

Report of:	Helen Watson, Executive Director of Children’s Services Cllr Barrie Cooper, Executive Member for Children’s Services
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Submitted to:	Extraordinary Council – 12 February 2020
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Subject:	Outcome of the OFSTED Inspection of Children’s Services
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)
<p>That Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the outcome of the OFSTED Inspection of Children’s Services outlined in the report published by OFSTED on 24th January, and the post inspection action planning that is underway.

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

Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan

Business	People	Place
The improvement and resourcing plan set out how the Council intends to focus resource on improving services to children and achieving an improved OFSTED rating.	The Council has a statutory duty to provide services to children in Middlesbrough who are in need of help and protection. It is committed to ensuring that these services provide effective and quality help to those families and children who require support.	Not applicable

Ward(s) affected

Services to children cover the whole of Middlesbrough and all children and families within it.
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What is the purpose of this report?

1. To report the outcome of the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) by OFSTED that took place between the 18th November and 6th December 2019.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. Services to Children in need of help and protection are one of the key statutory responsibilities of the Council and therefore the impact of an adverse OFSTED judgement is extremely important. The corporate response to this position and its implications could impact on all areas of the Council's activity and therefore require Member agreement, support and scrutiny.

Report Background

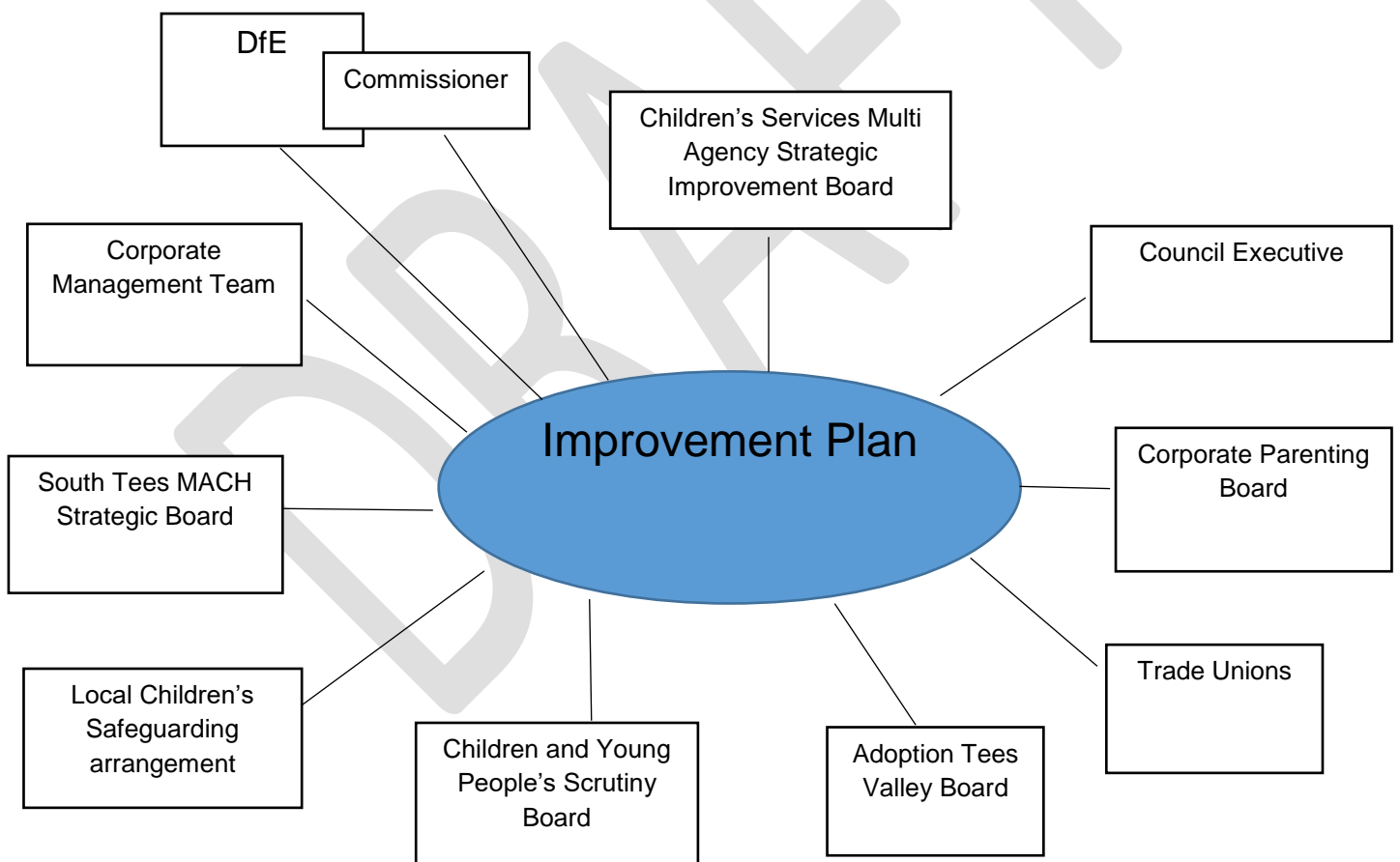
3. The last full inspection of children's services in Middlesbrough took place in 2015 and rated services as 'requiring improvement'. Since this date there have been a number of OFSTED visits looking at specific parts of the service that were consistent with the previous judgement. The inspection of November / December 2019 is the first full inspection received by Middlesbrough under the newer ILACS framework.
4. The ILACS inspection grades services under four categories the judgement for Middlesbrough is:

Judgement:	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

5. OFSTED uses a system of four grades in their judgements, Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate. As such the Middlesbrough judgement is the lowest possible grading that can be received and requires a timely and effective response from the Council.
6. The Council will be subject to a Statutory Direction with the Department for Education. A Children's Commissioner is currently being appointed by DfE to work with Middlesbrough Council to undertake a three month assessment of the capacity and capability of the Council to improve Children's Services. The Commissioner will write a report for the Secretary of State that will make recommendations about whether the Council continues to run Children's Services or whether an alternative delivery model is needed. This could be a shared delivery model with another local authority or a Children's Trust which could take delivery and cost outside of Council Control.
7. A meeting is taking place with Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board on 10th February 2020 to consider the report findings and next steps. The contribution of Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate

Parenting Board will be key in assisting the improvement journey. All Member briefings are in place for the 6th and 7th February 2020. Meetings with Trade Unions have also taken place on 29th January and 5th February 2020.

8. A twelve week Improvement Plan is in place and is being delivered at pace to ensure that those key findings in the OFSTED report that can be addressed quickly are, improving key services to children and rapidly improving their effectiveness. The Improvement journey will take several years to successfully implement and will be dependent upon four and six Ofsted inspection monitoring visits prior to a full reinspection Ofsted.
9. A further comprehensive action plan is currently being devised and will be scrutinised by Ofsted in an action planning seminar on 14th April 2020.
10. The Children’s Services Multi Agency Strategic Improvement Board has been established and will be independently chaired with DfE attending the Board and senior leaders from across the Council, Children’s Services and partner organisations. This Board will ensure accountability for improvement and will oversee the delivery of the Improvement Plan. The relationship with other key Committees and Boards is set down below:



11. In order to deliver the Improvement Plan there is a requirement for additional resources to provide capacity and expertise on the improvement of services to children estimated at approximately £3.3m. The Resource Plan is on the Council Executive agenda for 18th February 2020 with the majority being fundable from existing reserves.

12. The additional required funding for these resources will be included in the 2020/21 budget report to be considered by Council on 26th February 2020.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

13. It is recommended that Council accepts the findings of the OFSTED inspectorate and endorses the proposals for improvement and resourcing of the service in order to facilitate a rapid strengthening of services for children in Middlesbrough.

14. Specifically Council is asked to:

- Note the outcome of the OFSTED Inspection of Children's Services outlined in the report published by OFSTED on 24th January, and the post inspection action planning that is underway.

Why is this being recommended?

15. This decision is being recommended because it is not acceptable for services to children in need of help and protection in the town to be inadequate and therefore the Council needs to target the correct resources at effective action to rapidly improve the services in place to protect, help and support vulnerable children and families in Middlesbrough.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

16. The other potential option would be to attempt to manage improvement in the service within existing resources. This option was not recommended because the nature of the findings in the recent inspection mean that rapid improvement is necessary, for this to be successful it will need to be supported by sufficient, high quality, practitioners with the right skills and knowledge working to a focused plan.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

17. The resources required to deliver the improvement journey will be allocated from within existing resources to enable recruitment to take place to press forward with rapid improvement in partnership with the Department for Education.

Legal

18. The Council has a statutory duty to provide appropriate services to children under the Children Act 1989.

Financial

19. The financial implications arising as a result of this report will be increased investment in the service to support the improvement journey in Children's Services and this will be built into the 2020/21 budget report.

20. These resources will be allocated from within existing Medium Term Financial Plan and reserve assumptions and reflected in the 2020/21 Budget Report to be considered by Full Council on 26th February 2020.

Policy Framework

21.No Policy Framework implications have been identified

Equality and Diversity

22. There are no concerns that the improvement of children's services could result in policies and practices that could impact differently on individual or groups because they hold one or more protected characteristics.

23. Ensuring that services to children and families are effective and appropriate for all including those who hold one or more protected characteristics is a key responsibility for the service and will be monitored at all times as part of the improvement journey.

Risk

24. There are a number of entries on the Council's risk registers that set out the potential risks the Council could face as a result of failure to improve services to children.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

25. The Improvement Plan is underway and Executive on the 18th February 2020 will consider the Resource Plan.

Appendices

26. None

Background papers

27. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.