

10. The decision may mean the acquisition of eyesore sites and/or enforcement action, in accordance with relevant legislation. The Council already has processes in place to acquire properties through the Asset Acquisition Policy. The Council regularly undertakes a wide variety of successful enforcement action and has also previously undertaken successful Compulsory Purchase Orders.
11. Action and intervention on individual properties will be subject to the necessary legal advice.

Financial

12. The decision to allocate a maximum of £1m to tackling eyesore sites in Middlesbrough will allow the acquisition of sites and/or the use of enforcement action to prevent the sites from blighting local communities.
13. Where acquisition is being considered a business case for acquisition will be drawn up for each proposed site including the reasons for the proposed acquisition and plans for the intended future use of the site, along with anticipated costs. As mentioned above in the report business cases will need approval from the Directors of Regeneration and Culture and Finance.

Policy Framework

14. This course of action supports the Council's Strategic Plan.

Equality and Diversity

15. No protected groups will be negatively impacted by the decision.

Risk

16. The following high level risks identified in the Strategic and Directorate Risk Registers, will be reduced as a consequence of the market intervention enabled by the recommended decisions:
 - a. O1-005 - If poor economic growth occurs, then this will reduce public and private sector investment in the town, including town centre retail, housing development and business.
17. The risks regarding the acquisition of eyesore sites will be reduced by the production of a business case for each site.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

18. Business cases for individual sites will be drawn-up to determine the costs and benefits of acquiring proposed sites.
19. Once a business case has been approved by the Director of Regeneration and Culture, and the Director of Finance and Support, contact will be made with the owner (where known) to attempt to voluntarily acquire the property.

20. Where voluntary acquisition is not possible and there is not a reasonable prospect of the site being improved to an acceptable standard or returned to use in the near future the Compulsory Purchase process may be commenced.

Appendices

21. None.

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Address Eyesore Buildings and Sites	17.03.20

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