

## PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

<b>Date:</b> Monday 16th February, 2026
<b>Time:</b> 1.30 pm
<b>Venue:</b> Mandela Room

## 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

To receive any declarations of interest.

4. Minutes - Place Scrutiny Panel - 26 January 2026 3 - 8

5. Annual Update - Flood Risk Management 9 - 20

The Public Rights of Way Officer will be in attendance to provide the Panel with a Statutory annual update on Flood Risk Management.

Recommendation: That the Panel note the information provided

6. Annual Update - RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers) 21 - 28

The Governance and Information Manager will be in attendance to provide the Panel with a Statutory annual update on RIPA (Regulation on Investigatory Power).

Recommendation: That the Panel note the information provided

7. Draft Final Report - Barriers to Regeneration

29 - 42

Recommendation: That the Panel agrees the final report for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

8. Overview and Scrutiny Board Update

The Chair will provide a verbal update on matters considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 28 January 2026.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel will take place on 30 March 2026 at 1.30pm

10. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Charlotte Benjamin  
Director of Legal and Corporate Services

Town Hall  
Middlesbrough  
Friday 6 February 2026

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors D Branson (Chair), T Livingstone (Vice-Chair), B Hubbard, A Romaine, D Coupe, J Ewan, D Jackson, J Kabuye and T Mohan

**Assistance in accessing information**

**Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Joanne McNally 01642 728329/Tabitha Frankland 01642 726241, 01642 728329/01642 726241, joanne\_mcnally@middlesbrough.gov.uk; tabitha\_frankland@middlesbrough.gov.uk**

**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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 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.

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# PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT – UPDATE

16<sup>th</sup> February 2026

# Flood Risk - Context

- The Middlesbrough drainage system is extensive and complex in nature comprising open and culverted watercourses and a surface water/combined sewerage system.
- Flooding can come from a variety of sources including surface water run off, ordinary watercourses, surcharging sewers and from road gullies.
- Surface water flooding occurs when intense rainfall, often of short duration, is unable to permeate into the ground or enter drainage systems quickly enough, resulting in ponding or overland flows. It can cause considerable problems in urban areas.
- During periods of heavy rainfall standing water may accumulate even if the road gullies are in good working order. Some gullies just cannot drain the water away fast enough and therefore will surcharge during periods of intense rain fall. These intense periods of rain fall often don't last for long and once over, the gully will usually drain away the water without needing any attention.

# Flood Zones & Surface Water Flood Maps

- The Environment Agency updated their long-term flood risk information, as part of the National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA2) at the end of January 2025 with further map updates during 2025.
- An initial assessment of the new maps covering Middlesbrough appears to show an increase in the extent of flooding.
- We are currently undertaking a desktop assessment of the new maps to identify those areas which may be a risk of flooding and require further investigation or modelling.

# Strategic Flood Risk Assessments

- A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) gives an overview of areas that may be susceptible to flooding.
- It provides a comprehensive overview of all flood sources (river, surface water, groundwater, etc) across Middlesbrough, now and in the future, including the impact of climate change.
- The SFRA is a two-level process used by the planning authority to assess flood risk from all sources.
- Level 1 – provides a high-level overview to apply the Sequential Test
- Level 2 – offers detailed, site-specific assessments if development is necessary in high-risk areas, incorporating climate change impacts, flood depths and velocity.

# Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- Original SFRA was published in 2018
- Level 1 SFRA update in 2024
- Level 1 SFRA Finalised in Mar 2025
- Level 2 SFRA covering Middlehaven undertaken in Early 2025
- Level 2 SFRA Finalised in 2025
- Review of Level 1 & 2 following updates of EA Flood Risk Data 2025/2026

# Management of Flood Risk

# NWL Integrated Drainage Studies

- The Strategic Studies highlight and prioritise the areas of greatest risk from combined flooding within each of the catchment areas.
- Middlesbrough is covered by several catchment Areas.
- Each area will have a Stage 1 and Stage 2 study undertaken.
- Stage 1 focuses on the collection, collation, analysis and prioritisation of information to identify areas of High Risk from Flooding
- Stage 2 focuses on identifying opportunities within the top 3 or 4 High Risk areas to reduce or prevent flooding

## Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA)

The Environment Agency 'Medium term plan' is a rolling list of schemes which are refreshed yearly and are funded from Government funding allocation. The funding process is going through a review / change and so currently the programme is only over 2 year's and the current funding runs from 26/27 – 27/28

Following a recent refresh of the EA's Medium Term Plan. The following potential scheme areas were included:

- Shevington Grove, Marton 24/25 (105 Properties)
- Connaught Road, Nunthorpe 27/28 (27 properties)
- Gresham Road, Newport 27/28 (40 properties)
- NIDP Study - Thornfield Road 26/27 assessment



# Completed Scheme

- Saltersgill / Beechwood fields Scheme was completed in 2021 and better protects around 306 properties.
- Marton West Beck Scheme was completed in 2022 and better protect 500 properties.
- Ormesby Beck Restoration Scheme was completed in 2022/2023
- Cornwall Close was completed in 2024 and better protects around 5 properties.

# Other Flood Risk Prevention Improvements

## **Highway Drainage**

- We continue to investigate the highway drainage system, which has not been previously recorded or mapped, thereby increasing our knowledge of the system and the interactions with sewers and watercourses. We are then able to repair and cleanse the system where required.

## **Developments**

- We continue to work with developers to ensure that Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) techniques are a part of all major developments.

## **Gully Smart Asset management Software**

- The Software 'Gully SMART' was purchased in January 2022 to enable an improved proactive and reactive response to managing the Highway drainage network and reduce flooding from gullies and the impacts this can have.

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# Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

## Annual Update

# RIPA

This is the law governing the use of surveillance techniques by public authorities, including local authorities.

RIPA requires that when public authorities need to use covert techniques to obtain private information about someone, they only do so if surveillance is necessary, proportionate, and compatible with human rights.

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Typically, this relates to suspected criminal activity that is likely to result in a custodial sentence of six months or more.

Middlesbrough Council will not undertake any activity defined with RIPA without prior authorisation in the legally prescribed form.

# Roles and Responsibilities...

The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) has overall responsibility for overt and covert surveillance, including:

- creation, communication and review of this policy;
- appointing the CCTV Single Point of Contact;
- appointing the Coordinating Officer (Auditor) for covert surveillance;
- ensuring the availability of appropriate authorisers for covert surveillance;
- raising corporate awareness of the policy and proper surveillance practices;
- assessing corporate compliance with this policy;
- providing professional guidance on all matters relating to surveillance;
- engagement with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner and the IPCO; and overseeing the implementation of any post-inspection action plans recommended or approved by the IPCO.

# Roles and Responsibilities

Directors and Heads of Service have a general responsibility to ensure compliance with operations as detailed in the Surveillance Policy, this includes taking reasonable steps to protect health & safety including any necessary risk assessments.

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There are a number of key roles in the process of approving and monitoring applications for both overt and covert surveillance.

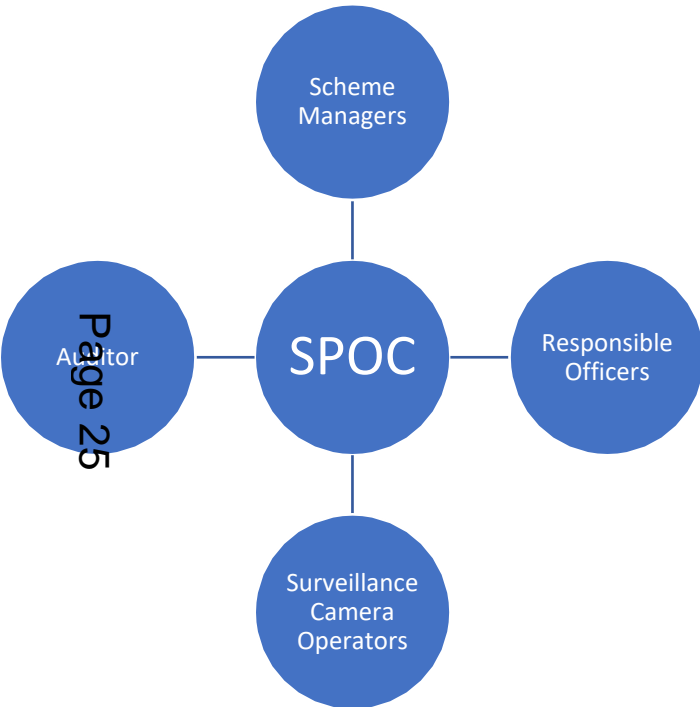
Depending on whether the surveillance is 'overt' or 'covert' will depend on the level of authorisation.



# Surveillance Key Roles

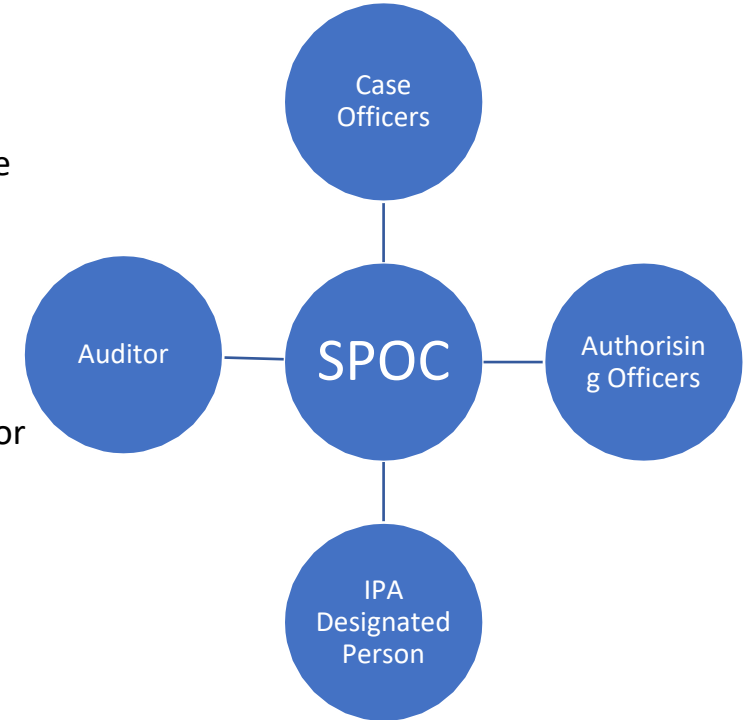
## Overt Surveillance

### Surveillance



- **Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)** Ann-Marie Johnstone  
Head of Policy Governance & Information
- **CCTV Single Point of Contact (SPoC)** John Kirk, Service Delivery Manager
- **Coordinating Officer (Auditor)** Leanne Hamer, Governance and Information Manager, Deputy: Michael Brearley, Data Protection Officer (for compliance audit purposes only)
- **Authorising Officers** Richard Horniman, Director of Regeneration and Culture, Judith Hedgley, Head of Public Protection, Claire Holt, Head of Strategic Housing
- **Authorising Officer for Juvenile / Vulnerable Adult CHIS**, or where confidential information or matters subject to legal privilege are likely to be acquired through either directed surveillance or by a CHIS, Erik Scollay, Chief Executive
- **Designated person**, Judith Hedgley, Head of Public Protection

## Covert



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Auditor



# Role of the (IPCO) Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office

Overseen by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner (Sir Brian Leveson), the IPCO was created under the IPA to provide independent oversight and authorisation of the use of investigatory powers by intelligence agencies, police forces and other public authorities.

It was agreed with the IPCO following their last inspection in 2020 that we continue to maintain an overarching Surveillance Policy which covers CCTV and RIPA. The IPCO conducts risk-based reviews of the application of RIPA powers. The Council completed submission of its compliance in January 2026.

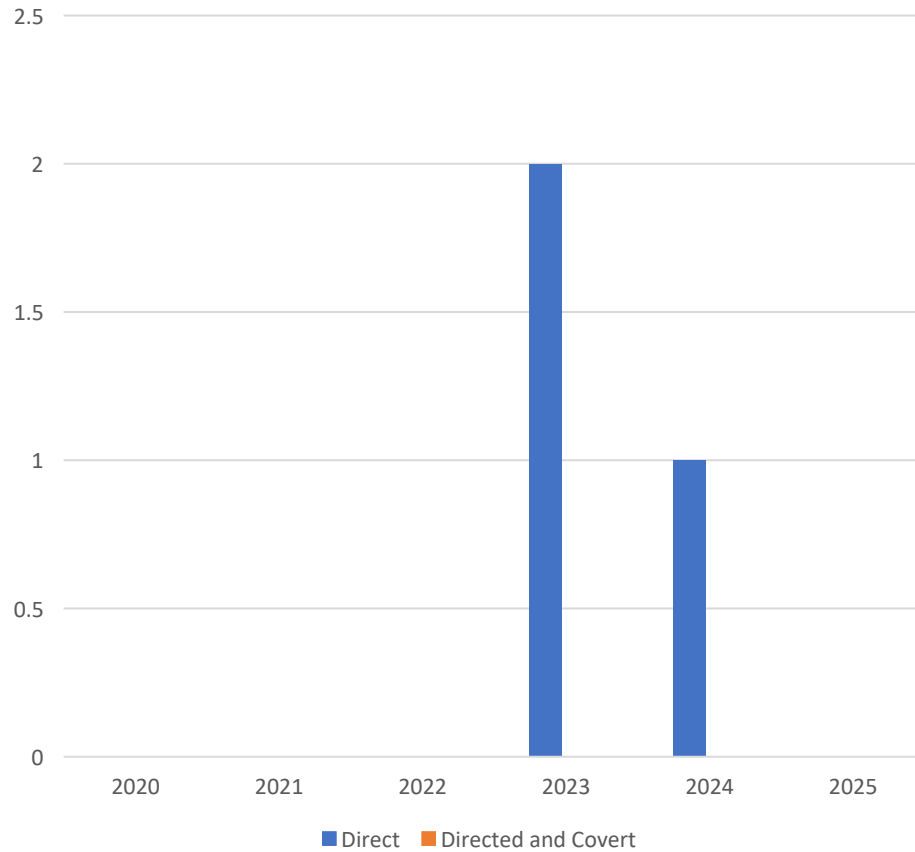
# Annual review

An annual Surveillance Report and Policy are produced to report on the surveillance activity of the Council ensuring that it complies with its strategic priorities and statutory obligations, that they are lawful and that due regard to human rights and to data protection.

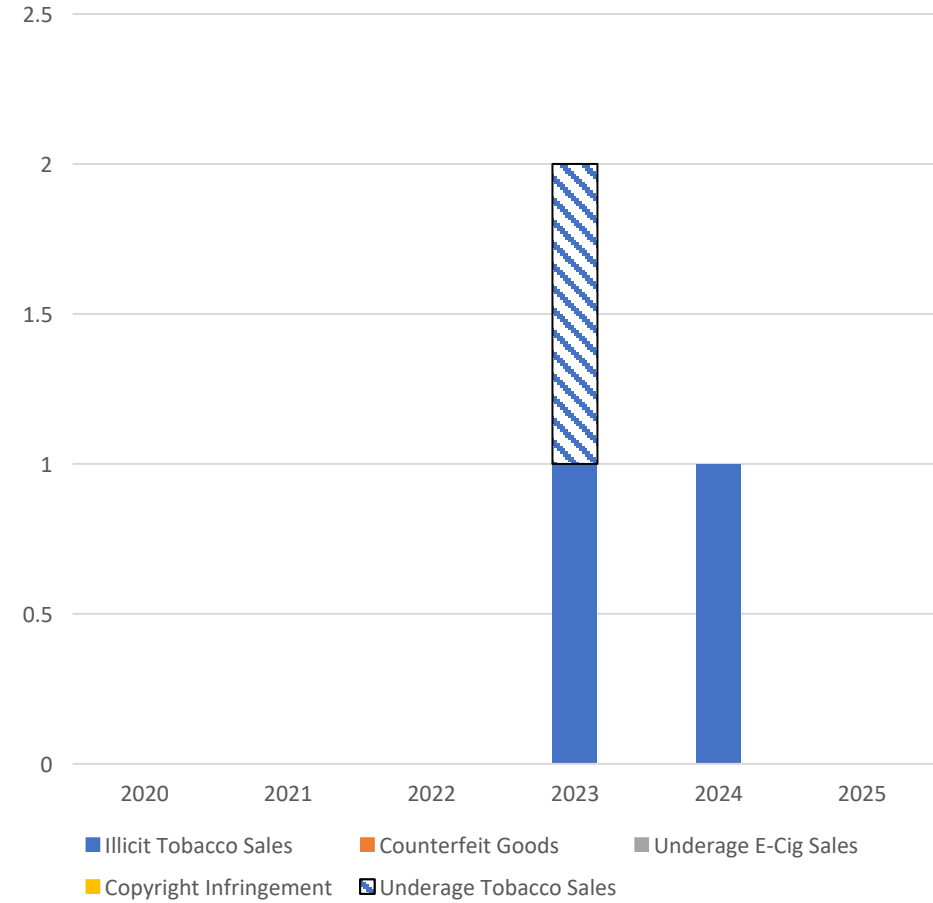
The Council always looks to methods to gather information that do not require covert surveillance to be undertaken, in order to minimise the use of surveillance powers therefore activity remains low.

# Activity

## RIPA - Nature of Surveillance



## RIPA - Suspected Offences



MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Final Report of the Place Scrutiny Panel  
BARRIERS TO REGENERATION

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## **THE AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW**

1. The aim of the review was to identify the barriers to regeneration in Middlesbrough and investigate how more businesses can be attracted to the town.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

2. The terms of reference, for the scrutiny panel's review, are as follows:
  - A) To establish what the Barriers to Regeneration are in Middlesbrough
  - B) To identify good practice from other local authorities in relation to attracting businesses to the area
  - C) To investigate what measures are in place to make people feel safer in our town centre and neighbourhoods
  - D) To gain an understanding of current legislation available to local authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3. The mainstay of UK high streets for much of the 20th century, retail is now in structural decline. The growth of e-commerce means councils and communities are now nursing an increasing number of vacant shops in town centres.
4. Around one in seven shops and one in five shopping centres units are now empty. Some town centres are now caught in a vicious cycle of boarded-up shops, declining attractiveness and falling footfall.
5. Already under pressure from online sales, the pandemic triggered a wave of retailer insolvencies in 2020. Some retailers like M&S and Next decided to relocate to out-of-town retail parks. Rents and service charges on retail parks are generally lower than in town centres. Internal store layouts are typically more efficient, while easy car parking and often longer opening hours add to the retail park appeal for shoppers. Higher energy costs and interest rates are squeezing households and businesses alike.
6. Although all towns across the UK have been affected by the decline in high street shopping, poorer towns have generally been hit harder than more prosperous towns. While there are exceptions to the rule, in general more deprived towns have a higher proportion of empty shops than relatively prosperous towns. One obvious explanation for this relationship is that people in more affluent towns have more disposable income.
7. An economic assessment on Middlesbrough had been carried out in 2017/18<sup>1</sup> it was recognised in the assessment that Middlesbrough needed to shift its focus away from a 'need based' retail model toward a 'want based' experience economy.
8. The assessment identified that Middlesbrough should prioritise; leisure, culture, events and unique offerings that cannot be replicated online.

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<sup>1</sup> [Middlesbrough Town Centre Economic Assessment 2017/18 – Report to Middlesbrough Council](#)

9. Additional recommendations from the assessment included, increase use of transport links and improve signage, investment in public realm and safety and strategies to reduce vacancies through alternative uses.
10. A further economic assessment on Middlesbrough was carried out in 2025 which focused on Middlesbrough's current position including emerging trends and how Middlesbrough was responding to those.
11. Key points summarised from the initial findings of the latest assessment included:
12. **Commercial Change:** Total commercial premises in the town centre had decreased, primarily due to a substantial reduction in retail units. Retail now accounted for a smaller share of total space, reflecting diversification into hospitality, leisure, and office uses.
13. **Vacancy and Performance:** Vacancy rates had fallen to around 14.6%, slightly below the national town centre average (14%) and outperforming comparable centres in the Northeast (17%).
14. **Demographic and Residential Growth:** Middlesbrough's population had grown from 140,600 (2018) to 148,285 (2022), driven by increased student numbers, infrastructure investment, and inward migration. The population was more diverse, younger, and increasingly skilled, presenting opportunities to broaden the visitor and consumer base.
15. **Transport and Accessibility:** Public transport use had recovered strongly post-pandemic. Rail passenger numbers had risen above 2018 levels, supported by a £35m station redevelopment. Car parking use had declined, indicating a gradual modal shift toward sustainable transport, although bus travel in Middlesbrough was down by 56.6% in 2023 when compared with 2011 levels.<sup>2</sup> Middlesbrough needs a transport system that is up to date and fit for purpose.
16. **Crime and Safety:** Crime and ASB had reduced significantly despite staying above national and regional averages, with total recorded crimes down nearly 7% in 2024/25 and ASB incidents halved since 2019. Collaborative policing and place-based initiatives had improved perceptions of safety and confidence.
17. **Spending and Economic Activity:** Transaction volumes were up despite lower average spend per transaction, suggesting broader engagement with a more varied town centre offer. Retail leakage remained high (44%), particularly to Teesside Park, underlining the need for continued place enhancement and loyalty retention.

## SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE:

### Term of Reference A - To establish what the Barriers to Regeneration are in Middlesbrough.

18. In relation to global economic conditions, the UK was currently in a difficult period and a lot of investment decisions are on hold. Middlesbrough was affected by the uncertainty due to a lot of companies and investments being based in other countries or London. During times of buoyant activity Middlesbrough benefited but was equally impacted when economic conditions were not so good.

<sup>2</sup> Friends of the Earth [Transport Map 2023-10](#) & data [bustrip-trends-by-authority\\_0.xlsx](#)

19. The market for office accommodation had not only been impacted by global economic conditions but also by the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of people hybrid-working had increased, and this had reduced the requirement for office space. Although this was changing again, and companies were now looking at bigger floorspace, they were not at the size required pre-Covid-19.
20. Retail is in decline and in the two years before the pandemic there was approximately 1 million square feet of floor space in Middlesbrough which needed to be reduced by one third. Post-pandemic, at least half of that space needed to be removed. Not all this retail space is owned by Middlesbrough Council, there are four shopping malls in the town centre. If all the current retail could be moved into one place, the town centre would be thriving.
21. In terms of the political arena, the Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC) is also operating within Middlesbrough and charged with achieving regeneration. Due to the change in Government in 2024 there has been some confusion around the MDC and how the proposed asset transfer from Middlesbrough Council would take place. Senior staff have now been appointed to the MDC and Middlesbrough Council staff will be working with them.
22. Middlesbrough has grown up into an area that has performed a city centre function for the wider Tees Valley. However, the city centre function has evolved due to the decline of its role as the primary hub for retail and office work, driven by changes in technology, consumer habits and post-pandemic working arrangements. The problem is getting more and more acute as time goes on. If Middlesbrough was to be built from scratch the town centre would need to be a third or a quarter of the size that it was currently.
23. The key issues for Middlesbrough are the perception of ASB and crime impacting on regeneration objectives and decreased footfall exacerbated by poor transport links.
24. The issue of ASB was identified frequently by potential investors in Middlesbrough, highlighting issues with how the town centre is perceived.
25. Due to the lack of natural footfall in the town centre ASB is more visible. Even though there are crime statistics to evidence that Middlesbrough is no less safe than other town, there are often day drinkers and drug users visible in Centre Square where the Council owns premium accommodation.
26. Middlesbrough Council carried out a consultation of local stakeholders<sup>3</sup> between December 2024 and February 2025 whereby a simple questionnaire had been sent to stakeholders and partners asking them to highlight areas of critical importance to their organisation and how Middlesbrough could collectively work towards addressing those issues and boost Middlesbrough's economic prospects.
27. The five top challenges that were identified from the consultation<sup>4</sup> were:
  - ASB and crime
  - Empty Properties in specific areas
  - Reduced funding from central government
  - Poor perception of the town

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<sup>3</sup> [Middlesbrough Council Regeneration Strategy Questionnaire](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Middlesbrough Council Regeneration Strategy Consultation Responses February 2025](#)



- Footfall and working patterns

28. In addition, the Stakeholders identified that the following changes needed to be made to improve Middlesbrough:

- Safer environment – additional lighting, policing and street security
- Improve the physical environment
- High profile and consistent policing
- Animation and events are key to rejuvenating the town centre, people need a reason to come into town
- Diversity – repurpose vacant units and blight sites

29. Stakeholders felt that Middlesbrough need to collectively concentrate investment or apply for funding to:

- Make the town centre feel safe and increase police and security presence
- Focus attractions and events in the town centre
- Rebalance/diversify Middlesbrough's economy
- Improve the physical environment

**Term of Reference B – To identify good practice from other local authorities in relation to attracting businesses to the area**

30. Town centre decline is a national issue and local authorities across the country are undergoing regeneration projects to adapt to the changing face of retail and the pressures that town centres face.

31. Media<sup>56</sup> showing examples of successful regeneration in Grimsby and Barnsley had been shared with the Panel as they are both northern industrial towns, that shared some similarities with Middlesbrough.

32. Grimsby regeneration focused on safety and reducing ASB and crime in the town centre. Safer Streets 5 is an initiative run by North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners to reduce crime and ASB and Safer Streets Ambassadors had been implemented to assist the vulnerable and people in need of assistance. Crime had reduced by more than 10 percent over the last 12 months in Grimsby Town Centre.

33. A community-focused initiative dedicated to enhancing the local environment, fostering community engagement and addressing societal changes had also been implemented in Grimsby. Grimsby in Bloom had relandscaped Grimsby's Riverhead Square development after a refit and was currently leading the Victoria Street Project which aimed to introduce a variety of new planters filled with colourful flowers, shrubs, and greenery, creating a more welcoming and visually appealing environment for shoppers and visitors.

34. Barnsley's regeneration focused on their Glassworks redevelopment that connects retail, culture, leisure, learning and health. The development will include a state-of-the-art library,

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<sup>5</sup> [The transformation of Barnsley town centre](#) Youtube Video

<sup>6</sup> [GRIMSBY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION | The story so far...](#) Youtube Video

flagship NHS diagnostic centre and rolling programme of immersive free events embracing arts, crafts, sport, food and music.

35. Stockton Borough Council (SBC) is currently undertaking a large-scale initiative to regenerate Stockton town centre and surrounding areas. Much like Middlesbrough, SBC has identified that retail space in Stockton town centre was too vast and no longer sustainable in the modern landscape of online shopping and retail parks. The Council has created a more compact retail core with most shops now being located in Wellington Square and the northern part of the High Street.
36. The layout of the town centre is also no longer in keeping with SBC's vision and the river, once heavily industrial in the 1960s when the shopping centre was first built, has since been cleaned up. An urban riverside park is now being developed which will connect the waterfront and High Street.
37. A key focus for SBC is the organisation of events held in the town centre to drive footfall and SBC has installed anchor points and a power supply in the High Street to support this. The Globe Theatre, originally built in 1935, has been majorly refurbished and reopened as a live venue in 2021 maintaining its cultural heritage while adapting to modern times. An evolved version of Stockton market also continues to take place twice a week maintaining its role in local identity and community gathering.
38. Diversification is also important to SBC when transforming the town centre. A former two-storey retail unit has been transformed into repurposed retail units for smaller businesses on the ground floor and an employment training hub on the first floor which has supported 1750 people into work since it opened in 2021. An NHS Community Diagnostic Centre has been built on the High Street, bringing health provision back to the town centre and creating an accessible site for residents. The re-establishment of the residential market is also a priority for SBC with the contemporary trend of 'city centre living' becoming increasingly popular. These type of additions serve their own important purpose but also help to improve town centre footfall.
39. The Globe Theatre, originally built in 1935 is also key to drawing visitors to Stockton town centre. The theatre has been majorly refurbished and reopened as a live venue in 2021 maintaining its cultural heritage while adapting to modern times. The town also benefits from two smaller venues The Arc and Georgian Theatre. Middlesbrough's main entertainment venue is the Town Hall which could potentially be enhanced to offer a more user-friendly experience and serve as a dual-purpose space, functioning as a tourist information centre as it currently only opens three days a week plus show nights. Middlesbrough Theatre also provides a more intimate entertainment venue but is located slightly further outside the town centre.

**Term of Reference C – To investigate what measures are in place to make people feel safer in our town centre and neighbourhoods**

40. Middlesbrough Council has Neighbourhood Safety Teams based within each of its localities (North, East, South and West).

41. The Neighbourhood Safety Team works with other Council services, Police, other statutory organisations, the voluntary sector, community groups and individuals to prevent and reduce crime and ASB including:

- Vandalism, graffiti, and deliberate damage to property or vehicles
- Groups of teenagers hanging around on streets
- Fly tipping or littering
- Drug use and dealing
- Drunk or rowdy behaviour
- Chaotic families
- Begging/rough sleeping

42. The Neighbourhood Safety Teams approach to ASB includes both support and enforcement.

The support offered includes:

- Work with youth service providers and the Youth Justice Service to offer diversionary activities
- Outreach work with the Rough Sleeper Team
- Outreach work with Treatment Services
- Outreach in the Nighttime Economy

43. Enforcement that can be carried out by the Neighbourhood Safety Teams includes:

- Issue warnings
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's)
- Community Protection Warning and Notices
- Civil Injunctions
- Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO)

44. Prior to the end of 2023, Middlesbrough Council had taken a Civil Injunction approach to ASB but were now using Community Protection Notices (CPN) to tackle it. Where an individual's behaviours were persistent and having a detrimental effect on the area, a warning could be issued. If individuals do not engage with the support offered this can be followed by a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). If behaviour did not improve a Criminal Behaviour Order could be issued which made the ASB an arrestable offence.

45. Requests for license reviews on commercial premises can also be requested by the Neighbourhood Safety Team if it is felt a business is operating inappropriately. – it would be great to have out of premises drinking areas where people can sit outside but this would need to be controlled.

46. The Neighbourhood Safety Team liaise with other local authorities to identify individuals causing ASB in particular begging who may move from one area to another. Whilst people begging in the town centre could be banned, they could then move elsewhere.

47. These individuals could be issued with a CBO within the CBO there would be an exclusion zone, where the begging was most prolific, and a second condition would be imposed that they could not beg in England and Wales. So, wherever that person chose to go and beg would qualify as a breach of the CBO and they could be arrested. Rather than push the

problem onto another area, the CBO would attempt to address the behaviour. A record of CBOs are held by the Police.

48. During the period June 2024 to April 2025 the following enforcement outcomes had taken place.

- 14 Criminal Behaviour Orders - active, Council led 9, Police led 5
- 22 Criminal Protection Notices – active
- 52 Community Protection Warnings (CPW) – active
- 5 First warnings to young people
- 3 Second warnings to young people
- 44 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) – The Council has taken a zero approach within the Town Centre
- 8 ABC breaches
- 1 Civil Injunction
- 1 Youth Criminal Behaviour Order
- 2 Licence Reviews on commercial premises

49. A vital part of the Neighbourhood Safety Team is the Neighbourhood Safety Wardens service. As of November 2025, Middlesbrough Council has 35 Street Wardens and 3 vacancies.

50. Neighbourhood Safety Wardens provide a reassuring presence to residents and help to build confidence in neighbourhoods.

51. The role of the Neighbourhood Safety Wardens is varied. They carry out a wide range of roles which can include:

- Responding to and reporting ASB incidents
- Reporting crime to the police
- Issuing FPN's for litter, graffitiing and dog fouling
- Supporting older and vulnerable people in the community
- Helping the homeless
- Getting involved in neighbourhood activities, visiting schools, attending community and resident meetings

52. Middlesbrough Council is implementing Safe Walking Routes to popular visitor attractions in the town centre. The routes will benefit from increased lighting, better signage, shrubbery removal and additional CCTV.

53. A Night-Time Economy Pilot Project is being funded by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioners Cleveland Unit for Reducing Violence (CURV) until March 2026. This includes the introduction of Street Marshals that will provide an authoritative and trustworthy presence from 8pm until 4am on Fridays and Saturdays (increasing over the festive period and Bank Holidays). Night-time economy clinic pilot sessions are also beginning in January 2026 which will provide an outreach treatment service for the homeless and beggars located at the Depaul Centre.

54. Multiple other resources are in place as part of the Night-Time Economy Pilot Project:

- Safe Haven – mobile service & physical centre on Albert Road
- Boro Angels – a group of volunteers working in Middlesbrough Town Centre helping the vulnerable every Saturday night from 10pm until 2am
- CCTV
- Police
- Door staff

55. CURV also funded other invaluable initiatives:

- Bleed kits
- Apex Radios – for doorstaff
- NTE safety campaign
- Anti-spiking materials
- Promotion of Ask Angela
- eLearning platform for staff in licensed premises

56. The Creative Factory is also carrying out several placemaking projects in the town centre to transform public spaces. ‘Most Creative Train Station’ and ‘We Shall Be’ are not just about creating new artworks but also about taking action to improve how Middlesbrough looks and feels.

57. The Creative Factory’s first Community Action Day brought people together to refresh the Historic Quarter. Volunteers filled bags of rubbish, cleaned and weeded planters in Exchange Square, and worked alongside Middlesbrough Council, STACK and TransPennine Express, to clean and repaint public spaces. These collective efforts transformed how the area looked and reminded everyone that Middlesbrough is a place worth taking pride in.

58. Small, practical changes like these raise the standards of Middlesbrough’s public spaces and completely shift how people experience Middlesbrough as soon as they arrive. Although they do not directly enhance safety levels, they contribute to a more welcoming town centre environment and people may be less likely to vandalise or litter where an area is well kept.

#### **Term of Reference D - To gain an understanding of current legislation available to local authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour**

59. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) encompasses criminal and nuisance behaviour that causes distress to others. Typical examples include: noisy neighbours, vandalism, graffiti, public drunkenness, littering, fly tipping and street drug dealing.

60. Parts 1-4 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014<sup>7</sup> sets out six anti-social behaviour enforcement powers. These powers (summarised in the table below) are a consolidation of nineteen that existed prior to the 2014 Act.

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<sup>7</sup> [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)

	Power	Effect	Relevant Authority	Sanction on Breach
People	ASB Civil Injunctions	Individuals aged 10 or over conducting ASB can be issued with an ASB Injunction which prohibits them from certain activities and/or requires them to attend rehabilitative activities	Police and Local Authorities	A 'contempt of court' punishable with up to 2 years in prison
	Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO)	Individuals with a criminal conviction can have a CBO attached to their sentence if they have behaved anti-socially. CBOs can place prohibitions or requirements on an offender designed to address their anti-social behaviour	The courts (upon application from the prosecution)	Criminal offence punishable by up to five years in prison (if tried at a Crown Court)
	Community Protection Notices	Adults or businesses responsible for environmental issues which have diminished the 'quality of life of those in the locality' can be required to remedy the problem	Police and Local Authorities	Criminal offence punishable by Fixed Penalty Notice. Remedial action.
Place	Public Space Protection Orders	Specific activities can be prohibited in a designated area.	Local authorities (in consultation with the police)	Criminal offence punishable by Fixed Penalty Notice
	Dispersal Powers	Individuals (aged ten or older) conducting anti-social behaviour in a public space can be directed to leave that specified area for up to 48 hours. Their property can be confiscated if they are using it to conduct ASB	Police	Criminal offence punishable by up to 3 months in prison.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

61. Trying to regenerate town centres by building more retail space is now a broken model. The solution must be to improve the mix of uses in town centres bringing footfall, life and vitality back. Empty shops, department stores and even shopping centres can be replaced with green spaces, medical centres, offices, workshops, colleges and housing to help create a pleasant and welcoming environment for visitors and residents.
62. Regeneration is a major challenge. With the right investment, town centres can be simultaneously reinvigorated and made more resilient over the long-term.
63. Antisocial Behaviour is one of the main reasons investors are reluctant to invest in the town, they want to be assured that their staff are safe coming to work. Residents of the town are also reluctant to venture into the town centre as they do not feel safe.

64. The key to tackling ASB is through prevention. When the town hosted bigger events, it was easier to make areas feel safe as they are flooded with people and Police.

65. The Council's priority is to reduce the visible impact of the problem in the first instance. Prevention is very important but the resources to do that are not always available.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- 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.

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

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Hugh McShane	Neighbourhood Officer
Stephen Wright	Neighbourhood Safety Officer
Sam Gilmore	Head of Growth
Michelle Shelton	Town Centre Manager
Matthew Gibbons	Development Manager – Locus
Lee Walker	Chief Executive Officer – Locus
Gaye Kirby	Head of Culture
Anna Byrne	Director – Creative Factory
Chris Renahan	Assistant Director – Inclusive Growth & Development – Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Judith Hedgley	Head of Public Protection
Adam Parkinson	Neighbourhood Manager
Fiona Helyer	Principal Public Protection Officer

## **ACRONYMS**

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

ABC's	Acceptable Behaviour Contracts
ASB	Anti-social Behaviour
CBO	Criminal Behaviour Orders
CPN	Community Protection Notice
CURV	Cleveland Unit for Reducing Violence
FPN	Fixed Penalty Notice
MDC	Middlesbrough Development Corporation
PSPO	Public Space Protection Order
SBC	Stockton on Tees Borough Council

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

69. 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 29 April 2025, 30 June 2025, 29 September 2025, 27 October 2025, 6 November 2025, 22 December 2025.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID BRANSON  
CHAIR OF THE PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL**

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