

Overview Report

Place Select Committee

Overview Meeting 2020

24 February 2020

Economic Growth and Development Services

Context

Members are well aware that as a Council we have had to adapt to funding reductions of £68 million over the last seven years and future funding is uncertain.

The challenge for all Members is to ensure that decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered are within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as the uncertain financial position, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction. Members are reminded of the four policy principles that support our decision-making:

- **Protect the vulnerable by**
 - protecting people who are subject to or at risk of harm
 - helping people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
 - supporting people who are financially excluded
 - assisting people whose circumstances make them vulnerable

- **Create economic prosperity by**
 - ensuring the businesses and people of Stockton-on-Tees are part of a thriving and productive Tees Valley economy

- **Tackle inequality through improving**
 - health
 - job opportunities, skills and training
 - educational attainment for all
 - affordable housing and fuel poverty
 - financial inclusion

- **Help people to be healthier by**
 - providing mainstream services that are available where needed
 - providing preventative services that are available where needed

It is within this context that the Select Committee is invited to undertake their overview duties.

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis. This was reported to Executive Scrutiny Committee in July and November 2019, and then forwarded to members of each Select Committee with key issues highlighted by the Chair at their next meeting.

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Economic Growth and Development Services – Richard McGuckin - Director

Relevant Services include:

- **Highways, Transport and Design Services:** Highway Network and Flood Risk Management, Transport Strategy and Road Safety, Urban Landscape, Design Services and Building Control.
- **Economic Growth:** Strategic Development, Planning Development, Business and Enterprise, Environmental Policy, Capital Programmes and Projects.
- **Housing Services:** Private Sector Housing, Housing Regeneration and Investment, Homelessness and Housing Solutions and Strategic Housing Services.

Council Plan 2019-2022

The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

The 2019-22 objectives for the Economic Regeneration and Transport and Environment Housing themes are attached at Appendix 1.

Emerging Issues

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows:

Government's commitment to eradicating rough sleeping

- SBC has worked with our NE LA partners to secure additional 'one-off' monies to pilot new service initiatives and will be seeking additional funding for 2020/21 (and will be lobbying for longer-term funding commitments).

Targeted Action Areas (North Thornaby and Central Stockton)

- Continuation of extensive partnership working i.e. working with Private Landlords (PLuSS) to establish a landlord-led accreditation scheme, supported by a proactive LA inspection and enforcement regime. Other examples include joint initiatives with colleagues in Community Safety, Private Sector Housing and Cleveland Police to address anti-social behaviour and problematic properties/tenants and landlords.

Establishment of a joint partnership arrangement with Keepmoat Houses

- Which has culminated in the commencement of the Victoria Housing estate regeneration project ('Sycamore Way') which will deliver a range of family and older persons accommodation for sale and rent.

Continue Depreciation of our Highway Assets

- The current cost to replace Stockton's highway asset would be £1.67bn. Due to a decade of austerity and the ever increasing demand on maintaining our asset it continues to depreciate with the Government only allocating the Council approximately half the budget it needs to keep our assets (carriageways, footways, street lights, bridges etc.) at a steady state.

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Opportunities for Capital Investment in Transport Related Projects

- The Council working in partnership with the Tees Valley Combined Authority has secured funding for a number of transport related projects such as improvements at Eaglescliffe Station, Elton Interchange and along the A689. There are also a number of other bids that have been submitted to Government awaiting decisions for further investment (Tees Crossing, Porttrack Relief Road, Billingham Station and further substantial improvements along the A689 and A177.)

Decarbonisation of the Transport Network

- Transport is now the number one producer of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the UK. In 2018 transport accounted for a third of all UK carbon dioxide emissions with the large majority of emissions from transport being road transport. A key challenge will be balancing the region's economic growth aspirations and the need to reduce CO₂ emissions from road transport.

Town Centres development

- In February Cabinet are giving consideration to the approval of large scale change in Stockton town centre that will include consolidation of the Council's retail assets, demolition and clearance of the Castlegate Centre and development of a new riverside park and commercial development on the south end of the site. The rationale supports the need to reduce retail and introduce new uses into the town centre and also seeks to maximise the opportunity to secure funding from the Government's future high streets fund.
- Consultation has recently concluded on the Borough's other five town centres and is focused on key questions that have arisen from known issues and stakeholder engagement across those communities. The detailed feedback from the consultation and next steps is yet to emerge but will be given consideration in the coming weeks.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Following the adoption of the local plan in January 2019 a review and consolidation of supplementary planning documents is underway and work towards seeking approval and subsequent adoption of those is expected to be complete in the first half of 2020 following extensive consultation.

Climate Change

- In 2019 the Council reported a 51% reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions since 2010 but work to continue to de-carbonisation agenda continues apace and the current work focuses on exploring opportunities for green energy generation while support to communities to reduce fuel poverty remains a high priority.

Warm Homes Fund

- The Council is leading the scheme for the Tees Valley, which will deliver heating to some of the most vulnerable in the Borough over the next few years.

Business Support

- Work to support the Borough's 5,500 businesses and secure additional inward investment continues. Enterprise and activity in schools remains a successful programme and start up support is currently focused in Town Centres.
- Work is ongoing to secure further employment land at Durham Lane to complement Belasis Business Park so that the Council can directly influence inward investment and in parallel work to better understand the changing face of business accommodation

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across the Borough is being undertaken in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Potential Areas for In-Depth Review

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-21. Using the information provided as part of the performance updates and this Overview meeting, the Committee is invited to identify potential topics for review within this theme.

Potential topics will be considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 24 March.

Disabled Facilities Grants

The Council currently receives around £1.8M per year to support interventions in peoples homes to support their independent living through physical adaptations. The scrutiny process will examine key lines of enquiry around its impact and how that reduces the burden on health and social care.

Highway Asset Management

The Council has an annual programme to manage and maintain highway assets that underpin the transport network funded through the Government's Local Transport Plan. Funding associated with maintaining assets is never sufficient to reduce the backlog of maintenance requirements which now stands at over £1.6BN. The scrutiny process will examine requirements for investments for the coming years with a particular understanding of the significant requirements to maintain the Council's bridges and structures stock which is often hidden investment but requires large financial interventions.

Sustainability

The Council continues programmes to support affordable warmth for its most vulnerable residents and also interventions to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which all support the objective of ensuring the Council's operations remain as sustainable as possible. The scrutiny process will examine interventions deployed to date towards carbon reduction and the ambition to achieve net zero.

Appendix 1

Council Plan 2019 – 2022 - Economic Regeneration and Transport

Vision

Our vision is of an economically prosperous Borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills.

Key objectives:

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- Have a successful business base where existing companies have experienced sustainable growth and new businesses have been created and attracted
- Provide sufficient sites and premises in vibrant, connected and distinctive places that businesses are attracted to
- Ensure that people have the opportunity to learn/ train and gain the appropriate level of skills to maximise the employment opportunities available in the economy

Council Plan 2019 – 2022 - Environment and Housing

Vision

Our vision is to make the Borough a better place to live and a more attractive place to do business with clean streets, carefully tended parks and open spaces and affordable and desirable housing.

Key objectives:

- Provide sufficient sites and premises in vibrant, connected and distinctive places that people choose to live, work, play and visit