

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 26 January 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), B Hubbard, A Romaine, D Coupe, J Ewan, D Jackson, J Kabuye and T Mohan

OFFICERS: J McNally, T Frankland, A Shippey and M Walker

26/45 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

26/46 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

26/47 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 22 DECEMBER 2025**

Some minor amendments to the minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 22nd December 2025 were proposed. It was agreed that these would be incorporated, and the minutes were then approved.

26/48 **ANNUAL UPDATES - COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP AND PREVENT AND CHANNEL**

The Head of Neighbourhoods began by advising Members that the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was a statutory partnership made up of key 'Responsible Authorities' who had equal responsibility for reducing crime and antisocial behaviour under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (As amended by the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2014 and the Policing and Crime Act 2017). The Responsible Authorities included Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue Authority, Health, Probation and the Youth Justice Service. They worked in collaboration with other statutory and voluntary services as well as local people to reduce crime and make people feel safer by dealing with issues such as antisocial behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, re-offending and serious violence.

Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership continued to meet every three months and partners discussed key strategic issues relating to community safety. The CSP Plan was set every two years and it was due for review this year. This would be completed with new priorities by the end of 2026. This process would be informed by a strategic intelligence assessment that would review data from a range of sources looking at patterns and trends of crime and antisocial behaviour and would include details relating to geographic locations and hotspots.

The CSP currently had three main priorities:

- **Priority 1 - Feel Safe**
Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour including environmental crime (there has been a 15% reduction in crime over the past three years)
Improving community cohesion and resilience
Delivering the prevent agenda
- **Priority 2 – Be Safe**
Improve mental health
Reduce exploitation
Reduce substance misuse
Reduce domestic violence
Tackling serious violence
- **Priority 3 – Stay Safe**
Working with communities (doing 'with' not 'to')
Improving environmental cleanliness
Addressing underlying community issues

The CSP had formulated a detailed delivery plan which set out how each partner agency would achieve the objectives identified under each three priorities. The partnership also had a number of subgroups to support the delivery of statutory functions.

A Member raised that although statistics pointed to a reduction in crime, this was not what was being felt in communities. It was suggested that residents were often reluctant to report incidents due to perceived lack of response.

The Head of Neighbourhoods agreed that all emphasis should not be placed on data as this often does not show the full picture, although it was still a valuable tool to inform plans and strategies. As a Council we must encourage communities to report crime and it was noted that there was still a comparison to be made as those crimes that went unreported today were probably consistent with those that went unreported in earlier years. The CSP used a variety of indicators to guide their work and inform the Community Safety Plan.

Members queried how consultations were carried out to gather information for the Community Safety Plan and it was raised that some residents missed the public consultations due to limited access to the internet or reduced mobility. A Member suggested the surveys be available and advertised in places such as post offices and local shops.

It was confirmed that online surveys were conducted via the Council's consultation portal and surveys could be completed in community hubs. The Head of Neighbourhoods agreed to take this suggestion on board although noted that explicit permission would be needed from the business owners to do this.

It was requested that the Community Safety Plan was circulated to Members and potentially brought to a future meeting of the Place Panel so Members could have some input.

Members queried how patterns in criminal activity had shifted over the past few years and whether statistics could be shared with the Panel. The Head of Neighbourhoods advised that data could be provided to Members but a representative from the Police would be better placed to discuss this topic in more detail.

Members also asked if the Council monitored social media trends to identify potential crime or unrest, and what actions were taken when such trends were detected.

It was advised that due to social media being a relatively new technology, the Council was still refining its approach to managing it. Social media was a powerful tool that could be used to spread both positive and negative messaging far and wide quickly. The Council had teams that monitored public communications across different platforms and captured information that was then shared with police and other partners. Appropriate action was taken where necessary, for example during the disorder in summer 2024 guidance was issued to residents on how to stay safe.

The Community Safety Partnership Officer began the Prevent update by advising that it was part of the UK's counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST. Prevent helped to protect society from terrorism by supporting people who were vulnerable to radicalisation and offered appropriate interventions. There were many different types of radicalisation and Prevent dealt with all of them. If someone was at risk of radicalisation, they should be referred to Prevent's support programme, Channel. Channel was confidential and voluntary, and offered support including:

- mentoring
- mental health support such as counselling
- education or career development support
- online safety training for parents/carers

The Middlesbrough Operational Prevent Group was a multi-agency group that led on action plans which sought to reduce risk by increasing communities' resilience and awareness. The group combined local authority departments including Youth Justice, children's social care, adult social care and external organisations including local educational establishments working together to deliver a partnership approach of Prevent. They also developed and led on action plans each year designed to promote risk awareness to professionals and others who supported or cared for vulnerable people in our communities whilst promoting the

safeguarding nature of Prevent.

The work of the operational Prevent group was overseen by:

- Ofsted
- Community Safety Partnership
- Peer observation
- Home Office Annual Prevent Audit
- Regional Contest Board
- Elected Members Scrutiny Panel

Examples of recent initiatives from the Middlesbrough Operational Prevent Group included:

- A successful professional's event in Partnership with Community Security Trust in May on the Incel Subculture
- Promotion of the 'ACT Early' campaign and new Home Office Prevent promotional products. Updated eLearning packages internally and to external partners/stakeholders
- Supported the third sector by providing referral pathways, Home Office eLearning and team briefings on prevent and promotional material for 'ACT Early' and IREPORTit
- Several mini projects delivered throughout the year to build community resilience including to promote healthy relationships, increase online safety, support young people with additional needs online and promote engagement and education in democracy
- Regular Prevent article contribution to the Protect and Prepare Newsletter circulated to the business sector
- Supported schools' designated safeguarding leads in respect to Prevent and other safeguarding concerns through awareness raising
- Annual Christmas digital resilience campaigns
- Numerous Prevent awareness sessions for professionals to enhance awareness and reinforce referral pathway
- Projects to assist with raising professionals' awareness of self-initiated terrorism – signs to spot and Protect and themed advice to increase resilience against this threat

A request was made by Members for data regarding the number of internal staff who had completed the Prevent eLearning courses and any feedback around this. It was also requested that a bespoke Prevent learning course to be offered to Members.

The Community Safety Partnership Officer confirmed that data around this could be circulated to Members following the meeting and it was also noted that due to local authorities' statutory duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism, Councils underwent regular assessments of their Prevent performance carried out by central government and last year Middlesbrough Council exceeded in all areas.

The Prevent lead provided training and support to internal departments on their statutory duty, commissioned services and the third sector on a variety of aspects including:

- Delivery of face-to-face training and guidance
- Advice on appropriateness of referrals
- Support on embedding processes for Prevent/Channel
- Provision and support of delivery of Home office e learning products relating to both Prevent and Channel

The Prevent lead carried out extensive work with local schools and provided the following:

- Prevent Awareness training (minimum 1 Designated Safeguarding Lead per school)
- Provision of all suitable and relevant products for Prevent and associated products such as Digital resilience products to increase young person's safety and media literacy online
- Provision of guidance for schools related to safeguarding concerns regarding Prevent provided in partnership by the Department for Education (DFE)
- Promotion and Access to available virtual Prevent Awareness sessions and guidance for school governors and trustees provided by the DFES Regional Prevent Advisor
- Provided advice and guidance to schools in partnership with Middlesbrough Council's

safeguarding lead & DFE's Regional Prevent lead to schools on Prevent related issues

- Encourage conversations with parents and carers and empower them to help their young people build digital resilience

Members heard that in the year ending 31 March 2025, there were 8,517 individuals referred to Prevent, with a total of 8,778 referrals made. This represented a 27% increase compared with the previous year (6,922) and was the highest number of referrals recorded in a single year since the data series began in April 2015. 'Extreme Right-Wing' concerns accounted for 21% (1,798) of referrals, higher than those related to 'Islamist Extremism' (10%; 870); compared with the previous year, the proportion of referrals for 'Extreme Right-Wing' concerns increased (up from 19%; 1,314 of 6,921), while the proportion for 'Islamist Extremism' decreased (down from 13%; 913 of 6,921).

Channel across Cleveland was a bespoke provision as our regional figures were low in comparison to other areas. The Channel panel was a safeguarding meeting of multi-disciplinary professionals whom all worked towards assisting individuals at risk to build their resilience against the radicalising narrative whilst addressing any susceptibilities or vulnerabilities they may have. Channel operated on a consensual basis and the type of support available through Channel was wide-ranging. It included help with education or careers advice, dealing with mental or emotional health issues, or digital safety training for parents; it all depended on the individual's needs.

The majority of referrals that went on to be adopted as a Channel case were for 'Extreme Right-Wing concerns' (612 out of 1464 (total specified); 42%); while 226 (15%) were for concerns related to 'Islamist Extremism'. Referrals with Extreme Right Wing concerns that were discussed at a Channel panel had the highest rate of adoption (34%; 612 of 1,798), followed by 'InCel Extremism' (32%; 21 of 66), 'Left Wing Extremism' (29%; 6 of 21), 'Fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks (where no other ideology)' (27%; 126 of 469) and IE (26%; 226 of 870). The lowest adoption rate was for referrals with 'Northern Ireland Related – Dissident Republican Extremism' (6%; 1 of 16). The proportion of Prevent referrals that were adopted as a Channel case had seen a large increase in the latest year ending March 2025, up by 10 percentage points (change from 7% to 17%) compared to the previous year.

Members queried whether local figures were available but it was confirmed that this could not be circulated as it could be identifiable.

Information was requested by a Member regarding how the referral process operated and it was confirmed that professionals could complete the national prevent referral form and external partners would be advised to follow the referral pathway. A national advice hotline was also available to the wider public 24 hours a day and there was a public webpage with guidance and instructions available including how to make a referral.

AGREED as follows:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. The Community Safety Partnership Plan would be circulated to Members.
3. Middlesbrough crime statistics would be circulated to Members.
4. Data regarding the number of internal staff who had completed the Prevent eLearning courses would be circulated to Members.
5. A bespoke Prevent learning course would be reoffered to Members.

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DRAFT FINAL REPORT - BARRIERS TO REGENERATION

A copy of the Draft Final Report on Barriers to Regeneration had been circulated with the agenda. Members discussed the information provided and some minor amendments were suggested. Members also discussed recommendations for inclusion in the Final Report.

AGREED as follows that:

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

A. Carry out a survey of college and university students, to gain feedback to see if people

who had come from different places across the country and now studied in Middlesbrough could suggest ways of improving Middlesbrough, from their own life experiences from where they were born.

- B. Elected Members and Officers to actively promote and talk up the town - many positive things are happening in Middlesbrough but they are often overlooked and overshadowed by the negative. This could be achieved through a positive marketing campaign and press releases.
 - C. Support and deliver more town centre events with a strong emphasis on cultural activity to drive footfall and encourage people that live local and further afield to travel into the town centre.
 - D. Redevelop Linthorpe Road to create a more compact retail centre to naturally increase footfall. The increased activity could make the town centre feel more vibrant and safer.
 - E. Increase the number of Neighbourhood Safety Wardens to provide a reassuring presence and help to build confidence in the town centre.
 - F. Work in partnership with businesses to ensure compliance with street-drinking regulations and discourage related activity around their premises.
 - G. Increase green spaces in the town centre which could provide significant health (mental & physical), environmental (cleaner air, less heat, better drainage), social (community building, recreation), and economic (higher property values, tourism, jobs) benefits.
 - H. Work in collaboration with Tees Valley Combined Authority to improve transport links into the town centre and outer areas of Middlesbrough to ensure key points of interest are easily accessible.
 - I. Increase Middlesbrough Town Hall/Box Office opening times to improve accessibility and user satisfaction and potentially function as a dual-purpose information hub.
 - J. Strengthen our relationship with Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC) further and work together towards the common goal.
 - K. Apply for an extension to funding from the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioners Cleveland Unit for Reducing Violence (CURV) or seek alternative funding for the Night-Time Economy Pilot Project, which is currently due to end in March 2026.
2. A final version of the report would be brought to the next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel for approval.

26/51 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for Monday 16 February 2026 at 1.30 pm

26/52 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.