

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Date: Wednesday 30th July, 2025 Time: 4.30 pm Venue: Mandela Room (Municipal Buildings)
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AGENDA

1. Welcome and Fire Evacuation Procedure

In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Minutes - Overview and Scrutiny Board - 9 April 2025 3 - 10

5. Minutes - People Scrutiny Panel - 14 April 2025 11 - 12

Overview and Scrutiny Board are asked to consider the minutes of the People Scrutiny Panel on 14 April 2025 as the Panel was disbanded on 21 May 2025.

6. Minutes - People Scrutiny Panel - 12 May 2025 13 - 16

Overview and Scrutiny Board are asked to consider the minutes of the People Scrutiny Panel on 12 May 2025 as the Panel was disbanded on 21 May 2025.

7. Executive Member Update - The Mayor 17 - 38

8. Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress update 39 - 64

9. Overview and Scrutiny Board - Work Programme 2025/26 65 - 74

10. Scrutiny - Work Planning 2025/26 75 - 80

11. Pre-Decision Scrutiny Protocol 81 - 86

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| 12. | Executive Forward Work Programme | 87 - 96 |
| 12.1 | Forward Plan Actions Progress | |
| 13. | Final Report of the People Scrutiny Panel - Children Missing Education | 97 - 126 |
| 14. | Final Report of the Place Scrutiny Panel - Empty Properties | 127 - 142 |
| 15. | Scrutiny Chairs Update | |
| 16. | Any other urgent items which, in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered. | |

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Tuesday 22 July 2025

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe, J Kabuye, L Lewis, M McClintock, T Mohan, I Morrish, J Platt, M Saunders, Z Uddin, G Wilson and J Young

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Scott Bonner/ Sue Lightwing, 01642 729708/ 01642 729712, scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk/ joanne_dixon@middlesbrough.gov.uk

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 9 April 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors I Blades (Chair), J Kabuye (Vice-Chair), D Branson, D Coupe, J Ewan, B Hubbard, L Lewis, I Morrish, D Jones (Substitute for M Saunders), Z Uddin and G Wilson

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Mayor Cooke and Councillor J Ryles

OFFICERS: M Adams, S Bonner, J Dixon, B Carr, L Grabham, A Humble, E Scollay and A Wilson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors J Banks, E Clynych, M McClintock and M Saunders

24/82 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

24/83 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 19 MARCH 2025**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 19 March 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/84 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to deliver her presentation. The presentation outlined the service structure in Adult Social Care which included Head of Prevention; Provider and Support Services; Access and Safeguarding and Specialist and Lifelong Services.

In terms of Access and Safeguarding; the presentation listed a range of services that were operated within the service which acted as a front-door for service users. Some of those services included:

- East and West locality teams which between them had received more than 9000 service users.
- The service also included a hospital team that assisted patients when they were being discharged.
- The Deprivation of Liberty team undertook best interests' assessments and offered advice and guidance regarding the Mental Capacity Act.

In terms of Prevention, Provider and Support Services this service provided support to help people stay at home, safely and independently. Services within this area included:

- The staying put agency
- Sensory loss
- Community Reablement
- Community inclusion services
- Levick Court.

In terms of Specialist and Lifelong Services, this area included services such as:

- Older person's mental health team
- Forensics Social Care Team
- Learning disability and Transitions team

Members were advised that other dedicated teams from commissioning and finance also worked across the portfolio area.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for her presentation and invited questions from Members.

A Member queried if the Sensory Loss team was restricted to sight and hearing loss. Members were advised that the team was small but growing and provided a very important service. The team worked with people who had lost one of their senses, and an example was provided of a lady who, through the help of the team had reduced the number of support carers from four to zero. It was also noted that Redcar and Cleveland Council had also referred people to the service. It was also asked if the team could be grown. It was clarified that it hoped the service could be commercialised so the service was available to a wider cohort of people. This would be one of the main priorities of the new Director of Adult Social Services.

In regard to the Community Inclusion Service, a Member queried if there was a waiting list for this service and it was available to those with autism. It was clarified that the Community Inclusion Service did not cover such assessments. However, it was possible that support could be provided to those people on waiting lists. It was also clarified that waiting list length was not in the remit of the Council but was determined by central government.

It was also asked if the Sensory Loss team would teach people who had lost their hearing how to use sign language. It was confirmed that this was the case and that there were a range of options available to provide support for those that had lost one of their senses.

Regarding the promotion of the handy person's service, it was clarified that while some publicity was available on the Council website, there was also an element of word-of-mouth publicity from social care professionals. It was important to maintain this balance due to potential over subscription of the service. It was also commented that the charges for the service were very reasonable.

A Member queried if Social Care related accommodation was being considered as part of new housing developments. It was clarified that available housing included sheltered housing, housing with extra care as well as residential and nursing housing. Social Services spoke with the Planning Service and developers where appropriate, but the Council would look at the issue of housing on a strategic level.

A discussion took place about the mechanisms in place for communities to provide feedback about community need. It was clarified that while Social Care was primarily focussed on the needs of individuals, there were links with neighbourhood working and a view to move to locality working. Doing this would allow the service to better understand the needs of communities which, in turn, would benefit care to individuals. The situation for Social Care was more reactive in nature at the moment.

A Member queried the remit of the Staying Put Agency which was clarified as being assessments of minor adaptations to people's houses, such as the installation of grab rails, that helped individuals live independently at home.

A conversation took place about the cost implications of community working during which it was noted that moving to a community based model of working could result in a more efficient way of service delivery. This approach also provided a much better level of service for users.

A conversation took place about new homes requiring relevant adaptations and how, in any circumstance, adaptation was always the best approach. It was also commented there should be a more joined up approach to housing needs.

A Member asked if any training was available for staff and Members regarding sign language. It was clarified there was a training programme for staff, but Members suggested there may be a need for Members to undertake a similar course.

It was commented that approximately 10 years ago the sensory support team was larger and was shared with Redcar and Cleveland Council. However, while the service had been diminished there were several innovative approaches that helped keep the service effective. There was also a need to invest further in this service which would complement sign language courses.

The Chair stated Adult Social Care was one of the largest spenders in the Council, and that the Transformation programme was proactive rather than reactive and wondered what Transformation looked like for Adult Social Care. It was highlighted that while the budget for Adult Social Care was large, this was supplemented by contributions from service users. Some of the initiatives, as part of the Adult Social Care Transformation programme included working more closely with the ICB who were also facing budget cuts. It was also important that a different style of conversation namely, about providing advice and guidance rather than based on want which led to dependency. Doing this could lead to reduction in demand. Other initiatives included a more community-based approach as well using technology such as Artificial Intelligence. Ultimately, there was a move to help people to help themselves.

The Chair invited the Executive Member to present the Public Health element of her portfolio. The presentation included the following information:

- The challenges across the South Tees including that despite improvements, Middlesbrough had a lower average life expectancy than the rest of England. There were also significant differences across different areas of the town.
- The different roles within the Public Health service that was spread across the South Tees.
- The programme approach to Public Health, which included five programmes, four core approaches and three levels of intervention.
- In terms of Healthy Environments, the intention was to implement a system led approach to creating places that promoted healthy eating and moving more. The healthy weight declaration has been agreed to assist with this.
- There was also an initiative to protect health which involved a number of priorities to protect the population of South Tees from the spread of communicable disease. It was noted there had been an increase in the cases of syphilis in the South Tees and an action plan had been created to tackle this.
- There was a need to reduce the inequalities in population health through early detection of disease. Significant work had been undertaken at James Cook Hospital to try and reduce Did Not Attend rates with the example of maternity DNAs reducing from 15% to 3.4% due to focussed work.
- There was a drive to reduce vulnerabilities at a population level, and this would be possible when there were sufficient facilities in place to do this.

A Member queried the issue of preventing ill health. In other countries health checks were undertaken with certain individuals. It was clarified this was available in the UK via the NHS health check for individuals between the ages of 40 and 74 and could be accessed via GPs. It was also clarified this was available to all people in that age range but that take up rates were dependent on demographic profile.

It was also clarified that GPs differed in their approach of inviting individuals for their health check. Going forward Public Health would try to understand why there was such variability.

A Member queried about Mental Health provision. It was clarified that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was available online and contained much of the information relating to this. It was further queried how success was measured in relation to such things as substance misuse. It was clarified this type of performance was managed through a national framework. It was commented that, in terms of Public Health support to different cultural groups, the service had an officer that managed the relationship between Public Health and BAME communities.

In relation to the School Activity programme, a Member suggested that improvements could be made by encouraging parents to walk their children to school rather than drive them. It was confirmed that this, along with several other initiatives, would contribute to the Active Schools programme.

In relation to improving health environments, it was highlighted certain areas of the town had more elderly people and that infrastructure was not suitable, such as footpaths. It was clarified that when footpath infrastructure improvements were made it made more sense to target those areas where there was a higher risk of falls.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, as well as the Directors of Adult Social Care and Public Health for their attendance.

AGREED that

1. Statistics relating to NHS Health Check take up be provided to the Board and where possible these be on a ward basis.
2. That the information presented to noted

24/85

TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - UPDATE

The Chair welcomed the Mayor to the meeting and invited him to deliver his presentation.

The Mayor's presentation included the following information:

- Intervention in Children's Services had come to an end as well as the Best Value Notice intervention. Linked to this the Middlesbrough Voluntary Independent Improvement Board had issued its final report.
- From a financial perspective the Council was previously overspending between £10 and 15 million per year.
- There had been cuts to frontline staff with the example of Environmental staff being cut from 220 to 70 over a period of 14 years.
- There was no longer an events team or events budget.
- All hard decisions that were viable had been taken in the first year of the administration.
- There had been a shift in funding to more preventative measures with the SHiFT programme being used as an example.
- The Council had received an additional £4million in the Local Government Settlement for 2025-26. This additional money was directed into the Priorities Fund which would be used for transformation projects.
- For some transformation projects investment may not yield financial return but it was deemed the right thing to do.
- It was important that processes across the Council were fit for purpose, as this would improve services for residents.
- One of the first improvements to be made concerned the ACT service and reviewing the Council's approach to Homelessness.
- Another example of process improvements concerned demolitions which was antiquated and had no on-line component.
- Initiatives that should be celebrated included the SHiFT programme which was jointly funded by the government and the Council. 26 Children were part of the programme with each placement costing £30,000. Aside from the moral and ethical reasons for the programme, SHiFT was also financially sound as the average saving, per child, was £1.27 million.
- In terms of upcoming initiatives, Neighbourhood working would be part of a report submitted to Executive in the near future. This would require more staff on the ground to solve problems for residents such as Link Workers at James Cook University Hospital. There would likely be initial significant costs, but these would contribute to significant savings going forward.
- Another initiative was the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund which had the aim of investing initially to realise savings later. This would not be part of the base budget. The Priorities Fund was going to contribute to several projects such as the Child Enrichment Team and Ward Funding.
- The Mayor was also keen to launch the Middlesbrough Childhood Guarantee, which would see children achieving 10 opportunities by the time they reached 10 years of age. Those activities would be offered to children who may not ordinarily be able to access them and included swimming lessons and visiting a farm. Two key elements of this initiative were education and workplaces.
- In terms of Ward Funding, £5,000 would be made available per Councillor, per Ward for projects of their choice if it aligned with a council vision. Applications for funding also needed to be signed off by all other relevant ward councillors. Funding would likely be made available for this in May or June of 2025.
- In terms of Grass Verges, budgets would be increased by 50% and would be targeted in areas of the town that needed it. Housing providers would be approached where relevant to seek match funding.
- Shopfront schemes would focus on district shopping centres rather than town centre shop fronts.
- Other projects the Mayor would be launching included Public Sector capital. This

project focussed on working with other public sector bodies to enhance mutual assistance. An example of the Council working with Middlesbrough College to enhance their building programme was given. Working in this way may have had an impact on other issues such as Anti-Social Behaviour.

- Tees Valley Social Care Renegotiations were also part of the Mayor's priorities which included setting a lower base rate for social care agency staff. This could result in lower costs for local Councils.

The Chair reminded Members that questions should not concern ward matters but should be strategic in nature.

A Member queried why small plots of Council owned land took a long time to sell and were seemingly overpriced. They suggested a system be put in place to speed such things up. The Mayor commented this was possible and recognised that property related matters was one of the Council's weaker areas. An example was improvements to sale agreements and this type of issue would be a priority for the Council's strategic housing officer.

In terms of Ward Funding, it was queried when the criteria would be available and if the new funding would replace the existing Small Scheme Allocation. It was confirmed the criteria for Ward Funding would be released on the 23 April with the relevant Executive papers and that Ward Funding would not replace the Small Scheme Allocation.

A Member stated he was supportive of initiatives to reintroduce some kind of Council owned Housing given the length of waiting lists for social housing. The Mayor stated new processes, such as an enforced sales process could potentially save significant amounts of time, especially compared to compulsory purchase orders. It was also stated that Council's moving back into Council Housing after selling its housing stock was rare and would require significant investment if Middlesbrough was to try this.

A discussion took place around selective landlord licensing and the possibility of the Council becoming a letting agent. Benefits of this included incentives that could be offered to prospective landlords.

A Member queried if the Council could influence unfinished structures. It was clarified that no processes were available for such properties given the Council's limited involvement in this area. It was also clarified that further rollouts of selective landlord licensing was a slow process.

A Member expressed his support of the Mayor's initiatives but stated Ward Funding may become political and wondered if Community Councils could be involved in the process. The Mayor stated that, as all Councillors were elected to do the best for their communities, politics in the process should be minimal. Involvement of Community Councils may complicate the process, however the Mayor was prepared to engage as many groups as possible to understand where funding was required. It was important to equip Councillors so they could help their communities. If the proposed scheme was successful discussion could take place about how the funding process could be improved going forward.

On the issue of Council IT, a Member suggested reviewing how Council compliments were received as they were currently submitted via a complaints form. It was also important for the Council to adopt a smart approach to how it advertises events and changes to schedules. The Mayor agreed with this and stated the complaints process was being examined for improvements. It was also stated that other processes had been improved as part of more effective service delivery. The Mayor stated an email would be set up to receive improvements to processes and circulated to Members.

In terms of child and youth issues, as outlined in the Mayor's presentation, it was queried which Executive Member such initiatives would fall under. It was clarified that until further notice this would fall under the Mayor.

A Member queried, in terms of Tees Valley Social Care Renegotiations, if this was mainly regarding recruitment. The Mayor clarified that it was focussed on the rates paid to agency staff and foster carers. The aim of the process was to introduce a level of fairness.

The Chair thanked the Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of Finance for their attendance at the meeting.

AGREED

1. That an email for process improvements be circulated to Members.
2. That the information presented be noted.

24/86

FINAL REPORT OF THE PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Councillor Branson, Chair of the Place Scrutiny Panel, presented the Final Report on Home to School Transport.

The purpose of the review was to ensure that the Council was meeting its obligations to provide Home to School Transport whilst effectively controlling costs.

The Terms of Reference for the review were set out at paragraph three of the report together with the evidence gathered by the Panel during the review.

The Panel's conclusions, based on the evidence gathered during the review, were detailed at page 59 of the agenda pack, paragraph 74 of the final report. In summary, the Panel found that in recent years there had been a sharp increase in the cost of Home to School Transport provided by Local Authorities, by up to 50% in some cases. Middlesbrough Council's 2024-2025 budget for providing the Home to School Transport Service was £6.7m. Free school transport was provided for students at compulsory school age based on distance from a suitable school, ability to get there safely, or on low family income.

Middlesbrough Council had provided free transport for 1069 SEND students and 238 other students in the previous year. The key issue was SEND students under the age of 11 since they were provided with free transport in almost all cases. Middlesbrough also had higher numbers of SEND students than other LAs in the North East region and nationally according to the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT).

During the course of discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- It was a complex area with costs having doubled since 2019 and expected to grow significantly further.
- One of the main problems was that Local authorities were reluctant to challenge parents.
- The cost of transport had also increased.
- Some schools had contacted the Task and Finish Group associated with the review expressing their dissatisfaction at the lack of passenger assistance.
- In terms of self-diagnosis the service relied on doctors but there had, nevertheless, been an increase in SEND children nationally.

The Board was asked to consider the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations (page 38, paragraph 232, of the report), as follows:-

- a) Investigate whether it would be cost effective to devolve the provision of Home to School Transport to individual schools, as they may be able to provide a more localised service. Ideally the funding could be passed directly to the schools making them responsible for controlling costs, ensuring there was no additional cost to the Local Authority.
- b) Review the eligibility requirements for free school travel, especially for post-16 students and for pupils who attend a school that is not in the catchment/nearest school by parental choice, but they meet the low-income criteria. There would need to be an option included for consideration of special circumstances.
- c) Ensure closer collaboration between Children's Services, Schools and the Home to School Transport Unit to make certain that the most cost-effective and suitable transport arrangements are in place for each student, particularly in relation to students with SEND. The requirement for transport assistance should be included as a consideration in SEND assessments.
- d) Prioritise the promotion of independent travel to all parents and students, increase the number of travel trainers and bus buddies and encourage greater use of personal travel budgets.
- e) Introduce a spare seat scheme to offer discretionary transport assistance on existing transport for students who are not eligible for free travel assistance, with an option for

part payment of the full cost.

- f) Investigate whether increasing the Council's fleet of vehicles and reducing dependency on third party providers would be cost effective and whether this would enable better route planning.
- g) Explore whether entering into longer-term contracts with third party providers would provide for greater flexibility and consistency.

ORDERED that the conclusions and recommendations, as set out above, be endorsed and referred to the Executive.

24/87

EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced the item for the Board's consideration. A copy of the Work Programme was attached at Appendix A and Members were asked to raise any issues they had in relation to any of the items listed.

There were no questions from the Board.

NOTED

24/88

FORWARD PLAN ACTIONS PROGRESS

The Chair stated he had raised a question regarding the decision to dispose of land and assets to the Middlesbrough Development Corporation that was considered at the Executive Sub Committee for Property on 2 April 2025.

The Chair also stated the report associated with that decision was attached to the agenda pack and the minutes of the meeting were available on Modern.Gov.

NOTED

24/89

SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

In the absence of its Chair and Vice Chair, the Chair of OSB updated Members on work carried out by the People Scrutiny Panel. The last meeting of the People Scrutiny Panel was held on 24 March 2025 where an update was received by TEWV on their improvement plan as well as an update from Adult Social Care following the CQC inspection. The committee also heard further evidence in relation to the Panel's review into Homelessness. The next meeting of the Panel was Monday 4 April.

The Chair of the Place Scrutiny Panel advised Members there had not been a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel since the last meeting of OSB to allow the Home School Transport report to be completed. The Chair of the Panel had also met with the Directors of Regeneration to discuss potential future topics.

NOTED

24/90

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

The Chair of OSB invited the lead Member of the Community Cohesion Task and Finish Group to provide a progress update to the Board.

Members were advised the Task and Finish Group was set up largely in response to the riots that took place in Middlesbrough. The Task and Finish Group had spoken to Middlesbrough's MP as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Members were advised that, due to the complexity of the issue, more work was needed on the report in conjunction with Democratic Services. It was requested that an updated report be brought back to OSB in the new municipal year.

AGREED that an updated Task and Finish report be provided to OSB in the municipal year 2025/26.

PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the People Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 14 April 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors E Clynch (Chair), J Banks (Vice-Chair), D Jackson, M Nugent, Z Uddin, G Wilson and L Young

OFFICERS: C Cannon, C Jones and S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors L Hurst, M McClintock, T Mohan, S Platt and S Tranter

24/73 WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures.

24/74 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Business
Cllr J Banks	Non-Pecuniary	Employed within education setting.
Cllr E Clynch	Non-Pecuniary	Employed within education setting.
Cllr D Jackson	Non-Pecuniary	School Governor.
Cllr L Young	Non-Pecuniary	Employed within education setting.

24/75 MINUTES - PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL - 24 MARCH 2025

The minutes of the People Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24 March 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/76 CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME) - DRAFT FINAL REPORT

A copy of the Draft Final Report on Children Missing Education (CME) had been circulated with the agenda.

Members discussed the information provided and provided recommendations for inclusion in the Final Report.

AGREED as follows that:

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

That Council should:

- A. Ensure that CME forms an integral part of Middlesbrough Council's Draft Poverty Strategy. CME, and its impact, should be explicitly referenced and included in any performance regime underpinning the strategy. Members of the Children's Scrutiny Panel should be briefed on how CME will feature within the Poverty Strategy no later than January 2026, or sooner if the strategy is available.
- B. Ensure that Education & Partnerships are fully prepared for the Children's Wellbeing in Schools Bill, in particular the monitoring of Elective Home Education and the implementation of a single unique identifier (SUI) for children. The Children's Scrutiny Panel should be briefed on the preparations, no later than December 2025.

- C. Establish a Working Group between Primary Schools in the Central areas of Middlesbrough, Education and Partnerships, Stronger Communities and local Councillors to explore if further assistance can be provided in respect of the large transient community and the issues of school roll turnover. The Working Group should report back on its progress by March 2026.
- D. Establish a Working Group between Education & Partnerships and Stronger Communities to understand the nature of the higher rate of CME in the Romanian community. The Working Group should produce an action plan to help reduce this number against the baseline average of 22, at the time of the review. The Working Group should provide a progress update against their action plan to the Children's Scrutiny Panel by March 2026.
- E. An update be provided to the Children's Scrutiny Panel that provides assurance to the on the ongoing work of assisting children at risk of permanent exclusion. This should happen no later than October 2026.
- F. An update be provided to the Children's Scrutiny Panel on the new Alternative Provision and the restructure of the Inclusion and Outreach Model. This should happen no later than April 2026.

24/77

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on items discussed at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 9 April 2025, as follows:

- Executive Member Update – Adult Social Care and Public Health
- Transformation Programme Update
- Final Report of the Place Scrutiny Panel – Home to School Transport
- Executive Forward Work Programme.

24/78

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

The Chair expressed their acknowledgement and thanks to the People Scrutiny Panel, for their efforts in the municipal year.

The Chair advised that the scrutiny investigation into 'Homelessness' would be passed to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, for consideration within the work programme.

PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the People Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 12 May 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors E Clynch (Chair), J Banks (Vice-Chair), D Jackson, M McClintock, S Platt, S Tranter, Z Uddin, G Wilson and L Young

OFFICERS: L Grabham and C Jones

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors L Hurst, T Mohan and M Nugent

24/79 **WELCOME AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures.

24/80 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point in the meeting.

24/81 **SOUTH TEES HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST - DRAFT QUALITY ACCOUNT FOR 2024/2025**

The People Scrutiny Panel welcomed the opportunity to consider the South Tees NHS Foundation Trust's draft Quality Account for 2024/2025.

A formal written response detailing the Scrutiny Panel's comments and feedback needed to be submitted to the Trust by Friday, 30 May 2025.

The Trust's Site Medical Director, Site Director of Nursing, Group Deputy Director of Quality, and the Compliance & Regulation Manager were in attendance to deliver a presentation, which outlined the priorities for improvement and the quality of services at the Trust. The presentation focused on the following matters:

- University Hospital Tees – Formation of the Group; Group Development; Group Quality Priorities 2024/25; Agreeing the 2025/26 Group Priorities; Group Quality Priorities for 2025/26.
- A&E Flow: South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust.
- Critical Care Outreach / Acutely Ill Patient – Martha's Rule.
- Current Live Use Status: Digital Journey.
- Infection, Prevention and Control Actions.
- Recent Get it Right First Time (GIRFT) Accreditation.
- Model Hospital Latest Data: FHN Elective Hub (23/3/25).
- Targeted Lung Health Checks.
- Cancer Improvement Plans (and treatment pathway).
- Further Faster 20 Programme.

Members were provided with background information regarding the Quality Account. It was explained that this was an annual undertaking that every Hospital Trust was required to do. The document reviewed performance over the last 12 months, focussing on areas such as:

- Patient Safety.
- Clinical Effectiveness.
- Patient Experience.

The document also set out the plans for 2025/26 and the priorities that would be looked at. The draft document had been circulated to partners for comment/ feedback.

The Panel noted the content of the presentation and was supportive of the outlined priorities. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The Panel was pleased to hear about the introduction of Martha's Rule and the Trust being an early implementer of this. It was recognised that Martha's Rule offered several positive outcomes for patients and avoided further deterioration of their health.
- Members praised the significant progress that had been made in the reduction in timescales around the diagnosis and treatment pathways for Prostate Cancer. The Panel acknowledged the achievements made and the work undertaken to accomplish these reductions, particularly in terms of treatment waiting times – down from 62 days to approximately 25 days, and the efficient communication around benign diagnosis.
- Members acknowledged the value of the Tees Valley Targeted Lung Health Check Programme and the positive outcomes achieved to date. Specifically, the circa. 83% of occurrences, which were found at early stages in comparison to circa. 30% without the screening programme, were positively recognised. It was noted that due to improvements in early detection/diagnosis, the pathology turnaround times continued to present challenge, and this was a key area of focus for the Trust over the next 12 months.
- A Member highlighted concerns around car parking and the patient experience at the South Tees Hospital site.

The Member explained that, over the last 12 months, he had attempted to gain further insight from the Trust in respect of car parking, with very little success. The following points were raised:

- The only reference to car parking matters in the draft Quality Account document related to free or discounted car parking for carers visiting regularly (section b of the 'Patient Experience and Involvement Indicators' – 'Patient Experience and EDI'). It was felt that inclusion of only this point did not sufficiently convey the undue distress experienced by patients as a consequence of limited car parking, and the impact this has upon timely attendance at appointments.
- In terms of previous communications with the Trust, it was noted that the Member had made a request for a copy of the hospital's Car Parking Strategy in May 2024. However, to date, this had not been received. In addition, communications between the Council and the Trust in respect of car parking could not be evidenced/were not recorded. In light of this, it was felt that the perceived lack of evidence of partnership working between the Trust and the Council diluted the following statement in the draft document: '...providing consistent feedback to individuals who have taken the time to report events or concerns'.
- It was requested that a copy of the strategy be forwarded to the Panel for information, and the issues around car parking be included in the final Quality Account document.

In response to these comments, the Trust representatives acknowledged the points made and indicated that they would be investigated accordingly.

- The Panel was appreciative of the data provided in respect of mortality and preventable deaths. This included the consideration of the Standardised Hospital Mortality Index (SHMI) and, although performance over 100% was regarded as 'poor', Members were pleased to hear of the improvements made over the last year in bringing this figure down from 110% to 104%. After further discussion around this topic area, it was evident that the Trust learnt from serious incidents and was keen to make improvements for patients and their families and/or carers.

The Panel wished to place on record its gratitude for the tremendous amount of work that had taken place over the last year by staff across the Trust and looked forward to receiving future updates.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their attendance and contributions to the meeting. It was agreed that the feedback from the meeting would be forwarded to the Compliance & Regulation Manager by 30 May 2025.

AGREED

1. That the South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's 2024/25 draft Quality Account document be noted.

2. That a letter detailing the comments made by the People Scrutiny Panel, in respect of the 2024/25 draft Quality Account, be sent to the Trust by 30 May 2025.
3. That the information, as provided, be noted.

24/82 **TEES, ESK AND WEAR VALLEYS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST - DRAFT QUALITY ACCOUNT FOR 2024/2025**

The People Scrutiny Panel welcomed the opportunity to consider the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust's draft Quality Account for 2024/2025.

The Trust's Chief Nurse and Associate Director of Quality Governance were in attendance virtually. The representatives requested that any comments/feedback regarding the previously circulated draft Quality Account document be forwarded via email before Friday, 30 May 2025.

NOTED

24/83 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.

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OSB (30 July 2025) Mayor's Update



Review

Middlesbrough Priorities fund

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Public Sector Capital

Childhood Enrichment



Middlesbrough Priorities Fund

Childhood
enrichment
team

Ward Funding

Youth Mutual
Seed funding

Grass verges

Shop fronts
scheme

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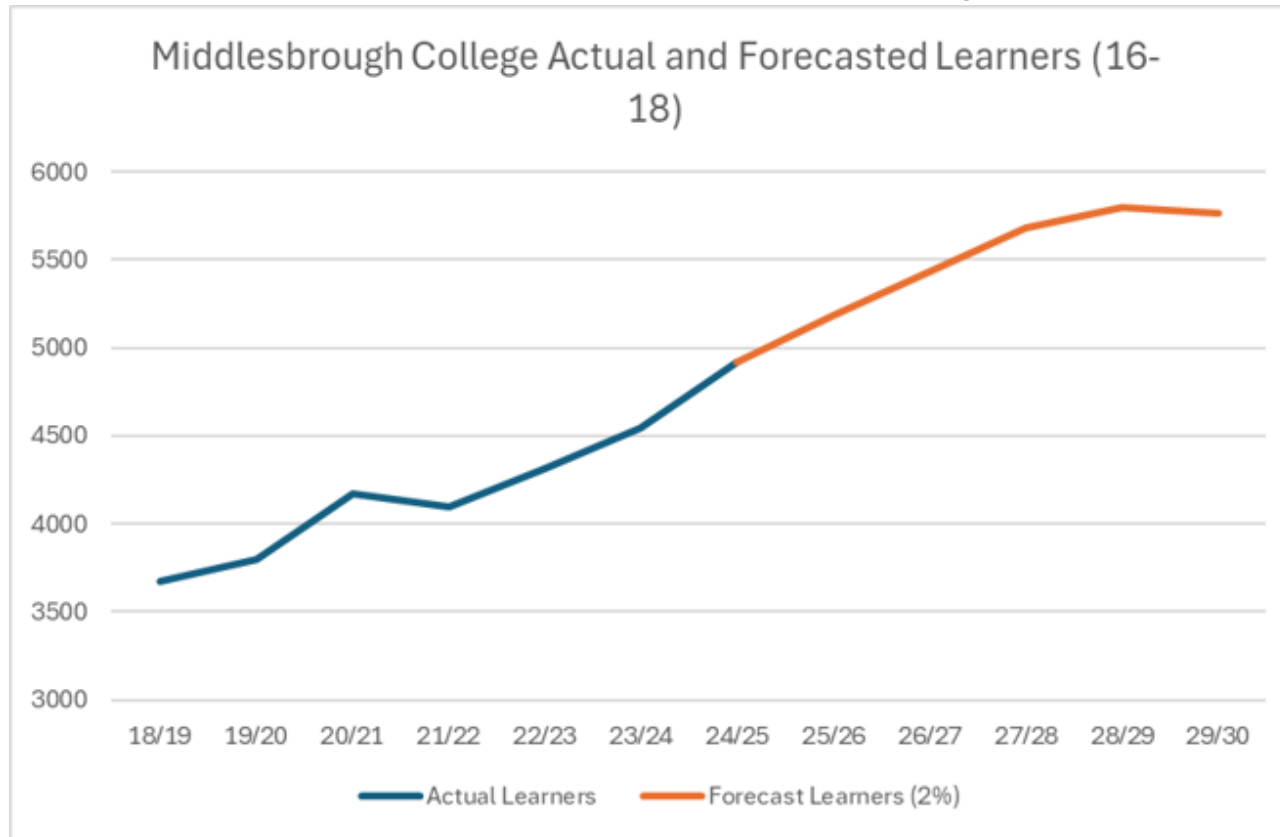
Middlesbrough Priorities Fund

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Homeless Intervention Team	Iris Programme	Domestic Abuse Co-Ordinator	Ai Interactive Coach
Grants for Schools	Energy Assessments	NEETS Programme	Focus Groups and Panels
MusicINC Growth	In-House Arbor team	Multibank	Trading Standards
	Financial investigator	Investment Prospectus	

Public Sector Capital

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Public Sector Capital

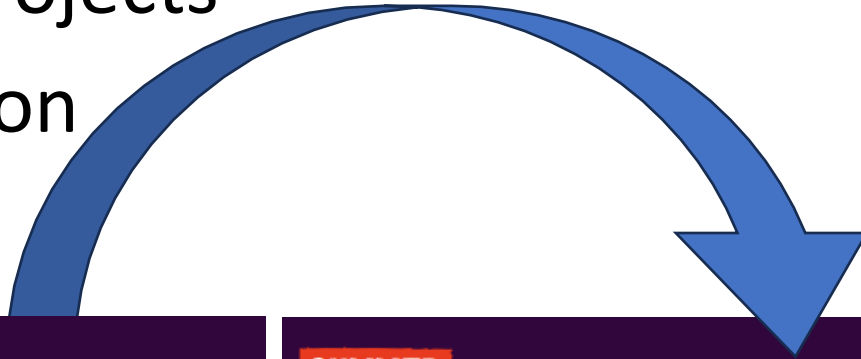
- ▶ £1.6 Million investment provided to allow building
- ▶ Rental agreement as opposed to a loan
- ▶ No additional cost to council
- ▶ Enables college expansion, prevents further young people being out of education, training or employment
- ▶ We have to act in the wider interests of the town and view our funding as town funding rather than purely council funding.

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Childhood Enrichment Team

- Two initial Projects
- HAF Expansion
- 10X10



SUMMER

Minimum of 4 hours per day
x 16 days during the Summer holiday period.

CHRISTMAS

Minimum of 4 hours per day
x 4 days during the Christmas holiday period.

SUMMER

Minimum of 4 hours per day
x 16 days during the Summer holiday period.

CHRISTMAS

Minimum of 4 hours per day
x 4 days during the Christmas holiday period.

OCT HALF TERM

Minimum of 4 hours per day
x 2 days.

FEB HALF TERM

Minimum of 4 hours per day
x 2 days.

Childhood Enrichment Team

Level-up your life skills:

**10 essential
life-enhancing experiences
for under 10s**

XP **Aim higher** *Unlock your potential* ➔



Childhood Enrichment Team

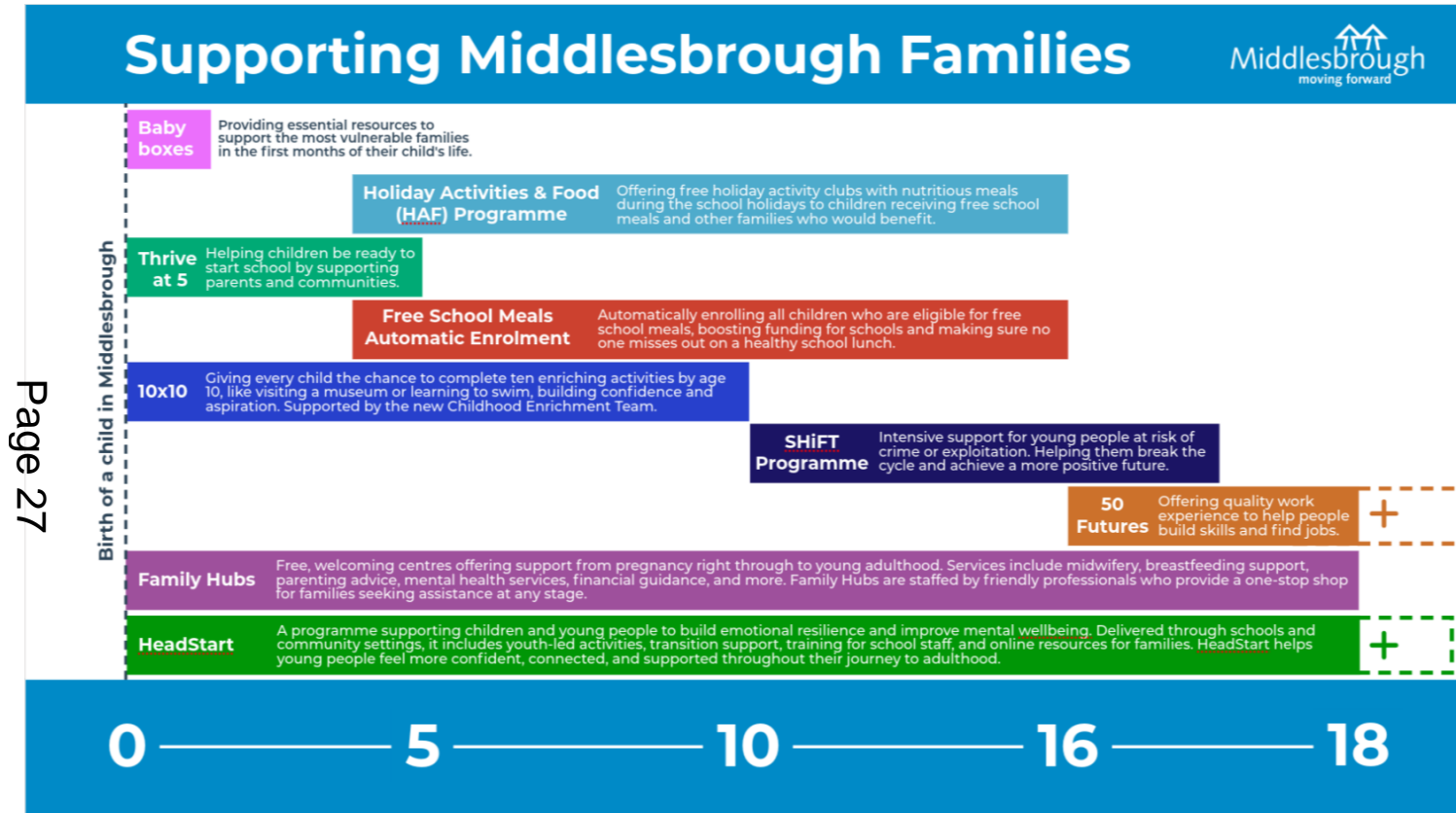


Childhood Enrichment Team

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Childhood Enrichment Team



Celebrate

Cycle Lane

Page 28
Turner Prize

Area care uplift

Progress on projects



Cycle Lane

- Removal Date set for 26th August
- No cost to council



Turner Prize

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- Huge win for the town and our cultural industries
- Comes on the back of the Arts council making their one annual visit to Middlesbrough
- More details to follow



Area Care Uplift

- Neighbourhood Caretakers have started and have worked on an initial project during induction

Before



Area Care Uplift



Progress on Projects

- Southlands, metal work in progress
- School foundation work in progress
- Old Town Hall
- Church house nearing completion
- Nunthorpe community centre at lease stage
- Pallister park design stage
- Neighbourhood Hubs designs expected by end of year if not sooner

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Preview

Budget Process

Page 34

Middlehaven

Recycling Project



Budget

- Still not clear on numbers and won't be until after the consultation closes
- We need to prepare for growth something that the council struggles with due to years of funding reductions
- First cover the existing budget
- Secondly cover service demand pressures
- Lastly grow select service areas matching key priorities
- More automated and hopefully better process
- We would still need to have double our current budget to be back to 2010 levels with inflation etc taken into account
- Over 7 Meetings with Government in this year alone

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Middlehaven

- Working to design a scheme initially that is not reliant on a single anchor
- Ward Councillors to be involved towards the end of the year
- Focus on work and living spaces balancing the Town centre need as well
- Chance to achieve significant housing on brownfield

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Recycling Project

- Awaiting delivery of the machine
- To be trialled at St Barnabas initially
- Aim to improve recycling and make cost savings

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Questions?



MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Chief Executive – Erik Scollay
Relevant Executive Member:	The Mayor – Chris Cooke
Submitted to:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Date:	30 July 2025
Title:	Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress update
Report for:	Discussion
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
That Overview and Scrutiny Board Note the contents of the report.

Executive summary
<p>The attached report was considered by Executive on 16 July 2025. That report (Appendix 1) provides an overview of delivery against the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan which captures strategic improvement action being delivered within the organisation to ensure the Council can fully demonstrate its compliance with the principles of the Best Value Duty. Provision of this report forms part of the assurance framework that has been put in place to demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement.</p>

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 To inform Overview and Scrutiny Board about delivery against continuous improvement plan.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities - Improve attainment in education and skills - Ensure housing provision meets local demand
A healthy Place	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities - protect and improve our environment - promote inclusivity for all - reduce poverty
Safe and resilient communities	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support adults to be independent for longer - improve transport and digital connectivity - promote new ideas and community initiatives - reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
Delivering best value	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Board Notes the content of the delivery against the continuous improvement plan Executive report.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 To advise Overview and Scrutiny Board of the Council's progress against the continuous improvement plan

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 Relevant background and other information is contained in the Executive report at Appendix 1.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

6.1 Other potential alternatives are detailed in the Executive Report.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Relevant Impact is detailed in the Executive Report.
Legal	
Risk	
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	
Reducing Poverty	
Climate Change / Environmental	
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
NA		

Appendices

1	Executive Report - Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress Update
2	Continuous Improvement Action Plan
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

Contact: Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Policy, Governance and Information
Email: ann-marie_johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Chief Executive, Erik Scollay
Relevant Executive Member:	Mayor, Chris Cooke
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	16 July 2025
Title:	Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress update
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	All
Key decision:	No
Why:	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
Subject to call in?	Yes
Why:	The report is not urgent

Proposed decision(s)
<p>That Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVES the updated Continuous Improvement Plan • NOTES the progress made in delivering the commitments within the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Executive summary
<p>This report provides an overview of delivery against the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan which captures strategic improvement action being delivered within the organisation to ensure the Council can fully demonstrate its compliance with the principles of the Best Value Duty.</p> <p>Provision of this report forms part of the assurance framework that has been put in place to demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. It will also be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Board.</p>

The report summarises progress made since the plan was put in place in March 2025, highlighting key achievements, grouping them by Best Value theme.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the expanded Continuous Improvement Plan for Executive consideration and set out progress made against that plan. The purpose of the plan is to ensure the Council can articulate its ongoing commitment to Continuous Improvement and capture activity that has been undertaken to deliver that commitment.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	The Continuous Improvement Plan contains commitments to work collaboratively with partners, communities and businesses to develop a vision for the town. Delivery of this will positively impact on the Council 's ability to work with partners to delivery al the ambitions within the Council Plan.
A healthy Place	The Continuous Improvement Plan contains a series of actions that will impact positively on the Council's ambitions around being a healthy place. In particular it includes commitments around poverty reduction ambitions.
Safe and resilient communities	Action is planned within the Continuous Improvement Plan to strengthen the Council's approach to community engagement which will positively impact on this ambition. It sets out plans to expand community development capacity and develop the proposed Neighbourhoods Strategy with a strong focus on community engagement and co-production of solutions.
Delivering best value	Successful delivery pf the Continuous Improvement Plan will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improve partnership working ▪ further enhance financial planning and management, ▪ reset the Council's approach to transformation ▪ strengthen internal audit arrangements ▪ enhance scrutiny ▪ better supporting Members.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Executive:

- **APPROVES** the updated Continuous Improvement Plan
- **NOTES** the progress made in delivering the commitments within the Continuous Improvement Plan.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Having a Continuous Improvement Plan that captures all strategic Continuous Improvement activity, provides Members and Officers with a comprehensive overview of improvement activity within the organisation as part of a framework of assurance reports. Agreeing the revised content of the plan will ensure the Council is tracking this type of activity within one document. Further revisions to this live plan will be identified as necessary going forward.

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 In March 2025, Full Council considered the final reports of both the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge team and the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB).

4.2 Both those reports were hugely positive, recognising the improvements the Council had made over the previous two years on its improvement journey. They also contained a series of recommendations, designed to ensure the Council maintained an outcome focussed commitment to the principles of continuous improvement journey as it transitioned from a period of intervention.

4.3 Appended to this report, is a copy of the live Continuous Improvement Plan and its status as at June 2025. Since the plan was agreed at Full Council in March 2025, it has been expanded to reflect actions arising from the External Assurance review undertaken by Grant Thornton as part of the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) application, where those actions are still relevant and in delivery. The plan also includes an action arising from the Care Quality Commission inspection of Adult Social Care services.

4.4 There are currently 47 actions within the live plan. Of those, 16 have been completed to date with the rest in progress. This is a live plan and a real commitment to continuous improvement. As such, even where actions have been completed, their impact will continue to be tracked, and further activity may be identified to ensure the actions have the required impact and / or to ensure the Council continues to proactively address the issues within the scope of the recommendations.

4.5 Key highlights, filtered by Best Value theme are set out below:



Partnerships and Community Engagement

4.6 The Council has a commitment to improving the way it works with partners with the aim of establishing a consistent, place-based approach, focussed on what Middlesbrough needs, rather than individual organisations. Since progress was last reported to Members, the Council has:

- Re-established a Town Partnership Board. This will include key public sector partners. The first meeting is due to be held in July and will focus on coproducing a shared vision for the town and ensuring this is reflected within the strategic priorities of all partners.
- Increased its engagement with the Combined Authority to identify ways in which the relationship can be reset. It has agreed a way forward on working to unlock the potential positive impacts that the Middlesbrough Development Corporation could have.
- Worked proactively with the Combined Authority to support its improvement journey as part of wider engagement to reset relationships.

Culture

4.7 One of the key documents the Council will deliver over the next three years is the People Strategy. The People Strategy sets out the steps the Council will take to ensure its staff have the skills, capabilities, behaviours and values that are needed to deliver improved outcomes for our residents and ultimately deliver the Council Plan ambitions. An annual review of the strategy was completed to ensure it continued to align with the organisation's direction of travel and reflected, where necessary, the recommendations made by the various supporting bodies that have worked with the Council on its continuous improvement journey.

4.8 The People Strategy sits alongside the Member Development Strategy which was successfully reviewed in February 2025 with input from Members to ensure the Council continues to focus on the skills and behaviours Members need to be able to deliver their roles.

Use of Resources

4.9 Ensuring resources are used effectively has been, and will continue to be, a key focus of the Council given the financially challenging environment that it continues to operate in. Over the last three months the Council has continued to build on the positive progress it achieved in relation to financial management by strengthening its quarterly financial reports to include a focus on the impact of quarterly outturns on its Medium-Term Financial planning. This will continue to be an area which it will grow and strengthen as it moves through this year's financial outturn reporting programme. This was reflected in the significantly reduced use of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) that was reported to Executive in June 2025. The original submission was for £13.4m in support, following exceptional financial rigour and grip, that actual requirement was reduced to £2.443m. This is a significant achievement.

4.10 In March 2025, Audit Committee considered a report recommending that it completed review of its effectiveness against guidance published by the Chartered

Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The Committee positively supported completion of an independent review and the Local Government Association (LGA) regional financial advisor is currently delivering this work at nil cost to the Council as part of the ongoing support offer available to all councils from the LGA. The outcome of this review will be reported to that committee in July.

- 4.11 The Council has a commitment to transformation as a method of ensuring the Council is better placed to be able to deliver its commitments within the Council Plan, on a financially sustainable footing. In April 2025, an action to reset the approach to transformation and identify additional capacity for its leadership was delivered when Executive agreed a report from the Chief Executive on the matter. Council is currently in the process of implementing that report's recommendations.
- 4.12 During the last three months the Council has also delivered commitments to secure additional capacity within key corporate teams to enable it to deliver on its commitments. Work to recruit to these posts is now in progress.

Governance

- 4.13 Regular engagement with staff and Members will continue to be undertaken on specific issues, as well as regular 'temperature checks' to identify views and assess culture. Surveys and engagement have been undertaken in relation the recent review of scrutiny, there is ongoing engagement with Members in relation to the review of the Constitution which will be considered by Council in September and a regular staff survey went live in June 2025.
- 4.14 In April 2025, a further revision was made to committee, policy and strategy templates to increase focus on delivery of the Council Plan ambitions as well as supporting ongoing compliance with good public law decision making. This report is prepared on that new format.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

- 6.1 The Council could choose to maintain multiple documents capturing continuous improvement activity; however this would be an inefficient approach and would reduce Members ability to see a comprehensive overview of the Council's ongoing activity in relation to continuous improvement.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Responding to the recommendations fully that have been made by both the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team and Independent Improvement Advisory Board as well as wider strategic continuous improvement activity captured within the Plan will inevitably have financial implications for the Council.

	Financial implications in relation to individual activities will be set out as necessary and appropriate authority sought to deliver actions.
Legal	While both the LGA peer challenge process and the Independent Improvement Advisory Board are discretionary exercises, the topics covered by both support the Council's compliance with its Best Value Duty. A Continuous Improvement plan ensures there is a systematic approach to continuous improvement that will provide future assurance to all stakeholders that the Council will respond effectively to any recommendations arising from inspections, reviews and other relevant reports.
Risk	If the Council failed deliver this Continuous Improvement Plan, this could have a negative impact on potentially all of the Strategic Risk Register.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	The Continuous Improvement Plan includes actions that will impact positively on this theme, in particular there are planned actions to strengthen the Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and community engagement.
Reducing Poverty	While not directly impacting on this theme, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge acknowledged the Council's plans which are already underway to strengthen focus on the existing commitment within the Council Plan that tackling poverty should be at the heart of everything we do.
Climate Change / Environmental	The content of this report is not directly relevant to these areas of impact, however continued implementation of improvement activity will ensure the Council is better able to deliver its Council Plan ambitions and compliance with good governance.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Report progress on delivery of the Continuous Improvement Plan to Overview and Scrutiny Board	Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Governance, Policy and Information	30 July 2025

Appendices

1	Continuous Improvement Plan – Progress as at June 2025
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Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Full Council	Local Government Association Peer Review and Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board reports and planned approach to Continuous Improvement – moving forward	26 March 2025

Contact: Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Governance, Policy and Information
Email: ann-marie_johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Continuous Improvement Plan

Delivery of the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan has a clear relationship with the Best Value Duty. Delivery of actions will ensure it has a robust approach across all the seven themes that comprise the Best Value Duty:



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This will ensure the Council is in a stronger position to deliver the four ambitions it has set out within the 2024 – 2027 Council Plan that Middlesbrough will:

- Be a successful and ambitious town
- Be a healthy place
- Have safe and resilient communities
- Deliver Best Value.

This plan encompasses all strategic continuous improvement activity including:

- the findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge team
- the last report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB).
- Outstanding recommendations from the CIPFA
- An action in response to the Care Quality Commission inspection of Adult Social Cares services.

There are currently 45 actions within this plan. Of those 16 are marked as complete, although some still have ongoing commitments and may result in further actions being identified.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
1	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	(CPC) Develop in co-production with communities, residents, partners and businesses a long-term vision for the town that is inclusive, practical and deliverable. By looking outwards and harnessing untapped potential to deliver its vision, this will enable everyone to understand and contribute to delivering shared ambitions for the benefit of Middlesbrough and its communities.	The Council is in the process of reestablishing a town wide engagement mechanism for Partners which will be called a Towns Board and will replicate the best parts of the defunct Local Strategic Partnership arrangements to ensure there is a regular meeting of key strategic public, private and VCS partners to set the strategic direction for the town and identify and deliver system wide change to improve outcomes for our residents. Once established, the first key task will be to co-produce a vision in a process that engages local communities and residents.	Chief Executive	Board to be established by June 2025 and a co-produced vision will be developed during 2025/26.	Ongoing. Draft Terms of Reference developed, and initial communications will be issued this month with a view to setting up the first meeting in June 2025 to be held in July 2025.
2	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	(CPC) Redefine Middlesbrough's strategic approach to partnership working based on principles of timely and meaningful collaboration, co-design and with common purpose to inspire and build a team beyond the council that are galvanised to deliver for the town. This will strengthen delivery of Middlesbrough's place shaping ambitions, maximise use of collective resources, and help shift the focus from organisational recovery to delivery of improved outcomes for residents.	The Council is committed to working with partners more effectively to co-produce a vision for the town, alongside a strategy, underpinned by agreed principles which will govern how we will work together to deliver improved outcomes for our residents. It is planned to use the reestablished Towns Board to co-produce an agreed strategic approach to partnership working.	Chief Executive	March 2026	See above.
3	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	(CPC) Develop and seek to strengthen relationships with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Tees Valley councils. This will maximise the potential for Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley to realise the benefits from	Officers are continuing to engage with the TVCA officers to work positively with them and there are a range of officer working groups that are well established across the Tees Valley.	Mayor and Chief Executive	May 2025	Complete. Following publication of the LGA corporate peer challenge team report, the Chief Executive wrote to the Interim Chief Executive of TVCA to seek discussions.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
			being at the forefront of devolution and drive economic development and growth which will be critical to all the council's ambitions.	The Council will seek formal engagement with the TVCA other Local Government members of the Combined Authority to outline a proposed revised engagement approach across matters of mutual interests to enable improved outcomes for residents and businesses in the Tees Valley			<p>First sessions were held in May. The Council has also engaged with TVCA staff to provide support in response to the recent Best Value Inspection Notice and Section 24 statutory recommendations that have been issued to TVCA.</p> <p>This is just the start of work and while this specific action is complete, further actions will be generated in due course to build on this.</p> <p>Chief Executives have agreed their participation in recruitment of the development corporation chairs for other areas as part of steps to continue positive relationships.</p>
4	All	Partnerships and Community Engagement	<p>(CPC) Seek to resolve the hiatus with the Middlesbrough Mayoral Development Corporation to achieve a shared plan for the town.</p> <p>This will unlock its potential as a powerful mechanism for effectively delivering economic development and growth and integrating the resources and assets of the council and TVCA.</p>	The Council will seek formal discussions with TVCA and government on options to address the hiatus in the best interests of the residents of Middlesbrough.	Chief Executive	May 2025	<p>Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>TVCA have agreed to develop a document which will articulate planned outcomes from the MDC and the timing of the Council and TVCA's contributions toward it.</p>
5	All	Culture	<p>(CPC) Develop and embed a comprehensive approach to strengthening equality, diversity, and inclusion, including:</p> <p>a. In organisational development, the workforce and democratic representation;</p>	We will raise the ambitions within the People Strategy and Member Development Strategy (expanding to include promotion of councillor roles to potential future councillors) to seize the opportunities that an improved approach to community engagement will bring as our residents increase their trust in the Council.	Head of HR and Head of Legal (People)	<p>People Strategy annual review (April 2025)</p> <p>Member Development Strategy annual review</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>Revised People Strategy considered and adopted by LMT in May. There is a detailed workplan in place which contains greater ambition and activity in</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
			<p>b. Within strategy, policy, and service delivery; and</p> <p>c. Community engagement, ensuring it looks at this agenda strategically for Middlesborough as a whole, not only for the organisation and those elected or employed.</p> <p>This will ensure EDI is at the heart of everything it does, that the council is representative of the communities it serves and delivers better decision-making by harnessing different perspectives</p>			(February 2026)	<p>relation to community engagement.</p> <p>The Council now offers briefings to those who are considering standing for local election. This needs to be codified within the next review of the Member Development Strategy.</p>
				<p>We will review the Council's report formats, policy and strategy templates to strengthen the way the Council assesses the impact of its activities on equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Head of Governance, Policy and Information</p>	May 2025	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Report formats were revised in April. Communications issued to report authors and all staff involved in the report development process. An Engagement session was held with Wider Leadership Management Team to outline the rationale for changes including improved consideration of impacts on EDI as well as improving the way reports demonstrate their impact on the four Council Plan ambitions.</p> <p>The Council has also reviewed its Impact Assessment Policy to capture impacts on poverty.</p>
				<p>Over the next 12 months the Council plans to increase community development capacity as part of the emerging Neighbourhoods Strategy which will include actions to also reset its approach to community engagement to ensure it better understands and responds to the needs of its communities as well as reestablishing a</p>	<p>Director of Environment and Community Services</p>	March 2026	<p>Ongoing.</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
				proactive approach to decision making that focusses on coproduction where possible.			
6	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	<p>(CPC) Bring further rigour to financial planning and management to support savings delivery and financial resilience by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reviewing the MTFP assumptions and updating them on a quarterly basis, with clear plans for managing demand and delivering savings reported in monthly budget reports. b. Supporting Executive Members to own and shape the financial position, within their portfolio areas and collectively, working with senior officers to challenge, monitor and hold each other to account. c. Embed understanding and ownership of the financial position with budget holders to ensure the on-going delivery of transformation, savings and efficiencies. d. Ensuring that scrutiny and audit oversight is effective, transparent and supports understanding - beyond the council - with key partners and the public. e. Reviewing pay scales to support recruitment and retention of key staff, 	Effects on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are going to be included within future quarterly budget outturn reports.	Section 151 Officer	To commence within the year-end report for 2024/25 (June 2025)	Complete and ongoing. Impacts on the MTFP are reflected within the year end report being considered by Executive in June 2025. Going forward this will be expanded on in future reports.
				The Council already has a cycle of monthly budget reporting and agreement of actions in response to issues raised by this process. These are then formally reported to Members/ appropriate member decision making and engagement is undertaken. This is included within the quarterly outturn reports.			
				Executive role - Further training will be provided to Executive Members on financial management disciplines. The Council already has in place Executive involvement in the budget clinic cycle, attending on a quarterly basis for all areas except Children's Services where they attend monthly.	Section 151 Officer	March 2026	Ongoing. Following identification of the Executive Members, a training programme is being developed in consultation with the lead member for finance with a draft training programme to be in place by July for delivery from September onwards.
				NEW ACTION – Commence delivery of the Member training programme	Section 151 Officer	July 2025	In development.
				Regular monthly reports continue to be submitted to Leadership Team and Wider Leadership Management Team on the budget position. We have an ongoing training programme that we are committed to delivering to ensure we raise and maintain the financial skill sets of our budget holders. Additional support is targeted at new budget holders, on a risk-based approach, with the highest levels of support targeted at those managing the most volatile budgets.	Section 151 Officer	Monthly	Ongoing.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
			linked to workforce and succession planning, with a focus on both bringing in external, as well as nurturing internal, talent.	A proposal will be submitted to Audit Committee to recommend it completes a self-assessment against CIPFA Good Governance guidance in March. If agreed, it will be delivered during 2025/26.	Section 151 Officer	March 2025, with the review to be completed during 2025/26	Complete and ongoing. The review is underway and is being facilitated by an LGA regional advisory who is a former Section 151 Officer. The outcome of that review will be agreed by committee and then reported within the first annual report from the Committee to full Council, anticipated to be delivered by September 2025.
				Scrutiny - the Monitoring officer and S151 officer are working towards development of an integrated approach to reporting the quarterly outturn position to improve members understanding of the overall position of the Council financially and their understanding of the impact on delivery of Council plan priorities.	Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer	June 2025 onwards Revised target April 2026	Discussions on how to ensure that integrated performance and finance reporting works effectively to demonstrate a narrative across the two disciplines and informs Council decision making is ongoing. It is proposed that this initial target is reset to allow the Council time to reset its wider approach to Performance management, with a view to implementing a new approach from 2026/27.
				The Town Board, once reestablished, will become the vehicle through which strategic discussions with our partners are held this will include sharing information about our spending power and priorities. The Board will be established during 2025.	Chief Executive	June 2025	See previous.
				We are securing additional capacity within the HR team to be able to look at options around the Council's recruitment and retention of key staff as well as ongoing delivery of the People Strategy to ensure our staff have the	Head of HR	May 2025	Complete. Growth bid has been approved to provide this additional capacity. Additional action captured to track recruitment to the post.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
				skills and capabilities to be able to meet the needs of succession planning.			
				NEW ACTION - Complete recruitment of the Pay and Reward Specialist to provide additional capacity to review the Council's approach on this matter.	Head of HR	September 2025	
7	All	Use of Resources	<p>(CPC) Reframe Middlesbrough's approach to transformation, shifting from tactical savings during a crisis, to long term financial sustainability and continuous improvement to deliver better outcomes, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Undertaking a cross-council reset and relaunch of its transformation priorities, alongside the council plan and council values, underpinned by strong leadership, a robust communications and engagement plan, and organisational development strategy. b. Creating a senior transformation officer role to lead, consolidate and prioritise the current programme, identify new areas for transformation, track progress and delivery of desired outcomes, and drive the organisational change and buy-in required to deliver successful transformation. c. Reviewing capacity to deliver Middlesbrough's transformation ambitions, including within corporate services and supporting data and analysis and performance 	<p>Following successful delivery of a programme of projects which have been primarily focussed on putting the council on a sound financial footing.</p> <p>The Council is currently pausing slightly to ensure the next phase of its approach to transformation of services, using a refined set of projects and programmes that has an increased focus on delivery of improved outcomes for our residents to support delivery of the council plan vision and underpinning ambitions, within a sustainable cost envelope.</p> <p>A report on the revised approach and the plans to put in place the capacity to deliver it successfully will be presented to Executive shortly.</p>	Chief Executive and Section 151 officer	April 2025	Complete. The Council has taken a reset report to Executive in April which has set out how it will amend delivery of the Council's approach to transformation. This includes plans to recruit a senior transformation officer.
				NEW ACTION - Complete recruitment of a Strategic Lead for Transformation.	Chief Executive	September 2025	New action added following completion of the initial commitment to reset the Council's approach to transformation
				NEW ACTION complete recruitment of a Continuous Improvement Team.	Strategic Lead for Transformation	October 2025	New action added following completion of the initial commitment to reset the Council's approach to transformation

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
			management, to ensure that all relevant services are adequately resourced to support transformation outcomes.				
8	Delivering Best Value	Continuous Improvement	<p>(CPC) Establish a locally owned assurance and improvement approach for Middlesbrough once the voluntary improvement Board steps down.</p> <p>This will help embed and sustain continuous improvement and support, providing oversight of the golden thread between the council's vision, corporate plan, performance and delivery of outcomes. By doing so, it will provide the council, its partners, and residents with assurance that the improvement journey is continuing at pace.</p>	This Continuous Improvement plan and the regular reporting of it to Executive and Scrutiny will ensure there is a locally owned assurance and improvement plan in place.	Chief Executive	July 2025 onwards	Ongoing. This document forms part of the first reports that will be submitted.
9	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	<p>(CPC) Review and strengthen Middlesbrough's internal audit arrangements and provision. This will ensure they are fit for purpose and adequately support its continuous improvement and assurance journey, with internal audit a key tool when deployed strategically in the delivery of high-quality services, transformation and financial outcomes</p>	Commission an external review of the current arrangements for internal audit to provide assurance to the Council as to whether they remain fit for purpose or require adjustment to better support the Council's continuous improvement and assurance journey.	Section 151 Officer	Review to be commissioned by September 2025 for deliver in 2025/26.	<p>An initial meeting has been held with Veritau to discuss the scope of this review and timescales.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a draft scope setting out required outcomes from an Internal Audit Service will be developed in consultation with Leadership Management Team by August 2025.</p>
10	All	Governance	<p>(CPC) Review and strengthen Middlesbrough's overview & scrutiny arrangements.</p> <p>This will ensure arrangements support robust and impactful scrutiny for the future, aligned with best practice.</p>	A planned review is already underway to assess the impact and effectiveness of the current arrangements following 12 months of their implementation with a view to changing if needed. Guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny will be used and members will be fully engaged in the review.	Monitoring Officer	May 2025	Complete. Review of scrutiny arrangements completed in December and the final report went to Overview and Scrutiny Board in April 2025. As a result of the review, scrutiny panels

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
				In addition, a pre-scrutiny protocol will be developed to establish a collaborative working relationship between Executive and Scrutiny Councillors to enhance decision-making in the organisation.			have been amended to increase panel capacity from 3 to 4 (including OSB). Pre-scrutiny protocol submitted to LMT in May 2025 prior to submission to OSB in June.
11	All	Governance	(CPC) Support councillors further in their roles through: a. Providing the Executive with administrative support and training for their roles; b. Addressing issues with Councillor Gateway system; c. Providing sufficient advanced notice for meetings, and at times that meet councillors' needs; and d. Promote and encourage good councillor conduct, including on digital platforms.	We are securing additional democratic support capacity to support the Executive team administration their roles.	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	Completed. Agreed growth bid in place.
				NEW ACTION – complete recruitment to an additional Business Support Officer post to support the work of the Executive	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	Completed in June 2025.
				NEW ACTION – training for Executive Members to be developed	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	Complete and ongoing. The incoming Executive have been offered access to the LGA Executive member leadership training course as well as bespoke training offered from the Deputy Monitoring Officer. This will continue to be tracked to ensure a good take up.
				We are securing additional capacity to support the quality of responses to Members and to manage feedback from Members to establish a continuous improvement approach to both the system and the outcomes members are seeking.	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	Completed. Agreed growth bid in place.
				NEW ACTION – complete recruitment to the additional support to support an improved Member Enquiries experience for Councillors	Monitoring Officer	September 2025	Ongoing.
				Ongoing discussions will continue to be held with Members to identify the issues with timings and options the Council	Monitoring Officer	May 2025 committee diary setting by	Complete. In order to ensure this is member led, it has been decided to book provisional dates for

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
				could put in place to manage timings and support Members to attend.		Council and ongoing	meetings of committees and then facilitate a committee-by-committee discussion on timing and frequency of meetings to meet Member needs. The Council will continue to seek feedback on this and refine the approach as necessary.
				We have recently delivered further training to all Members on good conduct on social media and will regularly push out reminders on good practice on social media usage.	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	Ongoing, social media posts continue to be a source of standards complaints.
12	All	Governance	<p>(CPC) Continue to improve member and officer relationships with clear understanding of the respective roles, responsibilities and promoting good behaviours.</p> <p>This will continue to strengthen Middlesbrough's governance guardrails, promote conduct in line with the Nolan Principles, and avoid the risks which in the past have arisen from Middlesbrough's Mayoral model.</p>	We are committed to an ongoing cycle of training and development of both officers and Members and will regularly take the temperature of the organisation through engagement and surveys to identify where more needs to be done.	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing regular surveys throughout the year	<p>Ongoing. Staff temperature check survey went live in June 2025.</p> <p>Members were surveyed as part of the review of the Member Development Survey in February 2025. The next planned survey will be undertaken in September 2025 and will focus on Member and Officer relationships.</p> <p>The Statutory Officers meet with group leaders on a monthly basis.</p>
13	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources, Service delivery and Continuous Improvement	(MIIAB) Develop a medium-term plan, as organisational capacity improves, to integrate finance and performance reporting within the corporate governance framework.	Following successful growth bids to put in place the capacity within Finance, action is being taken to secure additional capacity to reestablish a more embedded performance management process as well. Action will initially be taken to recruit additional capacity, with a view to first working together to strengthen performance management and reporting and then jointly developing an integrated approach to reporting to improve the Council's ability	Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer	Staff will be recruited into post by September 2025.	<p>Ongoing. Additional posts have now been job evaluated for the performance team and are going through the VCF process.</p> <p>Recruitment to the Deputy 151 officer post has been completed. This post will be necessary to shape the nature of the additional</p>

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
				to demonstrate alignment of its resources with Council priorities and the relationship between resourcing and performance across its priority areas.			capacity within finance and complete recruitment. They will commence in post in late July 2025.
14	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	<p>(MIAAB) Focus on long term financial resilience and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> tight control on 2025/26, develop a balanced position for the medium term, have a planned approach to growth, do not fund ongoing expenditure from one off funding pots, focus on transformational opportunities. 	<p>The Council has a robust budget management approach in place which it intends to maintain in 2025/26, including ongoing budget clinics, with Member involvement within them, as well as monthly budget reporting to inform these processes.</p> <p>Regular liaison with Executive will be undertaken as part of the quarterly review of the effects of decisions and expenditure on the MTFP. This will include medium term planning for growth.</p> <p>Not funding ongoing expenditure from one off pots of funding is a principle that is already robustly applied to Council budget setting processes. For example the proposed governance of the Middlesbrough Priorities fund includes such a principle.</p>	Section 151 Officer	<p>Quarterly throughout 2025/26</p> <p>Proposed revised target of April 2026 onwards</p>	<p>Discussions on how to ensure that integrated performance and finance reporting works effectively to demonstrate a narrative across the two disciplines and informs Council decision making is ongoing.</p> <p>It is proposed that this initial target is reset to allow the Council time to reset its wider approach to Performance management, with a view to implementing a new approach from 2026/27.</p>
15	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	<p>(MIIAB) Be prudent with extra money: top up reserves (to a level higher than currently suggesting), invest in contingency.</p>	<p>This is another principle within the Council's budget setting process and there are a number of contingencies built into the budget including a risk fund to manage risks around non-delivery of savings.</p> <p>The Medium-Term Financial Plan includes plans to grow the reserves prudently while balancing against the level of demand arising from being a local authority in one of the country's most deprived areas.</p>	Section 151 Officer	n/a - Ongoing over the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan	Ongoing. The Year end outturn report on 11 June 2025, shows a positive direction of travel on reserves over the life of the MTFP. On 31 March 2025, reserves were at £21.665m, compared to a target that was set during the section 24 action plan delivery of £18.1m by 31 March 2025.
16	All	All	(MIIAB) Build organisational capacity to strengthen resilience in	The Council has already taken action to identify funding for growth in these	Chief Executive	May 2025	Complete and ongoing. Finance growth bid is now

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
			finance, HR, OD and transformation to support delivery of your corporate plan priorities.	areas and it will consider whether there are any further growth needs within its reset approach to transformation which will be considered by Executive in April 2025.			<p>secured and a service review will be undertaken to ensure it is utilised effectively once the new Deputy 151 Officer is in post from late July 2025. The review is expected to commence by November 2025.</p> <p>The Council has reset its approach to transformation and set aside significant capital receipts that can be drawn down as needed to fund support services as the Strategic Lead of Transformation drives the Council's approach to transformation and develops, in detail, the activities that will need to be taken. In April 2025, Executive agreed flexible use of Capital receipts to fund a strategic lead for Transformation and additional support capacity in the form of a continuous improvement team.</p> <p>Recruitment to these posts is expected to commence in July 2025.</p>
17	All	Leadership	(MIIAB) Continue to focus on organisational development as an important part of your continuous improvement journey, with a particular focus on team development and embedding stable, permanent leadership arrangements.	Executive and Leadership team development programme has been put in place and is resuming at pace, with external support and expertise. In addition, the Council is refreshing support for its wider Managers, reestablishing a management training gateway, along with a wide range of programmes to develop skills and capacity. This is being overseen within the delivery of the People Strategy.	Monitoring Officer	Ongoing	The Council's Organisational Development (OD) Team has developed a leadership and management training programme that spans from aspiring manager level through to Chief Executive. The programme focusses on a core set of skills and behaviours to ensure they

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
							are embedded across the organisation. The Council is working to increase the capacity of its OD team and aims to complete recruitment to a vacant post within the team by September 2025.
18	All	All	(MIIAB) Complete and implement your communications strategy and use it as an effective tool to bring the council vision to life and to ensure that both the internal and external environment understands the outcomes the council is trying to achieve.	Once the Council has reset its approach to transformation, a draft Communications Strategy will be developed to ensure that there is a plan in place, owned by senior leaders, that ensures the Council is clearly communicating its vision, priorities and actions to ensure Members, Staff, the public and partners understand and engage with the outcomes the council is trying to achieve.	Chief Executive	Draft Strategy June 2025, to be reviewed on a quarterly basis by Leadership team. Reprofiled to September 2025.	In progress. The Communications team continues to prioritise topics that are linked to the Council Plan. The changes to the approach to transformation are still emerging. One key update is the briefings for staff held by the Chief Executive on the Council Plan, the organisation's values and transformation
19	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) The council are mitigating this risk for 2024/25 through contingencies and EFS. There are also reserves though these are at a critically low level. From 2025/26 onwards, the council aims to deliver transformational savings but we consider there to be significant risk in this plan. We raise Recommendation 15 for the council to develop comprehensive mitigation plans for savings that have been designated as 'Amber' and 'Red' within the Transformation Programme, focusing on identifying barriers and implementing solutions to reduce risks. Ensuring these plans are regularly updated and integrated into the projects.	The Council has put in place a savings delivery risk budget and has also increased the levels of reserves to manage this risk and is in the process of also resetting its approach to transformation. Regular monitoring of savings delivery will continue to take place with mitigation being developed as appropriate. SMART action – Any savings that are deemed to be undeliverable must be replaced with mitigation. Financial Regulations will be amended to set out clear expectations around this.	A Humble, Section 151 Officer	September 2025	Ongoing. The Section 151 Officer has in place a regular monitoring and reporting cycle on delivery of savings and sets out this performance within the Quarterly budget outturn reports to Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Board. As of June 2025, no savings for 2025/26 have been identified as undeliverable. Performance by quarter will be reported in the Quarter One outturn report, due to be submitted to Executive in September 2025. Further actions as required will be developed following that.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
20	Delivering Best Value	Governance	(EFS) We raise Recommendation 3 encouraging the council to: a) consider the merits of appointing at least one independently, ideally two, co-opted independent members to its Audit Committee; b) ensure that the Audit Committee reports directly to Full Council and that this is documented within the Constitution; and c) include quarterly presentation of the Strategic Risk Register to the Audit Committee	Audit Committee to complete a self-assessment of its effectiveness with external independent support which will inform a develop plan for the committee.	A Humble, Section 151 Officer and C Benjamin, Monitoring Officer	September 2025	Ongoing. The self-assessment was already in train and was a commitment in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement. An independent LGA advisor is supporting the committee to complete this.
				Completion of the first annual report from Audit Committee to Full Council.		December 2025	Ongoing. The outcome of the self assessment will be reflected in the first annual report of the committee and will form a development plan for the Committee.
				The Risk Register is reported to the Audit Committee every 6 months and to Overview and Scrutiny Board every quarter.		N/a already in place every 6 months.	Complete.
21	Delivering Best Value	Governance	(EFS) We raise Recommendation 4 encouraging the council to explore options for growing report writing skills at the lower levels of the organisation.	A revised report format will be considered by Leadership team in April, alongside recommendations to refresh report writing support.	C Benjamin, Monitoring Officer	Complete	Complete. A new report format has been developed and engagement has been undertaken to identify report writing needs.
22	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) We have raised Recommendation 9 that the council should more clearly articulate its approach to mitigating treasury management risks in the Treasury Management Strategy. From our review we have not identified any significant risk that the council is exposed to but recommend a clearer articulation of the steps taken to mitigate these risks.	Improved TMS taken to Council in February 2025 but further work will be undertaken to strengthen this within a revised TMS half year update to be presented to Executive.	A Humble, Section 151 Officer	October 2025	Ongoing.
23	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) We have raised Recommendation 11 that the council should progress external management arrangements for its remaining commercial properties in a timely manner.	The Council has already commenced a soft market testing exercise with Cushman and Wakefield to assess the extent of the commercial portfolio that could be outsourced. Once completed this will inform next steps with a realistic	R Horniman, Director of Regeneration	Completion of soft market testing by March 2025	Ongoing. Soft market testing complete. The initial stage has been completed to assess the appropriateness of arrangements to ensure it is assured that it has the

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
				proposal for outsourcing based on market appetite.		Subject to findings, development of an appropriate approach to outsourcing will be undertaken during 2025/26 if the business case is supportive of that outcome.	correct management arrangements in place, which included consideration of external management. The Council is currently continuing to review and refine its options appraisal in relation to this to ensure it has a sustainable medium term approach to commercial property management.
24	Delivering Best Value	Use of Resources	(EFS) We have raised Recommendation 12 that the council should continue to review and consider the most prudent approach to calculating MRP whilst considering both short-term and long-term impacts on the revenue budget.	The Council will review the MRP methodology and consider the effects on the MTFP as part of the 2026/7 budget setting process.	A Humble, Section 151 Officer	March 2026	Ongoing. This will be considered within the review of the MTFP as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process which will articulate the Council's considered approach, taking into account the costs of changes in approach, risks and the impact on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
25	Delivering Best Value	Continuous Improvement	(EFS) We raise Recommendation 16 that the council should develop a comprehensive change management framework that includes clear objectives, key performance indicators, and a culture of continuous improvement. There should be integrated accountability structures that clearly define roles and responsibilities for transformation initiatives. We also raise Recommendation 17 for the council to engage with stakeholders, including employees, residents, and partners, to build support for transformative initiatives and ensure alignment with broader community goals. The council should ensure all stakeholders are	Develop and finalise a Change Management Framework Not applicable as already actions in place to address this within the CIP	A Humble, Section 151 Officer	December 2025	Ongoing. This will be picked up by the new Strategic Lead for Transformation to put in place a coherent approach to transformation that includes change management.

Rec.	Council Plan Ambition	Best Value Theme	Recommendation	Action	Owner(s)	Target date for completion	June 2025 update
			aligned with the transformation agenda through effective communication and engagement strategies.				
26	All	All	(EFS) The Council have put in place an improvement plan to address the recommendations within the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report on the Council's Adult Social Care services that was issued in February 2025.	Submit quarterly reports to Department of Health and Social Care following consideration of those items by the People Scrutiny Panel.	Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration	Ongoing from September 2025 on a quarterly basis (revised from May 2025)	Ongoing. The outcome of the inspection was reported to People Scrutiny Panel in March 2025 The first progress report is now due to go to the Committee in September 2025.
27	Delivering Best Value	Continuous Improvement, Use of Resources and Leadership	(CQC) The CQC inspectors identified concerns that there was not much of a corporate view of adult social care performance data.	Refresh and reestablish a performance management cycle beyond the strategic level, to embed a 'golden thread' of Performance Management from the Council Plan down to departmental level.	Director of Legal and Governance Services	December 2025	Ongoing. A proposed way forward has been developed. A revised Performance Management Policy will be brought forward for Member decision in December 2025.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Democratic Services
Relevant Executive Member:	Not Applicable
Submitted to:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Date:	30 July 2025
Title:	Setting the Work Programme 2025-2026, for the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
That the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider and agree its work programme for the 2025/2026 municipal year. Once agreed, the work programme will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board, for approval.

Executive summary
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Board is asked to consider its work programme for the 2025/2026 municipal year.</p> <p>The primary function of a Scrutiny Panel is to influence the policies and decisions of the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services. It does this by gathering evidence on issues that affect local residents and making informed recommendations based on its findings.</p> <p>Work programmes provide structure to the activity of the scrutiny panel and allow for the effective planning and preparation of work. The Panel is asked to select two Scrutiny</p>

Investigation Topics and note the standard agenda items for updates throughout the municipal year.

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to ensure that topics agreed for inclusion:

- Affect a group of people living within the Middlesbrough area.
- Relate to a service, event, or issue in which the Council has an influence.
- Are not issues which the Overview and Scrutiny Board or Scrutiny Panels have considered during the last 12 months.
- Do not relate to an individual service complaint.
- Do not replate matters dealt with by another Council Committee unless the issue deals with procedure.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions.

1.1 Managing an effective work programme is essential to the success of scrutiny panels, as it assists with planning and managing the workload, focussing on the Council's ambitions and aims to assist with maximising impact on the Council's performance and outcomes for residents.

1.2 Scrutiny ensures that the decisions taken by the Council and its partners are appropriate. It creates an open, transparent way for members to shape, question, evaluate and challenge policies, decisions, and performance.

1.3 Scrutiny investigations are usually carried out over the course of several meetings, which consider information from relevant sources and examine current policies and practices. At the end of the exercise, a report is prepared which summarises the scrutiny panel's findings and puts forward recommendations.

1.4 The purpose of the report is to agree a work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Board, ensuring Scrutiny Investigation Topics and standard updates support the delivery of the ambitions of the Middlesbrough Council Plan 2024-27:

Our ambitions	Aims
A successful and ambitious town	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities. - Improve attainment in education and skills. - Ensure housing provision meets local demand
A healthy Place	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities. - protect and improve our environment. - promote inclusivity for all. - reduce poverty
Safe and resilient communities	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support adults to be independent for longer. - improve transport and digital connectivity. - promote new ideas and community initiatives.

	- <i>reduce crime and anti-social behaviour</i>
Delivering best value	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ensure robust and effective corporate governance.</i> - <i>set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability</i>

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Board agrees a Work Programme, for approval by Overview and Scrutiny Board by;

1. Noting the standard updates / presentations that will be scheduled throughout the municipal year.
2. Selecting two Scrutiny Investigation Topics, taking into consideration the suggestions from stakeholders and additional suggestions from panel members.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Under the terms of the Local Government Act 2000, local authorities have a responsibility of community leadership and a power to secure the effective promotion of community well-being. Therefore, in addition to the scrutiny panel's generally recognised powers (of holding the Executive to account, reviewing service provision, developing policy, considering budget plans and performance and financial monitoring), panels also have the power to consider any matters which are not the responsibility of the Council, but which affect the local authority or the inhabitants of its area. For example, nationally, local authorities have undertaken scrutiny work on issues such as post-office closures, rural bus services, policing matters and flood defence schemes.

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 19 March 2025, a new structure for scrutiny arrangements in Middlesbrough was agreed. As a consequence, Middlesbrough Council now operates three Scrutiny Panels for 2025/2026 in addition to its Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel
- Children's Services Scrutiny Panel
- Place Scrutiny Panel

4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Board are empowered to undertake review topics in the same way as Scrutiny Panels if they choose. At the beginning of the 2024/25 municipal year OSB formed the opinion that scrutinising the Forward Work Programme more thoroughly, inviting Executive Members to each meeting and monitoring developments in relation to the ward boundary review and Middlesbrough local plan that were taking place meant there was little time to scrutinise review topics. Instead, the Board decided against setting any review topics for its work programme but would investigate emerging issues where necessary.

4.3 Topics considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in 2024-2025 are listed below for Member's information.

Scrutiny Investigation Topics

Completed	Ongoing	Not Started
NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness • Electoral Registration • Cyber Security

Updates / Presentations

OSB Remit:
NA

4.4 At the start of every Municipal Year, Scrutiny Panels discuss the topics that they would like to review during the coming year. The Panel is asked to select topics for two Scrutiny Investigations and to note the standard updates that will be scheduled as part of the Work Programme.

4.5 As part of the process for establishing the panel's work programme, Democratic Services gather information and views from a number of sources. Following an annual consultation exercise which ran between 3 April 2025 and 9 May 2025, several topics were suggested by Councillors, residents, officers, and other stakeholders which are listed in Appendix 1. Context and rationale for the suggestions have been detailed where this was provided. Members are advised that the list is not exhaustive and that additional topics can be added and considered at the scrutiny panel meeting.

4.6 When considering topics for the work programme, Members need to consider the following to prioritise issues where scrutiny can make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development:

- Does the issue affect a majority of the population of Middlesbrough or specific area?
- Is the issue strategic and significant
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?
- Will it be duplicating some other work?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and others?
- Is it an issue of community concern?
- Are there adequate resources to do the activity well?
- Is the scrutiny activity timely?

- 4.7 In addition to the selected Scrutiny Investigation Topics, Panel Members are asked to note the following standard agenda items which will be scheduled for updates, throughout the municipal year:

	Update
1	Executive Member Portfolio Updates (various)
2	
3	

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

Ward Members were invited to submit topic suggestions as part of the consultation.

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

No other alternatives are put forward as part of the report.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Details of Financial impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Legal	Details of Legal impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Risk	Details of Risk impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	Details of Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Reducing Poverty	Details of Reducing Poverty impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Climate Change / Environmental	Details of Climate Change / Environmental impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Details of Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Data Protection	Details of Data Protection impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Approved recommendations to be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board	Democratic Services Officer	21 July

Appendices

1	Suggested Scrutiny Topics for 2025/26
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Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

Contact: Scott Bonner/ Sue Lightwing
Email: [scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk/](mailto:scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk)
sue_lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Suggested Scrutiny Topics for 2025/2026

Ref	Suggested Scrutiny Investigation Topic	Source	Council Plan 2024-2027, Ambition and Aim
1	<p>The role of faith and belief in decision-making, civic life, and the work of Middlesbrough Council</p> <p>Middlesbrough is a town of diverse faiths and beliefs, including non-religious belief. Does the council understand what 'faith and belief' means? Are there gaps in understanding, in particular around non-religious beliefs and how these are given a voice in shaping policy making and community work. Are HR policies in the Council reflective of faith and belief of its staff? Are civic events - particularly in regards to Remembrance - geared toward one faith over others and none. Should we look to be more inclusive in these?</p>	Councillor	<p>Safe and resilient communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>promote new ideas and community initiatives</i> <p>Delivering best value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ensure robust and effective corporate governance.</i>
2	<p>Poverty, its impact, and efforts to tackle it.</p> <p>We have some of the highest poverty rates in the country. The Executive is working on a poverty strategy and this work could complement that. I think this could be a cross-cutting scrutiny that is led by OSB but looked at in a series of sessions by individual scrutiny panels.</p>	Councillor	<p>A healthy Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities.</i> - <i>reduce poverty</i>
3	Cashless Council	Officer	<p>Delivering best value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ensure robust and effective corporate governance.</i> - <i>set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability</i>

4	Transformation – expenditure transparency	Officer	Delivering best value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance. - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability
5	Local Market This was about sharing with scrutiny how the Council tries to ensure that contracts are awarded to the local market. It would cover the quotations process, our reporting on local spend and why this can't always be the case due to procurement law. It would also be an opportunity for me to share the pilot we are doing with Nomia which is about digitalising procurement and getting local suppliers registered so we can have some really good data about our local market which may identify development opportunities or identify suppliers we were not aware of locally. As a small unitary local does mean Tees Valley as well so again this can be shared.	Officer	Delivering best value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance. - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability
6	Customer – probably later in the year as it progresses.	Officer	Delivering best value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance.
7	Approach to emerging digital agenda (including AI); ambitions for embracing digital technology with residents and communities	Officer	Delivering best value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance. - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability A healthy place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote inclusivity for all.

8	Recruitment from a candidate perspective: how easy is it to apply for a job with the council?	Officer	Delivering best value - ensure robust and effective corporate governance
10	Outward facing branding	Officer	Delivering best value - ensure robust and effective corporate governance
11	Development of a vision for the town	Officer	Delivering best value - ensure robust and effective corporate governance
12	Engagement with the development of any changes to the transformation themes	Officer	Delivering best value - ensure robust and effective corporate governance

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Democratic Services
Relevant Executive Member:	Not Applicable
Submitted to:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Date:	30 July 2025
Title:	Setting the Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/2026
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
That the Overview and Scrutiny Board approves the inclusion of the topics listed in the report topics put forward by the Adult Social Care, Children's and Place Scrutiny Panels.

Executive summary
<p>Overview and Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and agree individual Panel work programmes for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.</p> <p>When considering the work programme, the Board is asked to ensure that topics agreed for inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affect a group of people living within the Middlesbrough area. • Relate to a service, event or issue in which the Council has a significant stake or over which the Council has an influence. • Are not issues which the Overview and Scrutiny Board or the scrutiny panels have considered during the last 12 months. • Do not relate to an individual service complaint. • Do not relate to matters dealt with by another Council committee, unless the issue deals with procedure.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to determine the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025/2026 ensuring Scrutiny Investigation Topics and standard updates support the delivery of the ambitions of the Middlesbrough Council Plan 2024-27:

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities - Improve attainment in education and skills - Ensure housing provision meets local demand
A healthy Place	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities - protect and improve our environment - promote inclusivity for all - reduce poverty
Safe and resilient communities	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support adults to be independent for longer - improve transport and digital connectivity - promote new ideas and community initiatives - reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
Delivering best value	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Board approves the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025-2026 by agreeing individual Scrutiny Work Plans detailed in this report.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Board is required to consider and approve the Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

4. Background and relevant information

At the start of every Municipal Year, scrutiny panels discuss the topics that they would like to review during the coming year. Work programmes are useful as they provide some structure to a scrutiny panel's activity and allow for the effective planning and preparation of work. As part of the process for establishing the work programme, support officers gather information/views from a number of sources. The topics agreed by each Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2025/2026 are listed below for the Board's approval.

Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel

In Depth Reviews

- Healthy Place Making across the life course with a focus on children and young people.
- Domestic Abuse / Violence Against Women and Girls and how to tackle it.

Updates:

- Quarterly Monitoring of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Improvement Plan
- Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) - Annual Report
- Director of Public Health, Annual Report
- Updates from the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
- South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Draft Quality Account
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust - Draft Quality Account

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

In Depth Reviews

- Out of Area Specialist Provision
- Educational Attainment of Children in Care
- Supporting Children who are being exploited

Updates:

- South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report
- Performance data
- Children's Services financial information.
- SEND Local Offer

Overview and Scrutiny Board

In Depth Reviews

- Poverty, its impact, and efforts to tackle it.
- The role of faith and belief in decision-making, civic life, and the work of Middlesbrough Council

Place Scrutiny Panel

In Depth Reviews

- Barriers to Regeneration (ongoing review)
- Commemorating Middlesbrough's Bicentenary in 2030
- Development of a Vision for the Town
- The Council's Role in Housing

Updates:

- Flood Risk Management
- RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers) (Annual update)
- Community Safety Partnership (Annual update)
- Prevent and Channel (Annual update)

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

6.1 No other options were put forward as part of the report.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Details of impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Legal	
Risk	
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	
Reducing Poverty	
Climate Change / Environmental	
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline

Appendices

1	
2	
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Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

Contact: Scott Bonner/ Sue Lightwing
Email: scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk/
sue_lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Democratic Services Manager
Relevant Executive Member:	Not applicable
Submitted to:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Date:	30 July 2025
Title:	Pre-Decision Protocol
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
That Overview and Scrutiny Board approves the draft Pre-Decision Protocol

Executive summary
<p>The aim of this protocol (Appendix 1) is to set out an agreed way of working with the Executive, in line with the Council's Constitution, to facilitate the role of Scrutiny in respect of pre-decision scrutiny.</p> <p>The purpose of the protocol is to continue to embed a culture that recognises the importance of Executive and Scrutiny working together in a collaborative way.</p>

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 The aim of this protocol is to set out an agreed way of working with the Executive, in line with the Council's Constitution, to facilitate the role of Scrutiny in respect of pre-decision scrutiny.

1.2 The purpose of the protocol is to continue to embed a culture that recognises the importance of Executive and Scrutiny working together in a collaborative way.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities</i> - <i>Improve attainment in education and skills</i> - <i>Ensure housing provision meets local demand</i>
A healthy Place	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities</i> - <i>protect and improve our environment</i> - <i>promote inclusivity for all</i> - <i>reduce poverty</i>
Safe and resilient communities	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>support adults to be independent for longer</i> - <i>improve transport and digital connectivity</i> - <i>promote new ideas and community initiatives</i> - <i>reduce crime and anti-social behaviour</i>
Delivering best value	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ensure robust and effective corporate governance</i> - <i>set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability</i>

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Board approves the Pre-Decision Scrutiny protocol.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Scrutiny carried out well in advance of a decision being made should allow for more time and resources to explore the fundamentals of the decision and if appropriate, propose alternative options.

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open, resulting in improved public policies and services.

4.2 For effective scrutiny to happen the Executive and Scrutiny need to work together for the benefit of the Council and to improve decision-making.

4.3 Considering decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence those decisions, and to improve them. It gives Councillors the opportunity to challenge assumptions that may have been made as the decision was developed. It also provides an opportunity to consider how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision, and how those risks might be mitigated.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable

6. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

6.1 No other options are put forward as part of the report.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Impact will depend on decisions being examined under the pre-decision scrutiny protocol.
Legal	
Risk	
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	
Reducing Poverty	
Climate Change / Environmental	
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline

Appendices

1	Pre-Decision Scrutiny Protocol
2	
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

Contact: Sue Lightwing (Democratic Services Manager)

Email: sue_lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk

PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

The aim of this protocol is to set out an agreed way of working with the Executive, in line with the Council's Constitution, to facilitate the role of Scrutiny in respect of pre-decision scrutiny.

The purpose of the protocol is to continue to embed a culture that recognises the importance of Executive and Scrutiny working together in a collaborative way.

Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open, resulting in improved public policies and services.

In order for effective scrutiny to happen the Executive and Scrutiny need to work together for the benefit of the Council and to improve decision-making.

Considering decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence those decisions, and to improve them. It gives Councillors the opportunity to challenge assumptions that may have been made as the decision was developed. It also provides an opportunity to consider how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision, and how those risks might be mitigated.

Scrutiny Councillors can bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than that provided by Executive Members or Officers, which can help decisions to be more robust.

Looking at a decision before it is made can often be seen as a more effective means of scrutiny than looking at a decision after it is made (for example, through the Call-in process), when the opportunity to influence and change that decision is quite limited. Post-decision scrutiny can, however, help to influence future policy changes in the medium to long-term.

Scrutiny carried out well in advance of a decision being made should allow for more time and resources to explore the fundamentals of the decision and if appropriate, propose alternative options.

Pre- decision scrutiny can help the decision-making process by:

- Providing an impartial perspective.
- Challenging assumptions.
- Developing realistic plans and targets.
- Engaging with the public.

Process

- The Overview and Scrutiny Board will monitor and review the Council's Forward Work Plan of forthcoming Executive Decisions (key and non-key) to determine which items they would like to identify for pre-decision scrutiny before decisions are made by the Executive.

- As the Forward Plan is a live document and is available to view via the Council's Committee Management System, Modern.Gov, Scrutiny Members should review this document when they can, outside of scheduled meetings.
- Where requests for information are made at scheduled meetings, the Democratic Services Officer (DSO) will record any requests for further information in relation to items on the Forward Work Plan in the minutes of the meeting. An action will be added to Modern.gov for the relevant officer to respond to the request and send their response to the DSO via email.
- The DSO will email the Officer response to all Members of the Scrutiny Panel at which the query was raised.
- The DSO will try to ensure that responses are provided by the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting. Any delays in receiving information, and the reasons for the delay, will be reported to the Board.
- An update will be provided by the Chair/DSO or other relevant officer at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting. This is a standing agenda item.
- If further information is subsequently required by individual Scrutiny Panel Members on the same topic, this may be facilitated directly with the Officer providing the information as appropriate.
- Requests for pre-decision scrutiny information may also be made at meetings of the Adult Social Care and Health, Children's and Place Scrutiny Panels, a similar process to the above will be followed and information will be reported back to the relevant Scrutiny Panel.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Chief Executive – Erik Scollay
Relevant Executive Member:	Not applicable
Submitted to:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Date:	30 July 2025
Title:	Executive Forward Plan
Report for:	Discussion
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider and Notes the content of the Executive Forward Work Programme.

Executive summary
<p>OSB has delegated powers to manage the work of Scrutiny and, if appropriate, it can either undertake the work itself or delegate to individual Scrutiny Panels.</p> <p>One of the main duties of OSB is to hold the Executive to account by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive and decide whether value can be added by Scrutiny considering the matter in advance of any decision being made.</p> <p>This would not negate a Non-Executive Member's ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.</p>

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 To make OSB aware of items on the Executive Forward Work Programme.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities - Improve attainment in education and skills - Ensure housing provision meets local demand
A healthy Place	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities - protect and improve our environment - promote inclusivity for all - reduce poverty
Safe and resilient communities	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support adults to be independent for longer - improve transport and digital connectivity - promote new ideas and community initiatives - reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
Delivering best value	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Board

- Consider and note the content of the Executive Forward Work Programme.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 OSB has delegated powers to manage the work of Scrutiny and, if appropriate, it can either undertake the work itself or delegate to individual Scrutiny Panels.

3.2 One of the main duties of OSB is to hold the Executive to account by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive and decide whether value can be added by Scrutiny considering the matter in advance of any decision being made.

3.3 This would not negate a Non-Executive Member's ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.

4. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

4.1 Not applicable

5. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

5.1 No other options are submitted as part of the report.

6. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Relevant Impact will be detailed in individual decisions.
Legal	
Risk	
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	
Reducing Poverty	
Climate Change / Environmental	
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Implement any decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Board with regard to the Executive Forward Work Plan.	Relevant Officer	As directed by OSB

Appendices

1	Executive Forward Work Plan
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Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
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sue_lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk



Executive Forward Plan - 1 April 2025 to 31 May 2026

FOR THE PERIOD 22 SEPTEMBER 2025 TO 31 MAY 2026

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Council Strategy	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
The Mayor							
Deputy Mayor and Executive Member - Education and Culture							
Executive Member - Adult Social Care							
Executive Member - Children's Services							
Executive Member - Development							
I023887 Nunthorpe	Nunthorpe Grange Design Guide Update To approve the updated design guide for the	Executive Member Development 31 Jul 2025	A Successful and Ambitious Town		Public		5) Executive Member for Development <i>Richard Horniman, Director of Regeneration</i> <i>Richard_Horniman@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Council Strategy	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	Nunthorpe Grange housing site						
I023011 All Wards	Commercial Property Executive Report To seek Executive approval for the administrative arrangements in relation to the bad debts and operating income accounts, relating to Commercial properties held by Middlesbrough Council.	Executive 3 Sep 2025	Delivering Best Value	KEY	Fully exempt <i>To seek Executive approval for the administrative arrangements in relation to the bad debts and operating income accounts, relating to Commercial properties held by Middlesbrough Council.</i>		5) Executive Member for Development <i>Saiqa Azeem saiqa_azeem@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>
I023748 Central	Development of Middlehaven Proposals to commence preparatory work for the comprehensive redevelopment of Middlehaven	Executive 3 Sep 2025	A Successful and Ambitious Town	KEY	Public		5) Executive Member for Development <i>Richard Horniman, Director of Regeneration Richard_Horniman@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>
I023750 All Wards	Investment in Homelessness	Executive 3 Sep 2025	A Successful and Ambitious Town	KEY	Public		5) Executive Member for Development

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Council Strategy	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	Proposals for investment alongside a social investor to purchase properties to reduce the expenditure on temporary accommodation						<i>Richard Horniman, Director of Regeneration Richard_Horniman@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>
I023751 All Wards	Capital Investment in Council Buildings Proposals to invest in major reconfiguration and repair of Council buildings	Executive 3 Sep 2025	A Successful and Ambitious Town	KEY	Public		5) Executive Member for Development <i>Richard Horniman, Director of Regeneration Richard_Horniman@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>
Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability							
I022892 Berwick Hills and Pallister; Brambles and Thorntree; Longlands and Beechwood; North	Longlands Road sustainable transport improvements Proposals to improve sustainable transport opportunities along the Longlands Road corridor. The proposals cover a major transport corridor, covering	Executive 3 Sep 2025	A Healthy Place to Live	KEY	Public		6) Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability <i>Chris Orr Chris_Orr@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Council Strategy	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
Ormesby	several wards, at a significant cost						
Executive Member - Finance							
I023932 All Wards	Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update and 2026/27 budget approach and timetable To provide an update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and to seek approval of the budget development approach and timetable for the 2026/27 budget and MTFP for the four-year period 2026/27 to 2029/30.	Executive 3 Sep 2025	Delivering Best Value		Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Andrew Humble</i> <i>andrew_humble@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>
I023931 All Wards	Revenue and Capital Budget – Forecast Year-end Outturn position at Quarter One 2025/26	Executive 3 Sep 2025	Delivering Best Value	KEY	Public		7) Executive Member for Finance <i>Andrew Humble</i> <i>andrew_humble@middlesbrough.gov.uk</i>

Ref No. / Ward	Subject / Decision	Decision Maker and Decision Due Date	Council Strategy	Key / PFP	Likely Exemption	Background documents	Member / Officer Contact
	The report advises the Executive of the Council's financial position as at Quarter One 2025/26						
Executive Member - Neighbourhoods							
Executive Member - Public Health							

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Final Report of the People Scrutiny Panel
CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME)

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Term of Reference D – To consider any potential implications/impact/challenges of CME on providers and services.	Page 12
Term of Reference E – To consider the challenges of transient communities and how the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) track and work with newly arrived families.	Page 13
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THE AIMS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

1. The aims of the review are to:
 - Examine and understand the current issues relating to CME in Middlesbrough.
 - Identify suggestions for developing support for applicable children and their families.
2. The review also aims to assist the LA in achieving the following priorities from the Council Plan 2024-2027:
 - **A successful and ambitious town** - Improve attainment in education and skills; and
 - **A healthy place** - Promote inclusivity for all.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Panel's review, are as follows:
 - A. To understand the current position in terms of Middlesbrough Council's CME; to examine key data and demographics/characteristics in respect of CME in Middlesbrough; and compare with regional and national statistics.
 - B. To examine how the LA works with children, young people and their families, and education providers to identify and support CME (e.g. referrals and proactive identification).
 - C. To investigate what additional resources, if any, could be accessed to assist with CME.
 - D. To consider any potential implications/impact/challenges of CME providers and services.
 - E. To consider the challenges of transient communities and how EMAT track and work with newly arrived families.
 - F. To consider the increasing number of permanently excluded children in respect of CME.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. The Department for Education (DfE) (GOV.UK, 2024a) defines CME as a particular subset of children who are at increased risk and are not attending school. To be classified as a child missing education, children must satisfy all three of the following criteria:
 - Be of compulsory school age.
 - Not be registered at a school.
 - Not be receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.
5. The various categories of CME are as follows:
 - a) Children who are referred by schools to the Authority as missing.
 - b) Children who are EHE, but the Authority has deemed are not receiving an adequate education.
 - c) Children who have recently arrived in the town and are awaiting a school place.
 - d) Children who have been permanently excluded from school and are not in a full time alternative setting.
 - e) Children in the Authority's care for whom full time education has not yet been secured.

6. According to the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE, 2025), CME may be at significant risk of:
- Not meeting their academic potential and underachieving.
 - Becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) in later life.
 - Being victims of harm, abuse or exploitation.
 - Involvement in criminal or gang-related activity.
7. There is also a higher proportion of children recorded as missing education when there is a link to poverty, deprivation or involvement with social services.
8. Guidance for LAs, issued by the DfE (GOV.UK, 2024a) indicates that there should be robust policies and procedures in place to enable them to meet their duties and responsibilities in relation to these children. These include ensuring that there are effective tracking and enquiry systems in place; and appointing a named person to whom schools and other agencies can refer. In Middlesbrough, CME Officers are in post to fulfil this role.
9. Under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (GOV.UK, 2025) there is a duty for LAs to make arrangements to establish the identities of CME who reside in the respective area; are not registered pupils at a school; and are not receiving a suitable education. Those applicable children should be returned to full time education either at a school or alternative provision.
10. In addition, LAs also have a range of other duties, powers and expectations, which include:
- Arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion.
 - Serving notice on parents requiring them to satisfy the LA that the child is receiving suitable education.
 - Issuing School Attendance Orders (SAOs) to parents who fail to satisfy the LA that their child is receiving suitable education, if the LA deems it appropriate that the child should attend school.
 - Prosecute or issue penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure their school-registered child/ren attend school regularly.
11. Where there is concern for a child's welfare, this should be referred to the LA's Children's Social Care department. If there is reason to suspect a crime has been committed, the police should also be involved. In Middlesbrough, the CME Officer will initiate and pursue appropriate enquiries to trace the pupil and regularly review the case until the pupil is re-engaged in education, or was found to be resident in and known to another LA.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:

Term of Reference A - To understand the current position in terms of Middlesbrough Council's CME; to examine key data and demographics/characteristics in respect of CME in Middlesbrough; and compare with regional and national statistics.

12. CME are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education other than at a school. This includes children who are awaiting a school place and children in receipt of unsuitable education, including those children that LAs are supporting to place into suitable education.

National Picture

13. As per the table below, the DfE's most recent data (census date in Autumn 2024, Thursday 3 October 2024) shows that LAs reported 39,200 children missing education, which was an increase of 6,200 from an estimated 33,000 in the previous Autumn term.
14. The rate of CME was 0.5% of the population of comparable ages for children aged 5 to 16 years. At the same time, Middlesbrough's rate of CME was higher than the national rate at 0.6%.
15. The information in this release is based on the EHE and CME data collection. The collection from LAs started in Autumn 2022 and became mandatory in Autumn 2024. The proportion of LAs providing data reached 100% for the first time in Autumn 2024.

Children missing education at census date, autumn 2022/23 to autumn 2024/25							
	2022/23 Autumn term	2022/23 Spring term	2022/23 Summer term	2023/24 Autumn term	2023/24 Spring term	2023/24 Summer term	2024/25 Autumn term
Number of CME on census date	24,700	24,700	28,100	33,000	36,700	36,600	39,200
Rate of CME on census day by population	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%

(SOURCE: GOV.UK, 2024a)

Local Picture

16. When comparing LAs, the following statistics indicate that Middlesbrough has the highest rate of CME in the Tees Valley area:

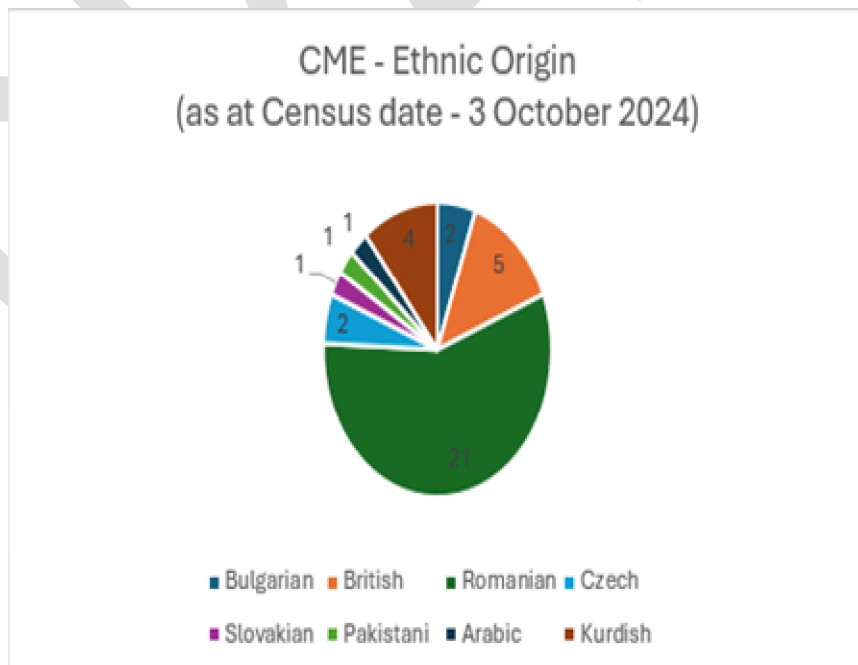
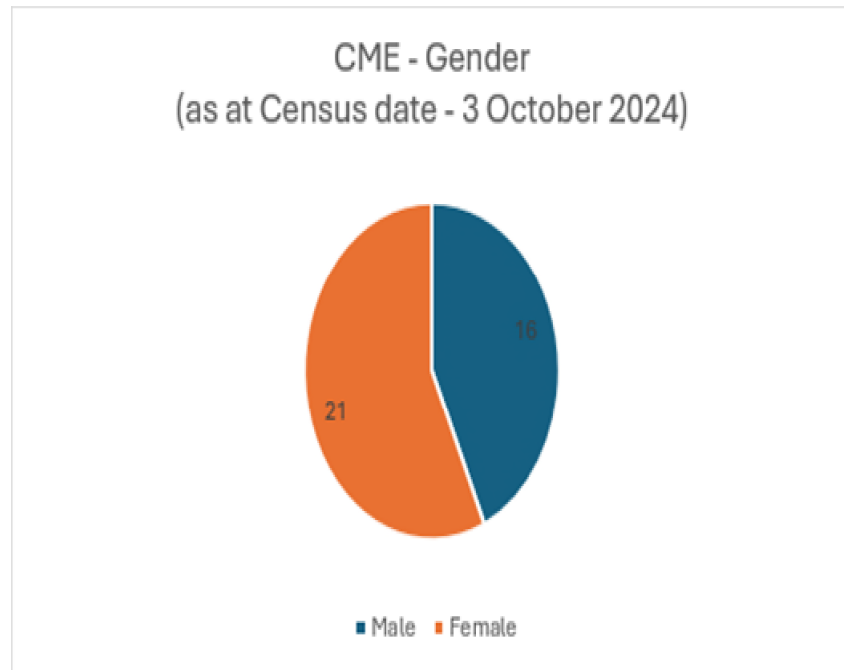
Rate of CME on census day by population (2024/25 Autumn term)

Local Authority	Rate of CME by population
Darlington	0.1%
Hartlepool	0.2%
Middlesbrough	0.6%
Redcar and Cleveland	0.4%
Stockton	0.1%

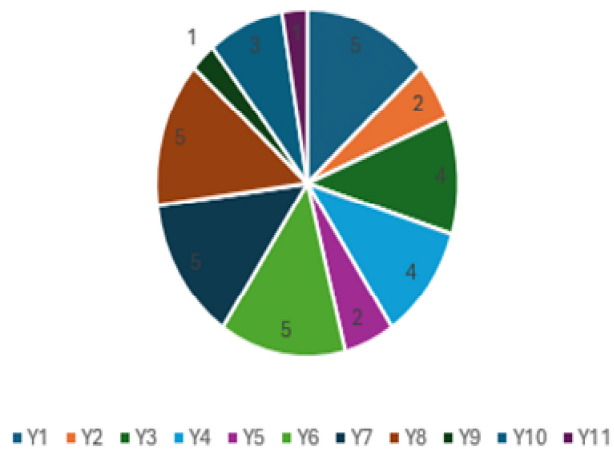
(SOURCE: GOV.UK, 2024a)

Middlesbrough

17. As at 3rd October 2024 (census date), Middlesbrough had 37 children missing from education
The demographics were as follows:



CME - Year Group
(as at Census date - 3 October 2024)



Supplementary Evidence

18. Following presentation of the CME statistics to the Panel during the formal meetings, Members were keen to understand whether the statistics had changed or remained static. To this end, officers sought to obtain more recent data. The following table shows the demographics (i.e. gender, age/year group and ethnicity) of CME in Middlesbrough the course of the scrutiny review:

	Total CME	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
		37	26	29	38	29
GENDER	Male	16	11	12	18	12
	Female	21	15	17	20	17
	Total	37	26	29	38	29

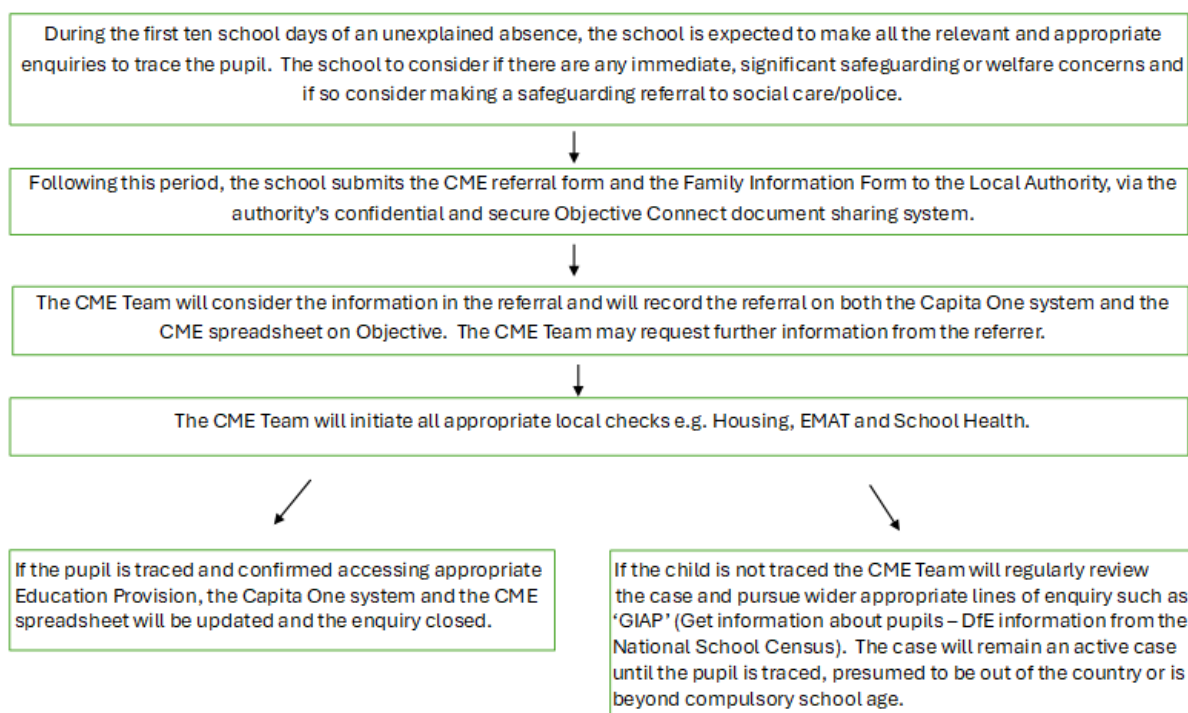
YEAR GROUP	Reception & Nursery	0	0	0	1	1
	Year 1	5	6	5	5	5
	Year 2	2	3	3	5	4
	Year 3	4	3	4	4	4
	Year 4	4	1	1	1	0
	Year 5	2	1	2	3	2
	Year 6	5	2	3	3	1
	Year 7	5	4	4	6	5
	Year 8	5	0	2	2	1
	Year 9	1	1	1	4	3
	Year 10	3	3	4	3	2
	Year 11	1	2	0	1	1
	Total	37	26	29	38	29

ETHNICITY	Bulgarian	2	0	0	0	0
	British	5	3	4	4	3
	Romanian	21	22	21	25	21
	Czech	2	1	3	4	2
	Slovakian	1	0	0	0	0
	Pakistani	1	0	0	0	0
	Arabic	1	0	0	0	0
	Kurdish	4	0	0	0	0
	Nigerian	0	0	0	1	1
	Afghan	0	0	1	1	0
	Iranian	0	0	0	1	0
	Kuwaiti	0	0	0	2	02
	Total	37	26	29	38	29

Term of Reference B – To examine how the LA works with children, young people and their families, and education providers to identify and support CME (e.g. referrals and proactive identification).

19. Guidance issued by the DfE advises that the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Part 1, Section 4 places a statutory duty on all LAs to arrange to identify all children of compulsory school age missing from education in their area (DfE August 2024b).
20. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2016 (GOV.UK, 2023) placed new statutory duties on all schools from the 1 September 2016 requiring them to inform the LA whenever they were about to remove a pupil from their registers.
21. Circumstances around individual cases can be complex and are not the same for every child. There are a variety of reasons why children miss education, which may include:
 - Children not entering the educational system at the appropriate time.
 - Children being removed from school by their parents due to poor attendance and/or issues at school, which may include bullying, illness and attendance issues/exclusion.
 - The availability of suitable school places when moving to a new area.
 - Children/families having difficult personal circumstances, for example, homelessness/living in temporary accommodation or refuge, or experiencing long-term medical/mental health problems.
 - Children with SEND who may not receive the necessary support in mainstream schooling.
22. In Middlesbrough, the Access to Education service is responsible for children who are missing from education. The team uses a proactive system for finding information about CME, to trace and ensure the return of children to education.
23. The CME Officer monitors information given to the Council by parents, schools, and other agencies (e.g. Child Health Information Service, Child Benefits Agency and Border Force) about children missing from education. For example, excluded pupils, children whose families are seeking a school place, and pupils not enrolled at a school for other reasons.
24. The following diagram illustrates the referrals process currently in place at Middlesbrough Council:

CME Referral Process



Children Looked After – CME

25. The reasons why LAC may not be in school varies, but they usually fit one of the following criteria:

- They have special needs and are awaiting a suitable specialist provision to become available.
- They have recently come into care and have had no school place prior to this. Therefore, a suitable school is in the process of being identified.
- They have moved to an out-of-town location for safeguarding reasons.

26. The most recent statistics released by the Children's Commissioner showed that, in March 2022, across the UK there were approximately 1,363 Looked After Children (LAC) (2.7%) who were not in school. This included children who were not registered at any school and were not receiving suitable education otherwise. By LA, this varied from 0% to 13.4% (Children's Commissioner, 2023a).

27. Data collected from 149 of the 152 local authorities in England showed that, of the 50,846 school-age children who had been in care for at least four weeks in March 2022, 1,363 (2.7%) were missing from school. Of these children:

- 541 were not enrolled with any school or education provider at all;
- 673 were in unregistered settings, such as private tuition, home education or a patchwork of other provision that is not inspected; and
- 149 were enrolled in a school but missing without authorisation 100% of the time.

28. At the 20 January 2025 meeting, Members heard that there were 14 LAC missing from education, which equated to 3.5% of the overall LAC cohort. Further to this, 10 (71%) had an Education, Health and Care Plan and 4 (29%) received SEND support.
29. As per the table below, a trend analysis showed that LAC missing from education had risen from 4 (1.2% of the cohort) in September 2023 to 14 (4.2%) in December 2024. Further figures were received upon the drafting of the final report, to include January and February 2025.

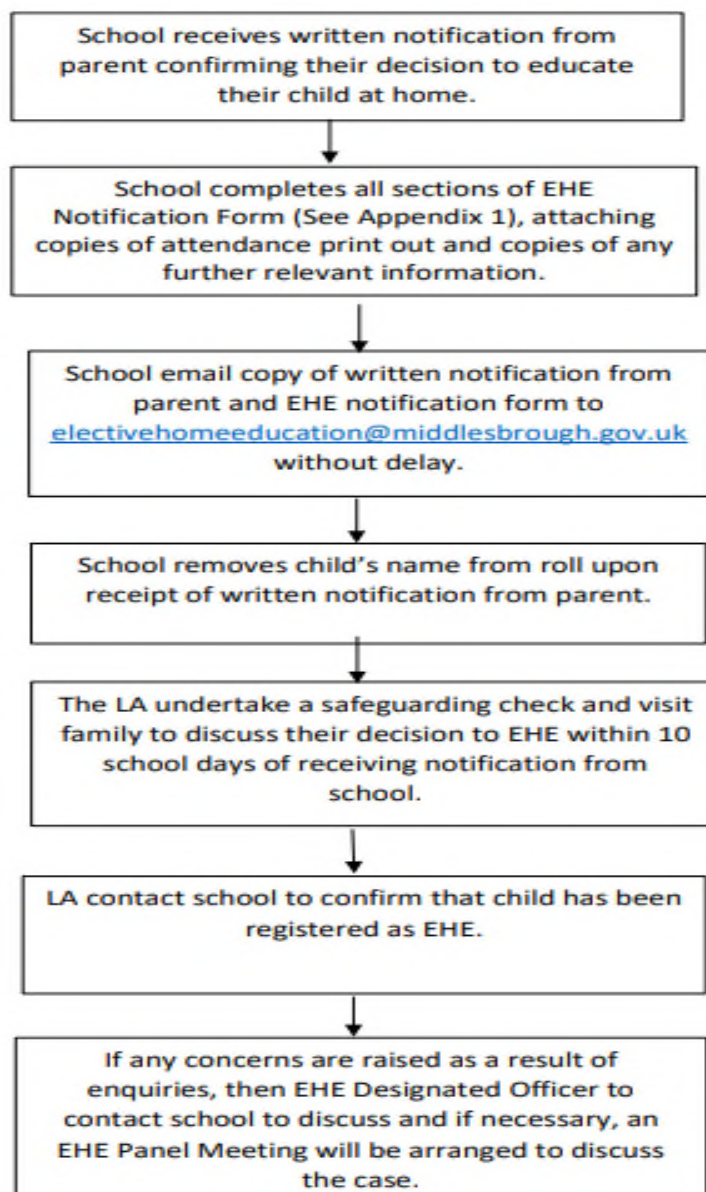
Trend	
September 2023	4 (1.2%)
October 2023	4 (1.2%)
November 2023	5 (1.5%)
December 2023	6 (1.7%)
January 2024	8 (2.3%)
February 2024	11 (3.1%)
March 2024	7 (1.9%)
April 2024	7 (1.9%)
May 2024	7 (1.9%)
June 2024	7 (2.0%)
July 2024	8 (2.3%)
September 2024	15 (4.4%)
October 2024	13 (3.8%)
November 2024	14 (4.1%)
December 2024	14 (4.2%)
January 2025	10 (2.9%)
February 2025	11 (3.2%)

30. Virtual Schools were established by the Children and Families Act 2014. The role of the Virtual School Middlesbrough (VSM) to promote the educational achievement of LAC and children previously in care. This includes children with a Social Worker and from September 2024, children in kinship care. The Head of Virtual School works closely with Schools, Social Workers and other professionals to share information and ensure that all parties are aware of the child's educational needs and progress.
31. The VSM plays a crucial role in tracking and monitoring the educational progress of children in care and assists with attendance monitoring, and Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

Elective Home Education (EHE)

32. The King's Speech in July 2024 set out plans to require LAs to maintain a register of CME children and EHE children.
33. Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that every child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full-time education. This must be suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child and to any SEN the child may have.

34. EHE is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home, or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full time.
35. Once schools receive notification from parents on their intentions to 'home school' their child(ren), the school has a duty to notify the LA without delay that the child is to be removed from their school roll.
36. The school should then follow the procedure below:



37. The EHE team reviews the quality of education that parents are providing for their children. Where this is deemed to be inadequate, the team will make arrangements for the child to return to school. This may involve the use of statutory powers by way of a School Attendance Order (SAO)
38. At the 20 January 2025 meeting, the Panel was advised that there were around 272 EHE children in Middlesbrough. This represents a significant upward trend in comparison to the figure of 120, two years ago. The Panel recognises that schools are encouraged to take attendance issues seriously, however that there is a concern that the more pressure placed on

parents, the more likely they are to remove children from school to commence EHE. The Panel acknowledges that this is particularly apparent for children with significant attendance issues and where SAOs were in progress.

Term of Reference C – To investigate what additional resources, if any, could be accessed to assist with CME.

39. During the evidence-gathering process, a number of Middlesbrough's Primary and Secondary Schools were approached and invited to participate in the review. A copy of the correspondence sent to school Headteachers is shown at Appendix A. Representatives were asked for their views on how CME affected their schools and if there were any specific support/improvements that could be identified. The Panel was particularly interested in matters relating to suspensions/permanent exclusion and transient communities.
40. Overall, two Secondary Schools and one Primary School indicated that they wished to participate:
- A representative from Secondary School A attended the Panel meeting on 20 January 2025 to provide information and respond to Members' queries.
 - A representative from Secondary School B had agreed to attend the 17 February 2025 meeting of the Panel, but unfortunately needed to submit late apologies due to unforeseen circumstances.
 - A representative from Primary School A provided a written statement to the Panel, which facilitated discussion at the 17 February 2025 meeting.

Secondary School A

41. At the 20 January 2025 meeting, the representative of Secondary School A, expressed their views that CME was a national problem but felt that Middlesbrough's deep-entrenched issue of poverty simply magnified the issues.
42. The representative advised that an increase in the number of family support workers would be beneficial and felt that the Early Help model in Middlesbrough could be improved. In addition, the representative was of the view that Middlesbrough does have issues with permanent exclusion, however the LA has limited resources to assist schools with this.
43. The representative also felt that the level of resource within the existing SEND provision was insufficient and may influence the number of CME. It was envisaged that although Middlesbrough has SEN facilities rated as outstanding, waiting lists could be significant. These views were echoed by the Head of Virtual School as a contributory factor of the increase in LAC missing from education. Members note that there is difficulty in finding school places for SEN; and therefore, an instability in places and insufficiency nationally has driven the increase in the number of CME.
44. Members are of the view that these issues could be examined further by the service area.

Primary School A

45. Primary School A, submitted the following information in writing, which was considered by the Panel at the 17 February 2025 meeting:

"At our school, we have a lot of families that move between authorities and as a school, we sometimes struggle to get an update on the child/ren and their wellbeing from parents."

We sometimes can't provide support to families that need to get their child in to school due to language barriers and when they have left the area abruptly, not giving school the opportunity to discuss their options with them.

We feel like 20 days is a long time and a lot can change in family circumstances during this time and when the child is in a different authority there is no way of ensuring that they are safe."

46. As the school's statement refers to issues of CME and transient communities, this is further discussed within Term of Reference E: 'To consider the challenges of transient communities and how the EMAT track and work with newly arrived families.'

Term of Reference D – To consider any potential implications/impact/challenges of CME on providers and services

47. Over the course of the investigation, it became apparent that service providers face a number of potential barriers. Equally, however, similar barriers can also be faced by service users (e.g. parents, carers, children and their wider families). The issues are particularly relevant to children with SEN.

48. In terms of national challenges, the Children's Commissioner found the following to be pertinent (Children's Commissioner, 2023b):

- Delays in transferring EHCPs when children are placed out of area.
- Schools often lack capacity or expertise to support children with SEN.
- Some children receive education from unregistered settings, posing risks to their education and safety.
- Placement type, stability, and location of care placement affects school attendance.

49. The Representative of Secondary School A suggested that there were challenges on schools and can be summarised as follows:

- Local demographics and the impact of poverty.
- Middlesbrough's Early Help model.
- Attendance issues / permanent exclusions and lack of resource to assist with this.
- Parents choosing EHE when challenged by service providers on attendance/behavioural issues. Schools chase non-attendance rigorously and are monitored by Ofsted on their attendance figures; schools tend to have their own Attendance Officers and Safeguarding Officers in place.
- Lack of SEN places / resource.

50. The Representative of Primary School A suggested that the following situations prove challenging to schools:

- Transience: Families moving in and out of the local area, sometimes abruptly with no communication from parents/carers.
- Language barriers affecting support given from schools.
- The 20-day period of children being absent from school, before referrals can be made to the LA/children can be removed from the school roll ('off-rolling').

51. Throughout the evidence-gathering process, challenges highlighted by the LA included:

- Local demographics.

- The high rate of permanent exclusion and suspension from Middlesbrough secondary schools and no nationally recognised definition of persistent disruptive behaviour.
- Ensuring that all relevant partners are aware of CME and are appropriately trained to identify potential cases effectively and efficiently.
- Difficulty in sourcing SEN/Alternative Provision (AP) places (a national issue).
- Reasons behind parental choice in EHE.
- Shortage of Primary School places in central Middlesbrough due to the transient nature of this area.

Term of Reference E - To consider the challenges of transient communities and how the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) track and work with newly arrived families

52. According to a report by the Children's Commissioner (2024), families moving into the local area may experience issues that would result in CME, for example:

- ***Families moving into the Local Authority area from another country.*** LAs reported that in some areas there was a growing immigrant community and they had been unable to plan for their arrival, which meant that they were suffering from a shortage of suitable school places. LAs also advised of refugees arriving and not being given the support needed to navigate the education system and enrol in school. LAs said that they did not get information on children who arrived in their area and therefore children arriving from abroad sometimes 'fell below the radar' and consequently did not receive a suitable education.
- ***Families moving from one Local Authority area to another.*** LAs said that this was becoming a bigger problem as some schools, such as secondaries, were increasingly at capacity. It was noted that this could be a problem in cases where children were moved into temporary accommodation. In this scenario, sometimes children were not enrolled in school because parents thought their move would be short term. When children move from one LA to another at non-standard transition points, their families sometimes have trouble applying to schools. LAs said that children who arrived new to an area would have limited choice about which school to go to. Sometimes a suitable school could not be found, which was especially likely in instances where a child had SEN and required extra support.

53. The town centre is the main area of residence for transient communities in Middlesbrough and, as such, there is a shortage of Primary School places in this location which could result in newly arrived children waiting for a suitable place to become available. However, the Panel notes that there are sufficient school places available for all of the children in Middlesbrough, but sometimes families find it difficult to travel longer distances to attend school in other parts of the town. Members were provided with the most recent Middlesbrough data in respect of this matter which showed that in the Summer of 2024, 11 primary-aged children had been waiting for a school place for over one month (but none had been waiting over three months). At the same time, there were around 45 secondary-aged children awaiting places, (the majority of these children had received offers of school places before the end of term).

Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT)

54. At the 11 November 2024 meeting, the Panel heard of the challenges of transient communities in Middlesbrough and how EMAT track and work with newly arrived families.

55. EMAT comprises of a variety of professionals including teachers, teaching assistants, and family support workers. EMAT works with schools to support pupils who speak English as an

additional language (EAL), and traveller, fair and circus pupils, to access education. The team also works with families who speak English as an additional language to help them to apply for school places for children.

56. EMAT provides the following support to schools and families:

- Supports and promotes the educational achievement of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students.
- Welcomes International New Arrivals (INA) and supports them in accessing school and educational opportunities.
- In partnership with schools, offers targeted in-school support to promote EAL across the curriculum and support EAL learners to achieve.
- Acts as an important link between school and home; attending admissions meetings and providing translation and interpreting services to help with communication between school and home.
- Provides and promotes cultural awareness.
- Delivers training, including bespoke training packages in schools.
- Assesses students' language upon first arrival to accurately identify need and provide a focus on pupil progression.
- Attends meetings and networks with other professionals working with EAL learners and their families to ensure a co-ordinated approach.
- Provides in-school support to traveller, fair and circus students and family liaison to improve attendance and educational opportunities.

57. EMAT is a buyback service and therefore in-school support is limited to partner schools and LAs that have signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA). In November 2024, the position of EMAT was:

- 22 schools had signed up to the EMAT SLA and been invited to attend support training.
- 1 Local Authority had signed up to the EMAT SLA for Traveller Education Services (TES).
- 5 Specialist/Bilingual Teaching Assistants had been deployed in schools.
- 4 Family Support Workers provided daily liaison between EMAT and schools to provide support in matters such as behavioural issues, attendance support and school transport applications, etc.
- 30 children from the traveller community supported in Middlesbrough Council.
- 40 children from the traveller community supported in Redcar and Cleveland.

58. Currently an overwhelming majority of CME referrals in Middlesbrough are children from the families of migrant workers from central Europe. The families will often return to their home countries either permanently or for extended periods or move to other areas of the UK but fail to declare accurately their intentions to schools at the time the pupils cease attending, which then causes issues for the education providers.

59. Should the family return to the UK they may well return to a different LA area dependant on work and housing availability. In the main, the families do not usually present with significant welfare or safeguarding concerns. The impact on Middlesbrough's central cluster Primary Schools is significant with schools carrying high levels of absence whilst enquiries are made to trace such pupils before the schools can remove them from roll. There is a similar burden placed on the LA in recording these cases and conducting enquiries to try to trace families who are no longer in the UK.

60. Primary School A, based in central Middlesbrough with a large transient population, responded to the Panel's request for their views on how CME impacts their school offer. The response included;

“We sometimes can’t provide support to families that need to get their child in to school due to language barriers and when they have left the area abruptly, not giving school the opportunity to discuss their options with them.

We feel like 20 days is a long time and a lot can change in family circumstances during this time and when the child is in a different authority there is no way of ensuring that they are safe.”

61. In response to this statement, the Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision explained that the 20-day timescale referred to in the school’s statement is the timescale that children need to be continually absent from school before schools can refer the issue to the LA. In addition, schools must ensure that children remain on their school roll until the 20-days have expired.
62. After 20 days, LAs could use resources to trace CME including health agencies, housing benefit services and other LAs. LAs will continue to search for CME until they are found in another LA or if evidence suggests that they had left the country.
63. All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their LA when they are about to remove a pupil’s name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in the regulations (Appendix B)
64. Where the pupil’s name is to be removed from the register under grounds 8(1)(f) - failure to return to school following a granted period of leave – or 8(1)(h) following a period of 20 days unauthorised absence, the school and the LA must show they have jointly made reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the pupil. In order to manage the volume of removals from roll and not impede or delay the freeing up of school places, the pragmatic decision has been made within Middlesbrough to allow schools to remove pupils from roll and inform the LA weekly of the necessary details and grounds for removal via the secure Objective Connect Shared Workspaces.
65. The regulations Reg 8(1)(f) relating to families taking extended unauthorised holidays and Regulation 8(1)(h) relating to ‘lost pupils’ are often not a good fit and require the school to keep the pupils on roll for up to 20 days absence before they can be removed from the roll. Provided the school is satisfied that the family has returned to a known address in their home country, either permanently or indefinitely, the pupil can be removed from roll in compliance with regulation 8(1)(e) and without the need to make a CME referral. To facilitate this process, a Family Information Form has been produced to:
 - Support schools to remove pupils from roll in compliance with the regulations.
 - Minimise the negative impact on school attendance.
 - Support and direct the reasonable enquiries that must be jointly undertaken with the LA for confirmed CME cases
66. The concerns raised by Primary School A are noted by the Panel, who also appreciate that this particular school has a large transient community, with an above average movement of children on and off the school roll. It was suggested that the school may appreciate discussions with the LA ahead of the 20-day period of absence to ensure school places were utilised effectively. Members are of the view that this could be explored further with the service area.

Term of Reference F - To consider the increasing number of permanently excluded children in respect of Children Missing Education

67. A permanent exclusion is when a pupil is no longer allowed to attend a school, unless the pupil is reinstated. The decision to exclude a pupil permanently should only be taken:

- in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
- where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school.

68. Only the Headteacher of a school can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently excluded.

69. The Government trusts Headteachers to use their professional judgement based on the individual circumstances of the case when considering whether to exclude a pupil. The following reasons are examples of the types of circumstances that may warrant a suspension or permanent exclusion:

- Physical assault against a pupil.
- Physical assault against an adult.
- Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour against a pupil.
- Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour against an adult.
- Use, or threat of use, of an offensive weapon or prohibited item that has been prohibited by a school's behaviour policy.
- Bullying.
- Racist abuse.
- Abuse against sexual orientation or gender reassignment.
- Abuse relating to disability.

(Source: DfE, 2024c)

70. This list is not exhaustive and is intended to offer examples rather than be complete or definitive.

71. Nationally, the rate of permanently excluded children is increasing. Data published by the DfE showed the permanent exclusion rate across England had increased from 0.04 in autumn 2022/23 to 0.05 autumn 2023/24 - an increase of 25%. The number of permanent exclusions had increased from 3,104 to 4,168. (DfE, 2024d).

72. In a local context, data for the 2023/24 academic year identified that 111 pupils were permanently excluded from Middlesbrough schools. The reasons for the permanent exclusions were as follows:

Reason for school exclusion:	Number of children excluded:
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	66
Physical Assault on an Adult	14
Physical Assault on a Pupil	10
Damage to Property	9
Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour towards an Adult	5

Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour towards a Pupil	3
Other	3
Use / Threat of an Offensive Weapon	1

Alternative Provision

73. The LA has a duty to arrange suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils from the sixth school day of exclusion. School exclusions and CME are dealt with by the Access to Education team. In Middlesbrough, sixth day education provision is delivered by several registered APs.
74. AP offers an adapted or alternative curriculum for children unsuccessful in accessing or engaging with a mainstream education. AP also encompasses provision available for children who are unable to attend school because of their physical and/ or mental health needs. A proportion of children in AP have additional vulnerabilities or characteristics, often because of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. For the children in AP, it offers an opportunity to gain qualifications (both vocational and academic) alongside participating in personal development activities whilst developing transferable skills and knowledge, which support onward progression into post-16 pathways after Year 11.
75. In education, Middlesbrough has witnessed significant increases in children and young people requiring AP; being referred for Education, Health and Care needs assessments; being persistently absent; and being subject to permanent exclusions from educational settings. This data, coupled with increases in children and young people requiring social care intervention; support from mental health services; and the lasting impact of the global pandemic, highlights an ever-growing need to provide environments that are rich in positive and nurturing relationships, and one where children and young people can achieve their potential ('grow and prosper' (Middlesbrough SEND strategy 2020-2024)). Specifically in relation to LAC, Middlesbrough has recently developed the PROCLAIM Project to support children and address their needs.
76. The majority of children accessing AP in Middlesbrough do so as a consequence of Permanent Exclusion. However, access to AP may also be due to other reasons such as children having multiple complexities and vulnerabilities. These children receive support from numerous external agencies and education providers.
77. As at December 2024, 279 children (264 secondary, 15 primary) were accessing education in AP, as follows:
- 188 accessed as result of being permanently excluded from their mainstream school.
 - 108 had identified SEN.
 - 42 had an EHCP for their SEN.
 - 38 were open to Social Care on a Child in Need plan (CIN).
 - 13 were open to Social Care on a Child Protection Plan (CPP).
 - 8 were LAC.
 - 7 were open to the Youth Justice Service.
78. Most pupils in AP receive a full-time education, however, 39% of children access the provision on a reduced timetable basis. These reduced timetables are used to accommodate an

assessment/ transition plan or because it is in the child's best interests to reflect their individual needs.

79. At times when exclusion rates are high or there is a high volume of permanent exclusions over a short period of time, some pupils wait for a place to become available at one of the registered providers. During this period, these children are offered an interim education package which is coordinated by the LA, and they receive regular visits from LA staff. At the 16 December 2024 meeting, Members noted that there were 22 children receiving an interim education package.
80. Due to the high number of permanently excluded children, the cohort of children in AP has grown significantly from 147 in 2021 to 279 in 2024. To ensure there is sufficient capacity in the system to meet sixth-day responsibilities and to allow children to experience their mainstream education entitlement wherever possible, the LA is working with Secondary School partners to prioritise reintegration back into mainstream education. This will allow children who are in AP to move back into mainstream education when they are ready. It also means that an increased number of newly excluded children can be reviewed and reintegrated into another mainstream school quickly to avoid them entering AP.
81. Middlesbrough Council has commissioned a range of good quality AP and specialist assessment provision. A 0-25 Inclusion and Outreach service has been developed in partnership with and is available to all schools.
82. The Panel notes that the 0-25 Inclusion and Outreach model has recently been restructured based on feedback from schools to ensure it meets local needs. Preventative AP pathways are in place, commissioned using high needs funding, to offer opportunity for off-site assessment of children's needs. New preventative AP has been commissioned, e.g. Latitude at Acklam Grange School, to avoid exclusions. A new primary age support base is being built for children with trauma and adverse childhood experiences to support early identification of needs ahead of a transition to secondary school. The LA is delivering project work in other key areas, such as: workforce development; transitions; and support for parent/carers as part of the Delivering Better Value programme with the DfE.

CONCLUSIONS

83. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the People Scrutiny Panel concluded that:
 - CME is a national and local issue; there are often higher numbers of children recorded as missing from education when there is a link to poverty, deprivation or involvement with social services. During the scope of the review, Middlesbrough had the highest rate of CME in the Tees Valley area, with an average of 30 children each month missing education.
 - Middlesbrough Council has robust policies in place for CME, adheres to statutory legislation and works well with schools with a CME referrals process. When investigating CME and considering the data around CME referrals, it was identified that Middlesbrough has issues with transience and permanent exclusions.

Transience

- Romanian children were noted to be the highest of all ethnicities recorded as missing from education. Most CME referrals in Middlesbrough are children from the families of migrant workers from central Europe.

- Middlesbrough Council has an Ethnic Minority Achievement Team that works closely with schools and international new arrivals to provide a package of support to assist families to access education.
- There is sometimes a shortage of Primary School places in central Middlesbrough due to the transient nature of this area. One Primary School suggested that the 20-day period of children being absent from school, before referrals can be made to the council / children can be removed from the school roll, sometimes causes difficulty with providing school places.

Permanent Exclusion

- Nationally, the rate of permanently excluded children is increasing. In Middlesbrough, the most common reason for permanent exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour. During the most recent school year, 2023/24 there was a total of 111 permanently excluded children; 66 of which were excluded due to persistent disruptive behaviour.
- Only the Headteacher of a school can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil on disciplinary grounds; the Government allows Headteachers to use their professional judgement based on the individual circumstances of the case when considering whether to exclude a pupil.
- The Local Authority has a duty to arrange suitable full-time education for permanently excluded children, from the sixth day of school exclusion. In Middlesbrough, this is provided by several registered Alternative Providers (APs).
- In Middlesbrough, new AP has recently been commissioned with an aim to avoid exclusions. A new primary age facility is being built for children with trauma and adverse childhood experiences to support early identification of needs ahead of a transition to secondary school.
- Most children accessing APs in Middlesbrough, do so due to permanent exclusion, however, there has been a significant increase in children requiring AP due to SEN.
- The difficulty in sourcing suitable school places for SEN was also highlighted as a concern throughout the review. This is a national issue and has increased the number of CME and EHE, due to parents not feeling that mainstream education is best able to support the needs of their child(ren).

RECOMMENDATIONS

84. The People Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive that the Council:

- A. Ensures that CME forms an integral part of Middlesbrough Council's Draft Poverty Strategy. CME, and its impact, should be explicitly referenced and included in any performance regime underpinning the strategy. Members of the Children's Scrutiny Panel should be briefed on how CME will feature within the Poverty Strategy no later than January 2026, or sooner if the strategy is available.
- B. Ensures that Education & Partnerships are fully prepared for the Children's Wellbeing in Schools Bill, in particular the monitoring of Elective Home Education and the implementation of a single unique identifier (SUI) for children. The Children's Scrutiny Panel should be briefed on the preparations, no later than December 2025.

- C. Establishes a Working Group between Primary Schools in the Central areas of Middlesbrough, Education and Partnerships, Stronger Communities and local Councillors to explore if further assistance can be provided in respect of the large transient community and the issues of school roll turnover. The Working Group should report back on its progress by March 2026.
- D. Establishes a Working Group between Education & Partnerships and Stronger Communities to understand the nature of the higher rate of CME in the Romanian community. The Working Group should produce an action plan to help reduce this number against the baseline average of 22, at the time of the review. The Working Group should provide a progress update against their action plan to the Children's Scrutiny Panel by March 2026.
- E. An update be provided to the Children's Scrutiny Panel that provides assurance to the on the ongoing work of assisting children at risk of permanent exclusion. This should happen no later than October 2026.
- F. An update be provided to the Children's Scrutiny Panel on the new Alternative Provision and the restructure of the Inclusion and Outreach Model. This should happen no later than April 2026.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

85. The People Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following for their assistance with its work:

Dawn Alaszewski, Director of Children's Care, Middlesbrough Council
 Victoria Banks, Head of Virtual School, Middlesbrough Council
 Caroline Cannon, Interim Director of Education and Partnerships, Middlesbrough Council
 Emma Cowley, Interim Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services, Middlesbrough Council
 Trevor Dunn, Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision, Middlesbrough Council
 Joe Tynan, Executive Director of Children's Services, Middlesbrough Council
 Newport Primary School, Middlesbrough
 Outwood Academy, Ormesby, Middlesbrough

ACRONYMS

86. A-Z listing of common acronyms used in the report:

AP	Alternative Provision
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CIN	Children in Need
CLA	Children Looked After
CME	Children Missing Education
CPP	Child Protection Plan
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan
EHE	Electively Home Education /Educated
EMAT	Ethnic Minority Achievement Team
INA	International New Arrival
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training

PEP	Personal Education Plan
SAO	School Attendance Order
SCIE	Social Care Institute for Excellence
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLA	Service Level Agreement
VSM	Virtual School Middlesbrough

BACKGROUND PAPERS

87. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

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<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england>
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- Legislation.GOV.UK (2024), 'Children and Families Act, 2014: Section 99: Promotion of Educational Achievement of Children Looked After by Local Authorities'
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<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/436A>
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- People Scrutiny Panel - reports/presentations to, and minutes of, meetings held on 16 September 2024, 14 October 2024, 11 November 2024, 16 December 2024, 20 January 2025 and 17 February 2025.
[Browse meetings - People Scrutiny Panel | Middlesbrough Council](#)
- SCIE (2025), 'Safeguarding Children in Education: Children Missing Education'
<https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/children/education/missing/>
Accessed 13 January 2025.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Correspondence to Headteachers/Schools inviting them to participate in the Panel's review.
Appendix B	School Off-Rolling Criteria

COUNCILLOR EDWARD CLYNCH CHAIR OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

People Scrutiny Panel Membership: Councillors E Clynch (Chair), J Banks (Vice-Chair), L Hurst, D Jackson, M McClintock, T Mohan, M Nugent, S Platt, S Tranter, Z Uddin, G Wilson and L Young.

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Claire Jones

From: Claire Jones
Sent: Thursday, 19 December 2024 15:33
Subject: Middlesbrough Council People Scrutiny Panel - Children Missing Education (CME)

Dear Headteachers,

I am writing on behalf of the Chair of Middlesbrough Council's People Scrutiny Panel, Edward Clynch, to gather the views of schools in relation to the current Scrutiny Topic - 'Children Missing Education (CME)'.

The principal power of a Scrutiny Committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations in delivering public services. The Scrutiny Committee gathers evidence on issues affecting local people and makes recommendations based on its findings.

The Middlesbrough Council People Scrutiny Panel would like to ask Middlesbrough Schools for their views on how 'Children Missing from Education' affects your schools, and if there are any specific support or improvements that you can identify. The Panel is particularly interested in matters relating to suspensions /permanent exclusion and transient communities (i.e. children and families who move more frequently between local authorities including homeless families, asylum seekers and refugees, gypsy, traveller and Roma families and families experiencing domestic abuse).

If you would like to provide your thoughts, the Panel would be delighted to invite you or a representative to the next public meeting as follows;

Monday 20th January, 4.30pm at the Mandela Room, Town Hall, Middlesbrough, TS1 2RT

If you would like to attend this meeting, please advise of your availability and an invitation will be sent.

Should you prefer to provide written comments, please respond to this email with your written information which will be passed to the Panel to consider. The Chair, Edward, is a local schoolteacher and would be extremely grateful for any insight from schools that you are able to share. Please note that any information provided will be used to formulate the Panel's final report. Please can I ask that you respond to this email with any commentary by 12 noon on Wednesday 15th January.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards

Claire Jones

Democratic Services Officer

Democratic Services

Middlesbrough Council

PO Box 500, Middlesbrough, TS1 9FT

E: claire_jones@middlesbrough.gov.uk | T: 01642 729112 | W: middlesbrough.gov.uk

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Appendix B

Deleting the name of a pupil of compulsory school age from the school admission register

Grounds for deleting a pupil of compulsory school age from the school admission register set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2024		
Code	Ground description	Further information
9(1)(a)	<p>Ground A - The pupil has been registered at another school</p> <p>Where a pupil has been registered at another school, unless –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a school attendance order naming the school is in force in relation to the pupil (see further information); the pupil is a mobile child and the school is their main school (see further information); the school has agreed with a person with control of the pupil's attendance at the other school that the pupil should be registered at more than one school (see further information on dual registration); or the school itself has control of the pupil's attendance at the other school and has decided that the pupil should be registered at more than one school (see further information on dual registration). 	<p>Transfer between schools:</p> <p>Where a pupil is transferring to another school, the original school must delete the pupil's name from the admission register as soon as they are entered on the admission register of the new school. The new school must enter the pupil's name on the admission register on the first day that it has agreed or been told the pupil will attend the school as explained under Expected First Day of Attendance.</p> <p>For example, if a pupil leaves School A on 28 March and their expected first day of attendance at School B is 29 March, they would be added to the admission register of School B and deleted from that of School A on 29 March.</p> <p>School A will: • record the pupil's attendance and absence up to and including 28 March, and • delete the pupil's name from the admission register on 29 March, and • transfer the appropriate pupil information via the S2S system.</p> <p>School B will: • enter the pupil's name on the admission register on 29 March, • record the pupil's attendance and absence from 29 March, • follow up any unexpected absence on or after the 29 March, and • request the transfer of the pupil information.</p> <p>There are a small number of exceptions, these are:</p> <p>School attendance order</p> <p>If a school attendance order is in place for the pupil, and the name of the school has been replaced by the relevant local authority with that of another school, their name must be deleted from the admission register under the reason for deletion at ground D (regulation 9(1)(d)).</p> <p>If the school attendance order has not been amended and still names the school, the pupil's name must not be deleted under ground A even if they have been registered at another school as well.</p> <p>Mobile child</p> <p>Where a child of compulsory school age has no fixed abode and their parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place, the child can temporarily attend another school without the need for their main school to remove their name.</p> <p>Main school in this context means the school that, during the last 18 months, the child has attended during periods when their parent was not travelling in the course of their trade or business, or, if there is more than one school that fits that description, the school that most recently fulfils those criteria.</p> <p>Dual registration</p> <p>In circumstances where it has been agreed between the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance that the pupil will be registered at more than one school, the pupil's name will remain on the admission register. This is also the case where it has been decided by the school if it has control of the pupil's attendance at the other school. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending another school on a temporary basis, such as a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school.</p>
9(1)(b)	<p>Ground B - The pupil has not continued at the school following completion of nursery education</p>	

	Where a pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and on completing nursery does not continue into reception (or more senior class).	
9(1)(c)	<p>Ground C – The pupil is also registered at one or more other schools and the other schools have agreed the deletion</p> <p>Where a pupil is registered at one or more other schools, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again; each school where the pupil is registered has given consent to the deletion; there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil (see further information); and the pupil is not a mobile child, or if they are, the school is not their main school (see further information). 	<p>School attendance order</p> <p>If a school attendance order is in place for the pupil, and the name of the school has been replaced by the relevant local authority with that of another school, their name must be deleted from the admission register under the reason for deletion at ground D (regulation 9(1)(d)).</p> <p>If the school attendance order has not been amended and still names the school, the pupil's name must not be deleted under ground C even if the other criteria are satisfied.</p> <p>Mobile child</p> <p>Where a child of compulsory school age has no fixed abode and their parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place, the child can temporarily attend another school without the need for their main school to remove their name.</p> <p>Main school in this context means the school that, during the last 18 months, the child has attended during periods when their parent was not travelling in the course of their trade or business, or, if there is more than one school that fits that description, the school that most recently fulfils those criteria.</p>
9(1)(d)	<p>Ground D - The pupil has a school attendance order which has been changed to name another school</p> <p>Where the pupil is the subject of a school attendance order that previously named the school, but another school has now been named on that order instead.</p>	
9(1)(e)	<p>Ground E - The pupil had a school attendance order which has been revoked</p> <p>Where the pupil was the subject of a school attendance order naming the school, but the order is revoked because the local authority that made the order is satisfied that arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable full-time education for their age, ability and aptitude and special educational needs somewhere other than at a school.</p>	
9(1)(f)	<p>Ground F - The parent of a pupil has notified the school in writing that the pupil will be leaving the school to be educated otherwise than at a school</p> <p>Where the pupil's parent has informed the school in writing that the pupil will no longer attend the school after a certain day and will receive education otherwise than at a school and that day has passed, and there is no school attendance order naming the school in force in relation to the pupil.</p>	<p>School Attendance Order</p> <p>If a school attendance order has been revoked because the local authority that made the order is satisfied that arrangements have been made for the child to receive suitable full-time education for their age, ability and aptitude somewhere other than at a school, the pupil's name must be deleted from the admission register under the reason for deletion at regulation 9(1)(e).</p>
9(1)(g)	<p>Ground G - The pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school</p> <p>Where a pupil no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school, the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again, and the pupil is not a boarder at the school.</p>	<p>In circumstances where parents are moving away and withdrawing their child but are unable to say how their child will continue with their education, for example, the family are relocating but have not been able to secure a place at a new school in advance, once the pupil has completed their final day at school and moved out of the area, the school must delete the pupil's name from the admission register and the pupil's</p>

		<p>information should then be transferred to the Lost Pupil Database via the S2S system.</p> <p>Reasonable distance</p> <p>DfE does not define reasonable distance because each case depends on the family situation and the geography of the area for example, the parent's ability to get the child to the school, a safe walking route or the accessibility of local transportation.</p> <p>Temporary or occasional absence</p> <p>Relevant regulation 9(5)(a) - Whether a pupil normally lives a reasonable distance from the school is not affected by a temporary or occasional absence. A judgement should be made in an individual case as to whether an absence is temporary or occasional, but a prolonged absence is not generally considered as temporary.</p>
9(1)(h)	<p>Ground H - The pupil has not returned following a leave of absence</p> <p>Where a pupil has been granted a leave of absence and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the pupil has not attended school within the ten school days immediately after the end of the period that the leave was granted for; the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances; but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they have not succeeded; or they have succeeded but they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps that could be taken (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance. 	<p>DfE's guidance on Children missing education sets out the expectations for schools and local authorities in respect of making reasonable efforts to find out a pupil's location and circumstances.</p> <p>Pupils who have been located but have not returned to school</p> <p>Where a pupil has been located and their circumstances discovered but they have not returned to school, a joint decision is required between the school and the local authority before this ground is used. Both must agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the child will return to the school, even with reasonable support and/or enforcement to try to cause their return to school. This means the final criterion will be met very rarely, usually when a pupil has been out of the country for a prolonged period and there are no signs of the pupil returning.</p> <p>This ground cannot be used in any case where the pupil could reasonably be supported to return to school regardless of whether that support has been provided. It cannot be used where a pupil is absent because of a health reason. It also cannot be used in cases where attendance legal action to cause the pupil to return to school could reasonably be taken instead. In such cases, the appropriate support or enforcement should be taken rather than the pupil's name being deleted from roll.</p> <p>Examples of appropriate use include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupil is still away from home and the parent has refused to give a date for their return but there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning. No date or evidence of the pupil returning has been provided by the deadline set out in the school's contact with the parent and there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning. The parent has given a date, or several dates, for returning and the pupil has failed to return by or on the last given date. <p>Examples of where ground G may be appropriate instead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The date for return the parent has provided is too vague or too far in the future to reasonably believe the pupil still normally lives a reasonable distance from the school. The school does not believe, taking account of any information from the parent, that the pupil still resides within the area and the pupil's absence does not appear to be temporary.
9(1)(i)	<p>The pupil has been continually absent from school for 20 school days</p>	<p>DfE's guidance on Children missing education sets out the expectations for schools and local authorities in respect of making reasonable efforts to find out a pupil's location and circumstances.</p>

	<p>Where a pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of 20 school days or more and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at no point during that period did any of the circumstances in regulation 10(3) Table 2 or 10(4) Table 3 other than the ones for codes G, N, or O apply; the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and the school and the local authority have jointly made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances, but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they have not succeeded; or they have succeeded but they agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, taking into account any reasonable steps they could take (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance. 	<p>Pupils who have been located but have not returned to school</p> <p>Where a pupil has been located and their circumstances discovered but they have not returned to school, a joint decision is required between the school and the local authority before this ground is used. Both must agree that there are no reasonable grounds to believe the child will return to the school, even with reasonable support and/or enforcement to try to cause their return to school. This means the final criterion will be met very rarely, usually when a pupil has been out of the country for a prolonged period and there are no signs of the pupil returning.</p> <p>This ground cannot be used in any case where the pupil could reasonably be supported to return to school regardless of whether that support has been provided. It cannot be used where a pupil is absent because of a health reason. It also cannot be used in cases where attendance legal action to cause the pupil to return to school could reasonably be taken instead. In these cases, the appropriate support or enforcement should be taken rather than the pupil's name being deleted from roll.</p> <p>Examples of appropriate use include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupil is away from home and the parent has refused to give a date for their return but there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning. No date or evidence of the pupil returning has been provided by the deadline set out in the school's contact with the parent and there is no reason to think there is anything preventing them from returning. The parent has given a date, or several dates, for returning and the pupil has failed to return by or on the last given date. <p>Examples of where regulation 9(1)(g) may be appropriate instead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The date for return the parent has provided is too vague or too far in the future to reasonably believe the pupil normally lives a reasonable distance from the school. The school does not believe, taking account of any information from the parent, that the pupil still resides within the area and the pupil's absence does not appear to be temporary.
9(1)(j)	<p>Ground J - The pupil is detained under a sentence of detention</p> <p>Where a pupil is found guilty of a crime and detained under a sentence of detention (as defined in regulation 3) before the pupil's name can be deleted from the admission register the school must have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will not return to the school once they are released.</p>	<p>This must be decided on a case by case basis after considering whether the pupil will return at the end, or part way through their sentence (e.g. where part is served on licence in the community). In determining whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will return to the school following their detention, it is expected that schools will discuss this with the pupil's youth offending team worker.</p> <p>Pupils who are remanded to custody awaiting trial or sentencing cannot be removed under this ground.</p>
9(1)(k)	<p>Ground K - The pupil has died</p> <p>Where a pupil has died.</p>	<p>A pupil's name should only be deleted from the admission register when the school is informed of the death.</p> <p>This would normally come from the pupil's parent but it is possible that notification comes from another source, such as relatives or the police.</p> <p>Once the school receives the information, it is particularly important to delete the pupil's name as quickly as possible to prevent inadvertent and unnecessary contact with the family about the child.</p>
9(1)(l)	<p>Ground L - The pupil will be over compulsory school age and will not continue into the sixth form</p>	<p>Compulsory school age</p> <p>A pupil ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.</p>

	Where a pupil will be over compulsory school age by the time the school next meets, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again; or the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements to be transferred to the school's sixth form. 	
9(1)(m)	Ground M - The pupil is a boarder at a school maintained by a local authority or academy and their boarding fees have not been paid	Where a pupil is a boarder at the school and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school is maintained by a local authority or is an academy; charges for the pupil's board and lodgings are payable by the pupil's parent; and those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.
9(1)(n)	Ground N - The pupil has ceased to be a pupil at an independent school or non-maintained special school	Where a pupil has ceased to be a pupil at the school and the school is not maintained by a local authority or an academy (including a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts).
9(1)(o)	Ground O - The pupil has been permanently excluded from the school Where a pupil has been permanently excluded from the school.	A pupil's name cannot be deleted from the admission register until the outcome of any consideration of reinstatement and independent review (in the case of a disciplinary exclusion from a maintained school, pupil referral unit, or academy) or appeal (in the case of a city technology college or city college for the technology of the arts) is known.

Deleting the name of a pupil not of compulsory school age

Grounds for deleting a pupil of non-compulsory school age from the school admission register set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2024		
Code	Ground description	Further information
9(3)(a)	Ground A - The pupil is not a boarder and will not attend the school again Where a pupil is not a boarder, and the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again.	
9(3)(b)	Ground B - The pupil is a boarder and has ceased to be a pupil at the school Where a pupil is a boarder and has ceased to be a pupil at the school.	
9(3)(c)	Ground C - The pupil has been continually absent from school for 20 school days Where a pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of 20 school days or more and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the pupil was not absent with leave during the period; the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or an unavoidable cause; and the school has made reasonable efforts to find out the pupil's location and circumstances but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has not succeeded; or has succeeded and has no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again. 	When determining if there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will attend the school again, the school may wish to consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the parent or pupil (if at sixth form) given a date for the pupil's return? Has a date or evidence of the pupil returning been provided by the deadline set out in the school's contact with the parent or pupil (if at sixth form)? Has the parent or pupil (if at sixth form) given a date, or several dates, for returning but the pupil has failed to return by or on the last given date?
9(3)(d)	Ground D - The pupil has died Where a pupil has died.	A pupil's name should only be deleted from the admission register when the school is informed of the death. This would normally come from the pupil's parent but it is possible that notification comes from another source, such as relatives or the police.

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Final Report of the Place Scrutiny Panel

EMPTY PROPERTIES

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THE AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

1. The aim of the review was to identify what actions the Council and other partners can take to reduce the number of empty properties in Middlesbrough.
2. The review aims to look at how to bring empty properties back into use and have a positive impact on local communities, including the lives of residents, the homeless, children leaving care, and families in need of accommodation, or temporary accommodation.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. The terms of reference, for the scrutiny panel's review, are as follows:
 - A) To understand the current position with regard to empty domestic and commercial properties in Middlesbrough and the efforts the Council is making to address the various associated issues.
 - B) To investigate the Council's responsibilities and enforcement powers in respect of empty properties.
 - C) To investigate what work has been undertaken with third party providers to refurbish and re-let empty properties.
 - D) To investigate what work has been undertaken to bring empty commercial properties back into use.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. Since 2010 the Government has placed considerable emphasis on the importance of returning empty homes to use. 2023 data shows that there were 261,189 empty homes in the UK.
5. Since 2013, powers previously held by central government to vary the amount of council tax paid on some empty homes have been devolved to a local level. The aim of this government policy is to further incentivise the reoccupation of long-term empty homes by increasing council tax payable or by removing discounts that were previously in place. Local authorities are now able to decide at what rates to apply a discount for properties empty for up to six months and for those properties empty and in need of considerable renovation. Councils also became able to take advantage of an 'empty homes premium'.
6. From 2024 and as part of the Levelling up and Regeneration Act, local authorities can charge a 100% premium after 1 year rather than 2 years previously as well as charging a 100% premium on second homes, subject to formal determination by the Council.
7. Empty and problem properties can be severely detrimental to residents and communities. A single empty property or property in disrepair can be the root of many issues such as vandalism, fly-tipping and other anti-social and criminal activity. Any crime or fear of crime, minor or more serious can have a detrimental impact on the local community. Such properties also present a risk to emergency services as well as putting additional pressure on various Council services, such as Environmental Health.
8. Tackling empty properties in Middlesbrough and bringing them back into use will positively impact on our residents, including individuals and families in need of accommodation, and the wider community for whom empty properties often cause problems.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:

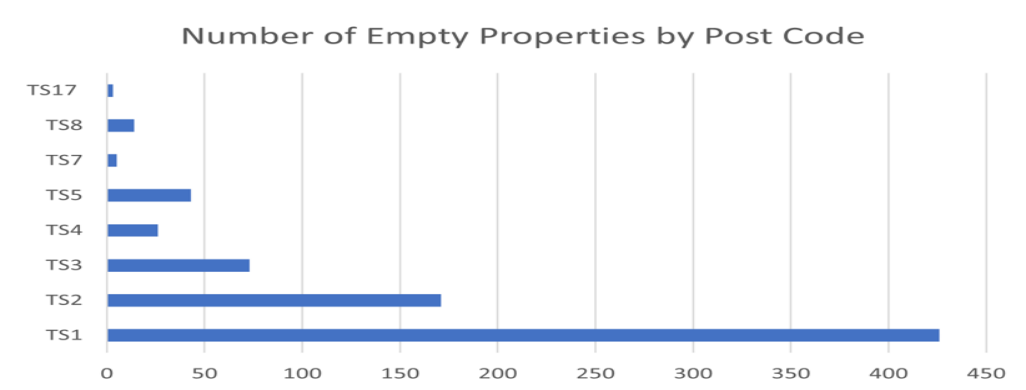
Term of Reference A - To understand the current position with regard to empty domestic and commercial properties in Middlesbrough and the efforts the Council is making to address the various associated issues.

9. Middlesbrough currently has approximately 2691 empty homes some of which are causing issues. Properties that have been empty for longer than six months diminish local housing provision and can have a severe impact on neighbourhoods. These homes can attract anti-social behaviour, increase crime rates, and decrease local property values and outside investment opportunities.
10. According to data extracted from council tax records for 7 October 2024, 2,691 homes were empty in Middlesbrough.

No. of properties	Duration and charge
826 306	Empty for less than six months And owned by charities (exempt from council tax)
1045	Empty between 6 months to 2 years (council tax payable)
514	Empty for more than 2 years (premium charge payable) 128 of these are high rise flats due for demolition

11. Of the recorded empty homes in Middlesbrough, some were 'transactional vacancies' (for instance, properties empty following the death of the owner) and are part of the normal operation of the housing market.
12. The 514 homes that have been empty for 2 years or more are a cause for concern as they are more likely to remain empty for longer without intervention and are also more likely to have a negative impact on both the social and physical regeneration of the area.
13. In addition to these empty homes, Middlesbrough has an as-yet unquantified number of problem properties, streets, and gardens in poor condition.
14. At present, the council tax database is the only verified method to evaluate and monitor the number of empty homes in Middlesbrough. This method does not provide a full and accurate view of the actual number of empty homes and does not include problematic occupied properties.
15. Tackling empty properties in Middlesbrough and bringing them back into use would positively impact on the residents of the town, including individuals and families in need of accommodation, and the wider community for whom empty properties often cause problems.
16. The potential benefits of bringing these empty properties back into use include an increase in council tax income from empty homes premiums that would in turn support the medium-term financial plan of the council, support for local housing needs, investment into the town, assistance in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and maximisation of both physical and social regeneration outcomes.

17. Returning empty homes to use can be a way to increase the supply of housing. While it will not fully respond to housing related matters, it can play an important part in maximising existing housing stock for the benefit of the people of Middlesbrough and support the provision of Council priority services including child, elderly and family care placements, homelessness and resettlement schemes.
18. Substantial areas of Middlesbrough have high residential voids, low sale values and high population churn, which creates potential market failure - resulting in social consequences and implications for Council resources and service delivery. This situation is unsustainable and results in the need for significant market intervention at great cost to the Council.
19. In addition to empty domestic properties Middlesbrough has a significant number of empty non-domestic (commercial) properties within the town centre and throughout the borough some of which are in poor condition.
20. As of September 2024, the total number of non-domestic business properties in Middlesbrough was 4638 of those 761 (16.4%) were empty. The majority of empty properties are based within the town centre.



21. Middlesbrough Council has implemented several actions in its bid to address the issues caused by empty properties including:
22. **Empty Property Strategy - Domestic** – The Empty Property Strategy for domestic properties was approved at the Executive meeting held on 4 December 2024. The Empty Property Strategy for Domestic Properties aims to identify, monitor, address and highlight the extent of the problem in Middlesbrough and proactively tackle it through collective identification, monitoring, addressing and ultimately reducing the number of detrimental properties in Middlesbrough.

The Strategy will:

- a) Ultimately reduce the number of empty and problem homes and return these properties back into use;
- b) Ensure holistic advice, assistance and governance for landlords and property owners is provided.
- c) Raise awareness of the issues around empty and problem homes;
- d) Support cross-directorate and multi-agency interventions into tackling empty and problem properties;

- e) Record and monitor accurate, complete and current information on empty and problem homes in Middlesbrough;

23. The aims and objectives to reduce the number of empty and problem homes aligns with the strategic priorities of Middlesbrough Council as detailed below:

Aims and Objectives Aligns our Strategic priorities:

To ultimately reduce the number of empty and problem homes and return these properties back into use

People

- To improve the quality of life of our residents.
- To maximise Net Collectable Debt.
- To protect vital public resources and services for local people.

Place

- Meeting local housing needs.
- Improve housing conditions.
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Maximise both physical and social regeneration outcomes within the town.

Businesses

By reducing empty homes and problem properties, creates thriving communities, possibility for inward investment etc.

Objective 1: Ensuring income maximisation

Objective 2: Ensuring strong relationships with housing providers/owners

Objective 3: Ensuring referrals are in place with other agency's

Objective 4: Ensuring a coordinated approach around inspection and verification of empty problem properties.

Objective 5: Ensuring accurate and live recording of empty and problem properties

Objective 6: To increase affordable accommodation opportunities for vulnerable individuals and families.

Review of the empty property strategy and linking this to work currently being undertaken around the housing needs (such as homeless / temporary accommodation).



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moving forward

24. **Problem Property Action Plan** – the aim of the action plan is to better unify and co-ordinate Middlesbrough Council's cross-directorate and partner agency problem property interventions, bridge gaps and embed the actions and assess and address the issues across Middlesbrough's problem properties aligning with the Empty Property Strategy - Domestic.

25. **Empty Properties Questionnaire** – The aim of the questionnaire is to ascertain why properties are empty and signpost landlords to other services or inform them of funding that may be available to assist in bringing a property back into use.

26. **Pilot North Ormesby** – All streets in North Ormesby have been reviewed and problem properties that were detrimental to the area had been identified all of which were empty. The properties that had been identified had been flagged and reported through the Active Intelligence Mapping (AIM) meetings and information listed on the council tax system had also been checked for accuracy.

Term of Reference B – To investigate the Council's responsibilities and enforcement powers in respect of empty properties.

27. There are several enforcement powers that are available to the Council to use in relation to empty domestic properties:

- **Completion Notices** – In April 2024 Completion Notices were introduced in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which force owners to undertake work on their properties to bring the property back into the ratings list.

- Hazard awareness notices: used to notify owners under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) of any high-risk conditions or dangerous disrepair issues, which should be dealt with in a property. These are categorised as high risk (category one) and lower risk (category two) hazards.
- Improvement notices: requires that owners carry out repairs to any category one, category two or both types of hazards if identified. Failure to comply can result in owners being fined and prosecuted.
- Empty dwelling management orders: allow the council to take over the management of any property which has been empty for over six months, with a view to working with owners to bring the property back into effective residential use, rather than forcing a sale.
- Enforced sales procedures under the Law and Property Act 1925: allow the council to issue and enforce charges against a property where someone has failed to meet the terms of a statutory notice or where someone owes council tax or other council debts.
- Compulsory Purchase Orders under the Housing Act 1985 (CPOs): allow the council to acquire land or buildings where there is a justified cause.
- Demolition orders under the Building Act 1984: require owners to clear a site and demolish the property with a specific time scale. These orders are usually issued as a last resort if a property is dangerous, beyond repair, or cannot be brought back up to standard.
- The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 s.29 gives the local authority the power to undertake works in connection with the building for the purpose of preventing unauthorised entry to it, or for the purpose of preventing it becoming a danger to public health.
- Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 action can also be taken if an officer of the council believes that the premise constitutes a statutory nuisance.

28. Detailed in the table below is the empty and problem premises intervention process and powers currently used by Middlesbrough Council. Each home identified is assessed using a RAG-rated scoring mechanism to categorise the priority for investigation by the relevant Council service team(s). Properties will be reassessed when necessary or if new information comes to light to ensure the correct categorisation/priority is given.

Concern	Threat Level	Service Responsibility	Empty Homes Scoring	RAG Rating
Property is empty & insecure	High risk – immediate action needed if known / likely threat e.g., arson / property is known to be open.	Public Protection	RED - All avenues will be explored with the owner to return their property to use in a way that suits their own needs, the needs of the community and the Council. Where assistance is refused and the owner is unwilling to cooperate, all enforcement options will be considered to establish the most appropriate course of action.	

Concern	Threat Level	Service Responsibility	Empty Homes Scoring	RAG Rating
Property is empty & secure	Medium risk – no immediate threat but may attract crime / ASB / threat to safety	Public Protection, Community Safety, and /or Planning Enforcement	AMBER - Resources will be invested and officers will work with owner in an attempt to prevent empty homes from deteriorating and being reassessed to a higher category. Where necessary, enforcement options will be employed if considered the most appropriate course of action. Cases in this category will be monitored on a regular basis.	
Property is empty but in good condition and not likely to become a concern	Low Risk	Resident and Business Support	GREEN - owner will be contacted and offered any assistance they may need to return their property back into use. These properties will be monitored for any change and reassessed where necessary.	
Property is empty and attracting anti-social behaviour	Medium to High Risk	Community Safety	RED - All avenues will be explored with the owner to return their property to use in a way that suits their own needs, the needs of the community and the Council. Where assistance is refused and the owner is unwilling to cooperate, all enforcement options will be considered to establish the most appropriate course of action.	
Property is a low value long term empty	Low to Medium Risk	Resident and Business Support	GREEN - owner will be contacted and offered any assistance they may need to return their property back into use. These properties will be monitored for any change and reassessed where necessary.	
Property is in a dangerous condition	High risk – risk of serious injury	Building Control	RED or AMBER – subject to cause of danger and effect of remediation.	
Property is empty but not maintained	Low risk	Public Protection, and / or Building Control	AMBER - Resources will be invested and officers will work with owner in an attempt to prevent empty homes from deteriorating and being reassessed to a higher category. Where necessary, enforcement options will be employed if considered the most appropriate course of action.	

Concern	Threat Level	Service Responsibility	Empty Homes Scoring	RAG Rating
			Cases in this category will be monitored on a regular basis.	

Term of Reference C – To investigate what work has been undertaken with third party providers to refurbish and re-let empty properties.

29. Middlesbrough Council works with various third-party providers to refurbish and re-let empty properties including The Ethical Housing Company, Thirteen Group and Jomast.
30. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from the Ethical Housing Company (EHC) attended a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel and gave a presentation in relation the Company's business model and partnership work with Middlesbrough Council to bring empty properties back into use.
31. The Ethical Housing Company (EHC) provides homes for people in housing need across the Teesside private rental market. The EHC's unique business model combined financial and social outcomes and had a long-term approach, ensuring rents were kept at affordable levels and providing a stable option for those in housing need. This unique business model combined commercial and social outcomes in the growing world of impact investment.
32. The company is based in Redcar but covers the whole of the Tees Valley area and had two arms of operation: lettings and housing. The Company aims to fill the gap in the private sector but with a social purpose. EHC is funded through private equity by a range of investors who have different portfolios from retail to housing.
33. Customers of the EHC are among the most vulnerable in society, often unable to access safe, high-quality, and affordable housing due to complex needs or issues related to drug, alcohol, or mental health. The EHC filled a crucial gap in the private rented sector (PRS), effectively serving as the equivalent of the social housing sector within the PRS. Customers not only chose the EHC because they provided good quality, affordable housing, but also because they received comprehensive support throughout their tenancy. This support included assistance with employment and training, help with benefit claims, and access to financial support services.
34. The EHC's business model is based on the following key factors:
 - Property Acquisition: EHC purchased properties in Teesside, often directly from social housing providers, local authorities, homeowners and landlords. The EHC aimed to acquire properties off-market, thus avoiding traditional estate agency listings and fees.
 - Affordable Housing: EHC focused on providing high-quality, affordable housing to people who were often excluded from the housing market due to issues like financial constraints or complex needs (for example, mental health or substance abuse).
 - Social Impact: EHC mission was to address housing shortages and homelessness. The company refurbished derelict homes, which not only provided housing, but also helped revitalise communities.
 - Comprehensive Support: Tenants received extensive support services. This included help with finding employment, training opportunities, assistance with benefit claims,

and access to financial support. This wrap-around support ensured tenants were able to maintain their housing and improve their overall quality of life.

- Sustainable Practices: EHC was committed to ethical and sustainable practices. EHC aimed to operate in a way that benefited both the community and the environment, ensuring long term positive impact.

35. In essence, EHC combined housing services with a strong social mission, providing affordable housing and comprehensive support to those in need, while also contributing to community development and sustainability.
36. The EHC is currently working closely in partnership with Middlesbrough Council to bring empty homes back into use and provide good quality affordable housing and reduce the need for temporary accommodation. Nine houses in the TS1 area of the town have been refurbished as part of this pilot scheme. The plan is to scale up the pilot into a long-term project, offering fully refurbished properties at affordable rent levels.
37. The refurbishment usually involves stripping properties back to brick and fitting new kitchen, bathroom, heating system, windows and/or roofs. There is no restriction on the type or size of property that would be considered. In particular there is a shortage of level access ground floor properties suitable to accommodate families. It was advised that local contractors were employed to carry out the refurbishments.
38. The EHC want to ensure that those who are unable to access social housing had a suitable alternative within the Private Rented Sector (PRS) which mirrored the offer ordinarily received from Social Housing providers including cyclical maintenance plans, affordable rent levels, a dedicated housing officer per approximately 150 properties, and opportunities for support with employment amongst other services. The EHC currently own and manage 98 properties across Teesside.
39. The EHC meet fortnightly with the Council, working together on issues such as permits for skips, selective landlord licensing and legislation. The projected number of properties for purchase and refurbishment within the Middlesbrough Council partnership for years 1 to 3 is 66 per year. However, the EHC are also open to other avenues for property purchase.
40. Thirteen Group is a housing association with over 36,000 properties across the Northeast, Yorkshire, and Humber, Thirteen Group is committed to more than just providing homes. Their work extends beyond brick and mortar focusing on improving lives and creating a more inclusive community for all.
41. Thirteen is the largest Registered Social Landlord (RSL) in Middlesbrough with approximately 11,300 homes to rent in Middlesbrough.
42. Of the 11,300 homes in Middlesbrough to rent there are 300 properties currently empty which proportionately was not a lot, 43% of the empty homes were screened which equated to 1.2% of the total homes owned by Thirteen, it was advised that properties were screened for security purposes to prevent theft of boilers and copper pipes It was advised that organised crime groups operated in some communities and properties needed to be secured to prevent gangs from using them for illegal purposes, 66% of all empty homes were less than 12 months old. Many older homes from 2022 or earlier were going through options appraisals to ascertain the best course of action.
43. The average cost to get a home back to operations is increasing with cost rising from circa £4k in 2020 to circa £10k in 2024. Thirteen aimed to get empty properties back into operation

within 28 days however high levels of increased cost were a limiting factor.

44. Properties were no longer being invested in by tenants and a higher number of properties were coming back to Thirteen in a worse condition and needed a lot more investment. Thirteen are increasing the standard of returning empty homes by replacing flooring and decorating if required. Thirteen are proud to invest in their properties and give their tenants the best start in their new homes.
45. Across the broader housing sector Thirteen's average rents are broadly comparable with others and the number of turnovers were at 2% which was broadly comparable with other RSL's.
46. Thirteen does not have specific areas where there are acute issues with empty properties. Of the 300 empty properties they were widely spread across the town.
47. Thirteen made extra investments in properties following research that was undertaken with customers in 2018/19 to find out what mattered to them. Tenancy turnaround rates across the whole of Thirteen were approximately 2000-2200 properties per year. Reasons for turnaround included 30% of tenancies coming to an end due to a person becoming deceased and no natural tenancy to continue and 30% of tenants leaving Thirteen to take up tenancies with the private rented sector. One of the main drivers for this was the internal standards of homes in the PRS, the fixtures, fittings and decoration in private rented accommodation is more attractive to tenants than that of RSL's.
48. Following this research Thirteen carried out a lot of work on gardens which was a hotspot issue for residents however the main issue for tenants remained the internal decoration and flooring/carpeting which Thirteen now invest in if it is needed.
49. In terms of the 300 empty properties Thirteen strived to turnaround properties in 28 days although sometimes this was not feasible, and the demand was not there due to the area the properties were in. In mitigation Thirteen were taking a whole house approach working to the Decent Homes Standard and working to the requirements of the customer and the regulator.
50. Thirteen Group consider the wider environmental drivers that affect Thirteen and how they work. Some of which had been widely reported in the press such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy which had highlighted the need for quality housing stock and decency within the housing sector and the health and safety conditions of such housing. Changes in the regulations of social housing were now being implemented.
51. The longer-term challenges for Thirteen were that all registered housing providers had a target to have all their housing stock up to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Level C by 2030 and to adhere to net zero carbon targets in the longer term which had put significant pressure on the company as they continued to develop new homes and invest in existing homes going forward. The Place Scrutiny Panel were advised that some of Thirteen's housing stock was 60-80 years old which would take a lot of investment to get these properties up to these standards.
52. It was highlighted that Thirteen were building a lot of new homes and the panel asked for clarification on how that balanced with managing older properties. It was advised that the drive for building new homes came from Central Government. Thirteen was a strategic partner with New Homes England. In terms of balance, it was advised that Thirteen were investing £110 million in existing homes this year and investment was set to grow over the next 5 years. The new build business model was principally through grant funding but also through loans and bank investment. This enabled Thirteen to provide investment of £110 million for existing

homes and build 500-600 new homes per year as part of their 30-year business plan.

53. Thirteen had a target of owning 11,200 homes at any one time and a commitment to build 600 new homes per year. Around 400 homes could be lost where policy dictates to rent to buy however Thirteen are committed to increasing the number of homes per year.
54. Representatives from Jomast attended a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel. Jomast Developments Limited are a private property developer and regeneration specialist.
55. Jomast is a substantial private landlord in Middlesbrough, nearly all of their properties are currently let. Whilst there are some voids, they were not available for letting due to being in a refurbishment programme.
56. Two projects that Jomast were undertaking included the refurbishment of Church House, a high rise building in central Middlesbrough that had been vacant for a number of years. The project would provide 86 newly refurbished apartments and is due to be completed in late summer 2025. The second project is the refurbishment of 67 houses in the Gresham area of central Middlesbrough in Wentworth, Waverley and Union Streets and Princes Road. All 67 properties were currently let.
57. Property management is a challenging business due to the capital required and work needed to meet the necessary standards and engage good tenants. A major issue for private landlords is the capital needed to refurbish properties to the appropriate standard including the EPC requirements. Increasing the energy performance of a building required substantial investment but it was important to achieve a good rating to make it satisfactory for the occupants, especially in light of increasing utility costs.
58. Refurbishment costs for a single dwelling could be approximately £40K and often private landlords did not have that capital. Jomast are keen to continue investing in Middlesbrough. However, the Company is selective with the type of property purchased because in some cases, although a property could be purchased at low cost, it was not commercially viable. Projects of scale usually made more commercial sense.
59. Jomast is happy to continue to engage with Council Officers with a view to bringing empty properties back into use as appropriate and refurbishing them to a high standard. A strategic approach is required to generally improve the market.

Term of Reference D – To investigate what work has been undertaken to bring empty commercial properties back into use.

60. Middlesbrough has a significant number of empty non-domestic (commercial) properties, within the town centre and throughout the borough, some of which are in poor condition.
61. Properties like Vancouver House could attract anti-social behaviour, squatters, increase crime rates and decrease local property values and outside investment opportunities.
62. It is important for the Council to have a strategy for tackling empty commercial properties although it does not have a great deal of power to do so. The majority of empty properties are in the central area of the town.
63. Rate reliefs are available when a property becomes empty, when a property becomes unoccupied the following rate relief can be claimed:

- **Non-industrial** - Shops, offices; a 100% exemption is applied for 3 months, followed by 0% relief, a 100% unoccupied charge.
 - **Industrial** - Factories, Warehouses, Workshops; a 100% exemption applies for 6 months, followed by 0% relief, a 100% unoccupied charge.
64. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) determines the rateable value of properties and when they could be taken out of rating. A property can be removed from the rating if the property is in a poor condition and cannot be economically repaired. Currently in Middlesbrough there are several large office buildings that the VOA have taken out of the rating including Centre North East, Gurney House and Church House. This is lost revenue to the authority as business rates are not payable.
 65. When properties are taken out of the rating by the VOA, the Council does not have any influence, although pressure is being applied for the VOA to take a different approach. Once properties are taken out of the rating, the owners are less inclined to maintain them.
 66. The Council continues to inspect those properties to check whether any work is taking place on them and to try to engage with the owners. If empty properties became unsightly or unsafe, the Council can use what powers it has to intervene. 426 non-domestic properties are currently stood empty in Middlesbrough with zero rate value.
 67. The risk faced by empty properties fall into three main categories. The most obvious is financial loss to the Council but there is also risk to the building itself, and the risk of the owner incurring legal liabilities.
 68. The financial impact of an empty property equals no rates payable for a period of 3-6 months, following which rates become fully payable. The ability to collect business rates worsens when properties are empty as there are limited options for enforcing where there is no trading and/or a reluctance to pay. Rates avoidance also reduces the potential empty charge payable each year.
 69. Empty buildings can also attract anti-social behaviour, squatters, increase crime rates and decrease local property values and outside investment opportunities.
 70. To try and encourage owners to bring properties back into use there are exemptions from paying business rates for unoccupied properties where the rateable value is below £2900, for listed buildings, bankruptcy or liquidation or prohibited by law. Small business rates relief is also available.
 71. There is a cross-organisation arrangement with the Regeneration Directorate as well as a Business Support Service. Advice and direction is available to new business start-ups. One thing that has been encouraged is converting former commercial properties into accommodation.
 72. One option open to the Council to deal with empty properties is by Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). The powers around CPO had recently been changed. However, the funding required to implement that legislation is not currently available to Middlesbrough Council. Another option is rental auctions, where the Council could take ownership of a retail unit and auction it off. This would not be effective as there is not the demand in Middlesbrough for this type of property.

73. A need has been identified for more cohesive working with the VOA around the timeframes for properties being removed from the ratings. Modifying current legislation to provide powers that allowed the Council to positively influence and persuade businesses to take a more proactive approach would be beneficial.
74. There are two investigation officers currently employed by Middlesbrough Council who are responsible for visiting and inspecting empty properties to check that they are indeed unoccupied. These details are kept on a database.

75. **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Place Scrutiny Panel concluded that:

76. Empty properties, whether commercial or residential, can create problems of nuisance or blight in a local area, for example through illegal access leading to vandalism or, in the worst cases, through disrepair and dilapidation. Problems are generally exacerbated in the longer term where properties fall into disrepair and, as this happens, the possibility of a property becoming occupied diminishes, thus worsening the position. Action is therefore needed by all relevant parties at an early stage as possible to ensure that such problems are addressed and alleviated. Early intervention will also mean that less Council resources are needed over the longer term.
77. The Council is the key organisation which is actively involved in addressing environmental problems associated with empty properties. This is undertaken through the use of relevant legislation for enforcement and liaison between relevant Council departments.
78. The Council is well placed to advise owners of empty properties (whether commercial or residential) on possible courses of action relating to their property. The provision of such advice - for example on owners' legal obligations, or in relation to renovation or disposal - could assist in addressing environmental problems associated with empty properties at an early stage.
79. Thirteen Group, which is Middlesbrough's biggest social housing landlord, also has an important role in managing the issue of empty properties, particularly in view of its ongoing regeneration schemes and the associated demolition of properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

80. Based on the findings of the scrutiny review, the Place Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive that the Council should:
- 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

84. The Place Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following for their assistance with its work:

Richard Horniman	Director of Regeneration
Emma Dorgan	Operations Manager - Investigations and Enforcement
Natalie Usai	Ethical Housing Company
Janette Savage	Head of Resident & Business Support
David Ripley	Thirteen Group
Stuart Monk	Jomast
Tony Parkinson	Jomast

ACRONYMS

85. A-Z listing of common acronyms used in the report:

AIM	Active Intelligence Mapping
ASB	Anti-social Behaviour
CEO	Chief Executive Officer

CPO	Compulsory Purchase Orders
EHC	Ethical Housing Company
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
HHSRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating System
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
PRS	Private Rented Sector
VOA	Valuation Office Agency

BACKGROUND PAPERS

86. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports/presentations to, and minutes of, the Place Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 2 September, 7 October, 4 November, 2 December, 6 January
- Empty Property Strategy

COUNCILLOR DAVID BRANSON CHAIR OF THE PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

Place Scrutiny Panel Membership: Councillors D Branson (Chair), T Livingstone (Vice Chair), J Banks, J Cooke, C Cooper, J Ewan, N Hussain, D Jackson, J Kabuye, L Mason, D McCabe, A Romaine, L Young

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