

COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 15 January 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors J Rostron, J Ewan (Vice-Chair), J Banks, I Blades, D Branson, E Clynch, C Cooke - Elected Mayor, J Cooke, D Davison, T Furness, P Gavigan, TA Grainge, L Henman, S Hill, N Hussain, D Jackson, D Jones, J Kabuye, T Livingstone, L Mason, D McCabe, J McConnell, J McTigue, I Morrish, J Platt, S Platt, J Ryles, M Saunders, M Smiles, P Storey, J Thompson, S Tranter, Z Uddin, N Walker, G Wilson, J Young and L Young

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Bonner, B Carr, A Davis, R Horniman, A Humble, S Lightwing, E Scollay, K Whitmore and A Wilson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors C Cooper, D Coupe, B Hubbard, L Lewis, M McClintock, J Nicholson, M Nugent and A Romaine

24/85 WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

24/86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

24/87 MINUTES - COUNCIL - 27 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 November 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Councillor T Mohan to be added to the list of attendees present at the meeting.

24/88 ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair announced that, as per Motion 171, carried at the last Council meeting, she wrote to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to request that consideration was given to amending current legislation to allow for all local Councillors to be eligible for enhanced DBS checks. A response had been received from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution.

The Minister had indicated that he was giving further consideration to Middlesbrough Council's recommendation for expanding eligibility for mandatory enhanced DBS checks to all Councillors.

A copy of the letter would be circulated to all Councillors following the meeting.

NOTED

Following a request from Councillor Morrish, Councillors observed one minute's silence to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day which would take place on 27 January 2025.

24/89 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no valid questions submitted from members of the public, within the required timescale for this meeting.

24/90 TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY (TVCA) UPDATE

The Mayor was pleased to announce that at a recent meeting of the TVCA Cabinet, one of the transport strategies had been approved. The strategy included a commitment of £3.2 million for a third platform at the Middlesbrough Railway Station.

24/91

MAYOR'S STATEMENT AND REPORT

The Mayor wished everyone a Happy New Year. The Mayor also welcomed the Erik Scollay, Chief Executive, and Andrew Humble, Director of Finance and Transformation to their first Council meeting in their new roles, wished them good luck and thanked all those who had taken part in their appointment process.

The Peer Review Team had been working at the Council this week and would produce a report in two to three months' time with their recommendations. The Mayor thanked everyone involved in the peer review process.

The Mayor announced that Housing would be his priority for this year. There were two policies that were being developed which had been outlined to the Place Scrutiny Panel recently. The Mayor indicated his intention to involve the Overview and Scrutiny Board in the formulation of the new policies. Housing was a crucial factor for many families and one of the cornerstones of making sure people had an improved life. It was important to regulate those providers who were not giving a good service, or good accommodation for Middlesbrough residents.

The draft Budget would be presented to the next Council meeting and the Mayor was quite confident that the Council was turning the corner. There was some growth in the draft budget in key areas such as Area Care and Culture. Work was continuing on the preparation of the draft budget and the settlement from Government. Ways of further consultation with Members and an ongoing process were being examined. This year's settlement was likely to be the last one that would not be a multi-year settlement. It was important to make this year's budget last and invest in key infrastructure to help in the future.

Responding to a Member's request, the Mayor confirmed that all Members would receive a copy of the Peer Review Report.

A Member paid tribute to everyone involved in the project to regenerate the old town hall and asked the Mayor to commit to ensuring that Middlesbrough's iconic buildings and heritage were not disrespected in future.

The Mayor responded that although funding had been sourced and allocated to regenerate the old town hall building, it was still a risk to the Council as work had not yet started and ongoing work would be required to make it secure. The Mayor added that it was not only heritage assets, but others such as the depot where staff worked, that were in need of repair. The Mayor added that all those involved deserved a huge amount of recognition and an email would be sent to those who had worked on this project thanking them.

24/92

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORTS

The Chair informed Council of an error on the Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability's Report as follows:

Paragraph 2.12 - heading to read as follows: Canon Street Interchange Newport instead of: A66 Hartington East and West Overbridges.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Finance.

Councillor Morrish on the Forecast Year-end Outturn position at Quarter Two 2024/25 and accountability of Directorates.

The Executive Member reminded Council that a similar question had been asked in September in relation to accountability for Directorates and budget management. The Executive Member stated that her aim was to return in-budget and avoid having to use any of the £3.5 million exceptional support that had been added as 25% of the total savings required

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to deliver. Those savings could be accessed if needed. The Executive Member invited Councillor Morrish to congratulate all officers if they did return in budget and Councillor Morrish was in agreement that he would. The Executive Member requested that the Monitoring Officer clarify the Councillors' role in relation to Officers.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Development.

Councillor Wilson on the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum.

The Executive Member confirmed that the Council was working with Middlesbrough Football Club (MFC) in relation to the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum and also the new Southlands Centre. No decision had been taken with as to whether there would be a new building or whether the existing Museum would be demolished. The current funding had been secured to enable the Museum to continue operating while the Council continued to work with MFC to secure the Museum's future.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Saunders on Cared for Children.

The Executive Member explained that the number of cared for children was in his report along with 4 other key numbers which would remain in the report going forward. A great deal of work was ongoing in terms of the budget and keeping track on that number. The current number was 505 now and 503 in June, so although there had been some pressures on the Service the situation was relatively stable. The key to reducing the overspend was investment in early help and fostering which were not only less costly but delivered better outcomes for young people. The Service was also reviewing Care Orders to ensure whether they were still appropriate or whether a young person no longer needed to be in the care system or whether early help or special guardianship were valid options. In terms of oversight, the Executive Member regularly met with the Executive Member for Finance to review budgetary savings, pressures and whether additional support was needed to meet those savings.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.

Councillor Jones on Community Hubs.

The Executive Member responded that the Council was currently exploring alternative uses for a former rehabilitation near to Norfolk Shops. One of those options could potentially include a new Hub for the Berwick Hills and Pallister Park area.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability

Councillor Grainge on Priorities.

The Executive Member advised that residents should continue to use the bins website to report waste that needed removing. Improvements were being made to the website. The Council continued to operate a no side waste policy. The Executive Member undertook to look into the problem raised in relation to the number of Council vehicles that were in use. From 2026 all households would have weekly food waste collections and would be provided with an additional bin. This would help free up room in the other bins and should alleviate some of the collection issues raised by the Councillor.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health.

Councillor McCabe on Middlesbrough Handypersons Service.

The Executive Member stated that the Handypersons Service worked alongside the Staying

put Agency in Middlesbrough. The Executive Member agreed to provide the information requested by the Councillor in relation to service costs and the origin of the funding.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Development.

Councillor Ewan on Housing Supply.

The Executive Member agreed that it was great to have an additional £6 million government funding to tackle properties across Middlesbrough. The Council now had a new lead Officer to co-ordinate work on empty properties, associated anti-social behaviour, council tax debts and environmental concerns. The Council was hoping to acquire 60 properties to refurbish using grant funding. This would also help to alleviate some of the stresses in adults and children's social care. Within the next 5 years it was hoped there could be up to £5 million saved across all departments. The Council was also working with the Ethical Housing Group, Thirteen and other providers to acquire, renovate and put houses back on the market.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Children's Services.

Councillor Banks on Fostering.

The Executive Member paid tribute to Carol and Gordon McGough on their MBE awarded to them in the King's New Years Honours List. It was a fantastic story and Carol and Gordon deserved this recognition. They had fostered over 90 young people during the past 30 years, providing respite, short and long-term placements and a stable home. It was testament to the couple that many of the young people they had cared for remained in contact with them. The couple retired last year. In terms of more effective outcomes for young people, the Executive Member hoped that more could follow their example and become foster carers for Middlesbrough. The Executive Member invited all Councillors to join him in congratulating Carol and Gordon McGough MBE.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability

Councillor Wilson on Street Lighting.

The Executive Member responded that he was not aware of the initiative in regards to street light column replacement in Trafford, Manchester, and asked the Councillor to contact him with details so that he could investigate further. The Mayor commented that some of the new battery technology that could be placed into street light columns had improved. It was the Mayor's intention that the Council would trial the new technology in some of those street lighting columns that were due for replacement.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Development.

Councillor Branson on the Old Town Hall.

The Executive Member updated Council on progress to date in respect of the restoration of the Old Town Hall. A total of over £6million of funding had been allocated from the National Heritage Lottery and Towns Funds to bring the building back to life and make it a showpiece for the town. Office space would be available for the digital sector. It was anticipated that work would commence on the building in July 2025 and would help with the continued regeneration of that area of the town.

Question in relation to the Report of the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture.

Councillor L Young on Outwood Academy.

The Deputy Mayor confirmed that she had met with the Minister the previous week to discuss progress with a permanent site for the Outwood Academy Riverside School. The DFE were

currently submitting the required responses to the Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC) in respect of planning permission. A letter had been sent to the Chair of the MDC requesting that there was no slippage on the 10-week timescale for the planning application. A further meeting was scheduled with the Minister at the beginning of March and Central Ward Councillors would hopefully be invited. In addition to the impact on pupils who had to travel by bus daily to the school, and had been educated in temporary accommodation for over seven years, the impact on local residents was also acknowledged. The Deputy Mayor stated that she would be happy to meet with residents to explain the timeline.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Children's Services.

Councillor Wilson on Priorities.

The Executive Member stated that the numbers of children in care but also not in education, employment or training (NEET) was currently 64.5% which was lower than the overall rate for 15+ which was 93% in Middlesbrough. Middlesbrough Council recognised by the DFE as a top performer in terms of support for young people overall who were NEET and provided some top quality practice. It was recognised that care experienced young people faced some additional barriers which made it more challenging for them to stay in employment, education or training. The Council had a team to provide intensive support via clinics to young people in care and personal advisers were allocated to the older age group. The Council also worked with partners such as colleges, training companies and Middlesbrough Football Foundation to encourage young people into work settings. The Council continued to work intensively to reduce the number of NEET.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability.

Councillor Jones on Priorities.

The Executive Member clarified that staff had been working very hard to clear up the remains of bonfires from last November. The vast majority had now been cleared and it was anticipated that this work would be completed by the end of January. The Executive Member undertook to look at ways in which the service might be improved and suggested that Councillors contact their Neighbourhood Teams if they required an update on this issue in their Wards.

Question in relation to the Report of the Executive Member for Children's Services.

Councillor Clynych on Early Help.

The Executive Member stated that Early Help was a very important element of Children's Services that provided support to prevent young people entering the care system where outcomes were less and costs were higher. A range of support was provided including education, employment and benefits for the family as whole, youth support and activities and wellbeing support for parents. The Executive Member provided an example of a family who had received early help support including debt support, financial advice, counselling and therapy that had led to a positive outcome with their case being closed. The Executive Member added that the Council should be really proud of the work that staff did to support young people early on and get those outcomes for them.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board presented a report, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the current position regarding progress made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the individual Scrutiny Panels.

The Chair invited Members to note the report.

ORDERED that the report was noted.

24/94 **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

24/95 **MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

There were no Members' Questions submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

24/96 **NOTICE OF MOTIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no Notice of Motions submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

24/97 **NOTICE OF URGENT MOTIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no Notice of Urgent Motions submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

24/98 **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND SECTION 24 ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

A joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Legal and Governance Services was presented that set out the key activities, progress and impact of the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan since last reported to Council on 27 November 2024.

The report also set out an update against the Section 24 recommendations made by the Council's External Auditors and a recommendation to close that plan following delivery of all actions and the outcome of the latest Value for Money judgement made by the Council's new External Auditors which contained no statutory recommendations.

On a vote being taken it was **ORDERED** as follows that Council:

1. Agreed that the Section 24 Action plan was formally closed.
2. Approved the change control outlined in the report at paragraph 6.1 to close CT5.07 in the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan: Monitoring of Appraisal completions - 95% of staff in work to have had an appraisal.
3. Noted the progress against the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan.
4. Noted that the Corporate Peer Challenge was currently underway and would inform the Council's future continuous improvement activity.

24/99 **VACANCIES ON COMMITTEES 2024/2025**

Council received a report which sought nominations for appointment, following resignations from Committees and Outside Bodies and vacancies that remained outstanding following the Annual meeting.

The report included a list of current vacancies on various Committees and Outside Bodies and nominations were put forward at the meeting by individual members.

ORDERED that the following vacancies allocated in accordance with the wishes of the political groups, be approved by Council:

Committee Vacancies:

Corporate Health and Safety Steering Group

1 vacancy – no nominations

Staff Appeals Committee

1 vacancy for Vice Chair – Councillor Livingstone appointed.

Outside Bodies Vacancies:

JOINT COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS BY COUNCIL:

River Tees Port Health Authority

1 vacancy – no nominations

JOINT COMMITTEE AND OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS BY EXECUTIVE:

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

1 vacancy – Councillor Clynch appointed.