

## EXECUTIVE

<b>Date:</b> Wednesday 24th July, 2024
<b>Time:</b> 12.30 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

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### THE MAYOR AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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### DEPUTY MAYOR AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

7. South Tees Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 81 - 162

### EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

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### EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

9. CIPFA Review of Council's Financial Management Arrangements 173 - 226

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## EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

11. The Disposal of Land at Hemlington Grange West 253 - 272
12. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.
13. Exclusion of Press and Public

With regard to Appendix 3 of item 10 (The Disposal of Land at Hemlington Grange West); Executive consider passing a Resolution Pursuant to Section 100A (4) Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 excluding the press and public from the meeting during consideration on the grounds that if present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information falling within paragraph 3, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Appendix 3 of item 10 contains the valuation figures, disclosure of which are likely to restrict negotiations marketing and may prevent the Authority obtaining best value for the land.

14. **The Disposal of Land at Hemlington Grange West - Appendix 3** 273 - 274

Charlotte Benjamin  
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall  
Middlesbrough  
Tuesday 16 July 2024

## MEMBERSHIP

Mayor C Cooke (Chair), Councillors P Gavigan, T Furness, P Storey, J Thompson, Z Uddin and N Walker

## Assistance in accessing information

**Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Scott Bonner / Chris Lunn, 01642 729708 / 01642 729742, [scott\\_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk) / [chris\\_lunn@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:chris_lunn@middlesbrough.gov.uk)**

**EXECUTIVE**

A meeting of the Executive was held on Wednesday 26 June 2024.

**PRESENT:** Mayor C Cooke (Chair), Councillors P Gavigan, T Furness, P Storey, J Thompson, Z Uddin and N Walker

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor I Blades (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** N. Corrigan (Local Democracy Reporting Service)

**OFFICERS:** M Adams, C Benjamin, S Bonner, R Brown, A Davis, G Field, A. Glover, C Heaphy, R Horniman, D Middleton, J Tynan, M Nath and E Scollay

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** None.

24/1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

24/2 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 22 MAY 2024**

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 22 May 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/3 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE: QUARTER FOUR 2023/2024 - YEAR END**

The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health submitted a report for Executive consideration.

The report advised Executive of corporate performance at the end of Quarter Four and 2023/2024 Year End, and sought approval of any changes, where those were within the authority of the Executive.

The Council's Scheme of Delegation gave Executive collective responsibility for corporate strategic performance, together with associated actions. The report provided the necessary information to enable Executive to discharge its performance management responsibilities, setting out progress against Executive approved actions, delivery of the Strategic Plan and other key associated items, together with actions to be taken to address any issued identified.

The report noted the Strategic Plan 2022-24 was established under the Council's previous administration with its priorities created by the then elected Mayor and which were monitored through various performance disciplines, to reflect progress and achievements.

The projected financial outturn at Quarter Four and 2023/2024, Year End was presented separately at the meeting.

As part of continuous improvement in performance and risk management, the Council's Leadership Management Team (LMT) had implemented monthly reviews of corporate performance utilising a Directorate Performance dashboard, drawing data from a range of performance systems.

The output from these sessions was reflected through quarterly updates to the Executive and covered progress on delivering actions agreed by Executive, key Directorate performance issues and other performance-related matters.

**ORDERED that Executive approve the proposed action to the finalise reporting of the Strategic Plan 2022-24 at Quarter Four and Year End 2023/24, as detailed in Appendix 2**

of the report.

**AGREED that Executive Note:**

1. The delivery status of the Strategic Plan workplan (2022-24) at Quarter Four and 2023/24 Year End, as detailed in Appendix 1 and;
2. The Strategic Risk Register, at Appendix 3.

**OPTIONS**

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

**REASONS**

To enable the effective management of performance and risk in line with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance.

24/4

**2023/24 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MTFP**

**SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 4.13.2 – ORDER OF BUSINESS**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 4.57, Executive agreed to vary the order of business to deal with the items in the following order: 6, 5 and 7.

The Mayor and Executive Member for Finance and Governance submitted a report for Executive consideration.

The report summarised the General Fund revenue and capital outturn and reserves position for the financial year 2023/24 and highlighted the areas of particular financial challenge. The report also summarises the financial position for Dedicated Schools Grant for 2023/24 as well as the debtors position at 31 March 2024 and highlighted the work to be undertaken to increase recovery of debt owed to the Council.

The report sought approval from Executive in relation to revisions to the Capital Programme and approval of new grants into the budget framework. It also set out the further work to be undertaken to review the 2024/25 budget assumptions and development of the 2025/26 MTFP in light of the 2023/24 financial outturn.

The Council's Scheme of Delegation gave Executive collective responsibility for corporate strategic performance and financial management / monitoring, together with associated actions. Standing Orders and Financial Procedures required Executive's approval for major virements between revenue budgets, and in-year changes to the Council's Capital Programme within approved Council resources.

The Executive Member commented that further reductions to the Council's overspend was positive and this was in part due to a robust programme of budget monitoring processes. However, there remained significant work to do, namely via Transformation projects, to ensure the Council's financial stability.

The table relating to debt collection performance had undergone minor amendments since the meeting papers had been published.

**ORDERED that, in respect of the Capital Programme, Executive approve the inclusion of additional expenditure budgets to the Capital Programme for 2023/24 totalling £5.012m (summarised in Table 8) which were externally funded. These adjustments had increased the approved 2023/24 Capital Programme budget to £72.643m.**

**AGREED that:**

**In respect of the General Fund Revenue Budget, Executive:**

1. Note the 2023/24 net revenue budget year-end outturn as of £129.948m against an approved budget of £126.354m, a final overspend of £3.594m (2.8%) as analysed in Table 1 in paragraph 4.12 of the report.
2. Note that an analysis of one-off vs ongoing variances, in 2023/24 had been



undertaken as set out in paragraph 4.15 and Appendix 1, and this would be used to review and assess the 2024/25 budget allocation of growth and any revisions will be reported in Quarter One 2024/25 monitoring.

3. Note that £2.399m of qualifying revenue expenditure had been funded from Flexible Use of Capital Receipts (FUOCR) in accordance with the FUOCR strategy approved by Council on 17 January 2024 (Table 9 and Appendix 5 of the report).
4. Note a bid of £0.199m had been made by the Director of Children's Services to DfE for an additional improvement grant for 2024/25. If successful, this would be incorporated into the relevant budget in order to support the funding of transformation and savings delivery for 2025/26 onwards as well as support practise improvements in progressing young people to permanence (paragraph 4.13).

In respect of the Council's Reserves and Provisions, Executive:

1. Note the General Fund Balance of £10.986m and unrestricted usable earmarked reserves of £1.069m at 31 March 2024
2. Note the cumulative usable Collection Fund surplus of £8.325m at 31 March 2024 and the s151 Officer's action to apply this sum at budget setting 2024/25 in order to replenish the General Fund Balance to the recommended minimum level of £11.1m and unrestricted usable earmarked reserves at £9.280m at 1 April 2024 in accordance with Council approvals on 8 March 2024.
3. Note that the combined total of unrestricted usable reserves at 1 April 2024 stand at £20.380m (14.2% of the 2024/25 Net Revenue Budget of £143.190m) and that this level remained very low compared nationally to all unitary councils as illustrated in comparisons set out in the Reserves Policy approved by Council on 8 March 2024.

In respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Executive:

1. Note the total in-year deficit of £7.729m for 2023/24 mainly due to an overspend of £8.058m relating to the High Needs Block, which was an increase of £1.085m from the total £6.644m deficit reported at Quarter Three. The increase was mainly due to higher demand for specialist provision as inclusion of pupils within mainstream settings had remained a challenge.
2. Note that a range of management actions were being taken to address the increase in expenditure alongside the DfE Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme (paragraph 4.27 of the report) which aimed to support the financial recovery of the DSG position. This included service plans on reviewing exceptional support funding, increasing pupil exclusion recharges and recoupment of assessment places as part of reducing this over-spending in 2024/25 onwards.
3. Note the total cumulative deficit of £14.293m at 31 March 2024, including £15.079m relating to the High Needs Block.
4. Note that under current government regulations implementing a 'statutory override' in place to the end of 2025/26, this deficit could not be funded from the General Fund, and the Council was required to deliver a recovery plan to the Department for Education (DfE).
5. Note that this position presented a potential significant risk in medium to long-term relating to the Council's financial sustainability if no government solution was reached before the statutory override was removed and this was a national issue that required resolution.

In respect of the Capital Programme, Executive:

Note the 2023/24 Capital Programme final outturn of £47.714m, which was a favourable variance of £24.929m (34%) from the revised £72.643m budget for 2023/24 comprising:

- An underspend on projects of £2.218m
- Slippage on projects of £22.711m into 2024/25.

In respect of the level of Collection Fund and General Fund Debtors at 31 March 2024, Executive Noted the following:

- Council Tax £36.773m

- **Business Rates £8.391m**
- **Sundry Debt £15.516m**
- **Housing Benefit Overpayments £6.741m**

**In relation to the Council's financial recovery and resilience, Executive:**

- 1. Note the approach to strengthening financial discipline during 2024/25 as set out in paragraphs 4.61 to 4.68 of the report.**
- 2. Note the actions being taken to improve budget management and forecasting in preparation for the development of the 2025/26 MTFP.**
- 3. Note the critical role that the development of a further pipeline of transformation projects and initiatives would have in relation to achieving financial recovery and rebuilding the Council's financial resilience.**

## **OPTIONS**

**No other options were considered as part of the report.**

## **REASONS**

**To enable the effective management of finances, in line with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance, the Scheme of Delegation and agreed corporate financial regulations.**

24/5

## **AUTO-ENROLMENT OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND MAXIMISING PUPIL PREMIUM FUNDING ACROSS MIDDLESBROUGH**

The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and the Executive Member for Governance and Finance submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The report sought approval for the Council to undertake the Free School Meal and Pupil Premium Optimisation pilot. The pilot was time sensitive with an enrolment completion date of September 2024 in readiness for the October 2024 census which was the deadline for pupil premium data to drive school funding.

The Council needed to engage with Middlesbrough schools to seek approval to progress with the auto-enrolment of Free School Meals and Pupil Premium optimisation pilot.

The purpose of the pilot was to ensure that schools were receiving the maximum benefit of Pupil Premium funding to address the attainment gap as well as contribute towards the Council's plan to reduce poverty and create a healthy place by enabling children who are entitled to free school meals to access them.

Nationally 1 in 10 children were not receiving the Free School Meals to which they were entitled. The Child Poverty Action Group in 2021 in the North East of England estimated a regional Free School Meals under-registration rate of 11%. Schools were also not receiving Pupil Premium funding and other associated funding dependent on Free School Meal registration.

The scheme would ensure that all eligible households received Free School Meals and that schools were maximising the Pupil Premium. There were several reasons, including burdensome and complex administration, language or low levels of literacy and a feeling of stigma or embarrassment from families that prevented some households from claiming Free School Meals.

The scheme also contributed towards reducing poverty, as children would have access to a Free School Meal, which could be funded by the parent (a saving to the household of c£400.00 per child per year).

Access to a healthy meal for every eligible child would contribute towards the Council's Plan 2024-2027, creating a healthy place, helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives. It would ensure that the most vulnerable children and families in poverty had access to Free School Meals and would ensure children were receiving a healthy balanced diet and would contribute to wider health priorities such as reducing childhood obesity. In addition, this process would have the potential to support closing the attainment gap through the allocation

of Pupil Premium funding to schools.

The Mayor commented that this was an exciting initiative and related the benefits of the scheme to his personal experiences. Similar schemes had seen success in Sheffield. It was clarified that in Middlesbrough 1 in 6 eligible families were not claiming free school meals.

A discussion took place that expressed the benefits the scheme would bring to residents and how it would have knock-on benefits to other initiatives.

**ORDERED that Executive approve progression of a pilot initiative with schools, between officers across Revenues and Benefits Service and Public Health, to support the implementation of auto-enrolment of Free School Meals, with the aim of increasing the number of children registered for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium, subject to the agreement of Middlesbrough schools.**

#### **OPTIONS**

**Do nothing:** To continue with the current application process whereby the responsibility rests with households to apply for Free School Meals, whilst this was still the route, the approach by the Council would ensure applications were maximised as is the Pupil Premium.

**Delay the auto-enrolment until the 2025 Census.** The current timescales were very tight by delaying this launch would allow for more robust plans to be put in place. Although any delay would impact on the transitional protection as described in the report with the schools potentially missing out on financial support.

#### **REASONS**

**The initiative took a proactive approach to ensure that all children who were eligible for Free School Meals were identified and enrolled for Free School Meals.**

**To ensure that the Schools received transitional protection for income related Free School Meal, those eligible needed to be identified and captured on the October 2024 Census. All activities relating to this initiative needed to be completed by the end of September 2024.**

**Some children would automatically receive Free School Meals due to the Universal Infant Free School Meals, if they were in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2, although the school may have missed out on Pupil Premium.**

**Any successful claims would mean the Schools would see an increase in Free School Meal take up and an increase in the level of Pupil Premium income that they generate from participation in the pilot.**

**A small sample size of 60 Middlesbrough households were assessed utilising existing data sets held by the Council, which determined that a potential of 11 households with children, who would be eligible for Free School Meals. Based on this figure, if those children were primary aged children, this would result in an additional £16,280.00 of Pupil Premium funding coming into schools in Middlesbrough (if secondary pupils, this would equate to £11,550.00).**

**Under the Ever 6 Scheme (source: Department for Education) if a household was entitled to Free School Meals the current scheme meant that the school will benefit from Pupil Premium for a period of time irrespective of any subsequent changes to the household income.**

**The policy was a key decision that impacted on two or more wards and would involve engagement with all Middlesbrough schools.**

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance submitted a report for Executive consideration.

The report provided important information regarding the regulation and management of the Council's borrowing, investments, and cash-flow for the 2023/24 financial year.

It was a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures under the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, and by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003, to produce an annual review that covered the treasury activity and compared the performance against the original strategy set by the Council. The report should be read in conjunction with the Council's revenue and capital outturn report for 2023/24, both of which had a significant impact on treasury arrangements.

The report also provides the Prudential Indicators results for 2023/24 in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Capital Finance, which is best practice in terms of governance in this area.

The Executive Member commented that Middlesbrough was not an outlier in terms of borrowing, but increased levels of borrowing increased affordability.

**AGREED that Executive:**

1. **Note the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 as the Council's year-end position in relation to capital finance activities and overall indebtedness as detailed in Tables 1- 5 of the report).**
2. **Note the performance of the treasury management function against the Council's approved strategy for the last financial year as detailed in Paragraphs 4.32 – 4.37 of the report.**

**OPTIONS**

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

**REASONS**

The recommendations contained in the report would fulfil the following for the local authority:

- **Compliance with the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance for local authorities.**
- **Compliance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code for local authorities.**
- **Compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 Section 1 in relation to borrowing.**

24/7

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

None.

**All decisions will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) was published unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures.**

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Environment and Community Services
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
<b>Title:</b>	South Tees Clean Air Strategy
<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	A healthy place
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	

**Proposed decision(s)**

That Executive approves the South Tees Clean Air Strategy that will ensure the local authority meets its statutory obligation under the Environment Act 1995 and amendments within the Environment Act 2021.

**Executive summary**

The South Tees Clean Air Strategy aims to raise awareness of the importance of air quality. It has been developed jointly with Redcar and Cleveland Council and sets out how each authority will maintain and improve air quality standards in collaboration with partners and their local communities, to work together to improve the air that we breathe. Statutory limits on air pollutants were imposed by the Government over 30 years ago and over this time air quality across the South Tees area has improved significantly. Some air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide from coal burning, and lead from petrol, are fractions of their previous levels due to the measures that have been taken to reduce these pollutant sources. Good air quality is associated with reducing the burden of disease and inequalities on our communities, including a reduction in strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including

asthma. The air quality in Middlesbrough is good and it complies with the UK National air quality objectives. However, whilst air quality has improved, it still remains the largest environmental health risk in the UK and the World Health Organisation advocates that there is no clear evidence of a safe level of exposure to air pollution below which there is no risk of adverse health effects. Therefore, the aim of the Clean Air Strategy is to ensure that air quality in Middlesbrough is as good as it can be and not just meet legal standards. The strategy will contribute to the council priorities around climate change and physical environment by improving the health of those who live in Middlesbrough as improvements to air quality are achieved.

The development of the South Tees Clean Air Strategy fulfils the mandatory requirement to have an Air Quality Strategy.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the South Tees Clean Air Strategy (Appendix 1)

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Executive approves the South Tees Clean Air Strategy

## **3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

- 3.1 The Clean Air Strategy set the policy and process for improving the air quality standards across the South Tees, to improve the physical environment, improve the health of our populations and tackle health inequalities. It is a statutory requirement for Middlesbrough to have a Clean Air Strategy in place.

## **4. Background and relevant information**

- 4.1 Exposure to air pollution can affect everyone's health. When we breathe in air pollutants, they can enter our bloodstream and contribute to coughing or cause eye irritation, they can cause or worsen many breathing and lung diseases, leading to hospitalisations, cancer, or even premature death. The effects of air pollution can be severe in people that already have underlying medical conditions. It is important that we monitor the air quality in our area to ensure that we are not exceeding levels that could cause illness to our residents.

- 4.2 In Middlesbrough there are two air quality monitoring sites located at BreckonHill Primary School and MacMillan College. Each site monitors air quality using real time monitoring equipment. The pollutants measured are particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), nitrogen dioxides, sulphur dioxides and ozone. There are also 24 tubes located across Middlesbrough which monitor nitrogen dioxide. These tubes are changed on a monthly basis and give an annual average result for the area which provides an indication of nitrogen dioxide levels across the whole of the town. All of the pollutants measured in Middlesbrough have the ability to impact on the health of our communities and therefore air quality monitoring is vital to ensure that we do not reach levels of air quality that could cause ill effects.

- 4.3 The sources of pollutants are varied:

- nitrogen dioxide from car exhaust emissions.
- particulate matter comes from construction dust, industrial processes and domestic burning. Particulate matter can increase the risk of health problems like heart disease, asthma, and low birth weight.
- sulphur dioxide is from burning of fossil fuel e.g. domestic and industrial burning and car exhaust fumes.

- 4.4 Public Protection also plays a proactive, preventative role in assessing new planning developments proposed for areas of Middlesbrough and whether they would require an

air quality assessment to be submitted as part of the application. This identifies any requirements for air quality mitigation measures as part of the development.

- 4.5 The South Tees Clean Air Strategy demonstrates that air quality across Middlesbrough is good and meets the UK legal standards. The graphs in Appendix 2 show the air quality levels for PM<sub>10</sub> and nitrogen dioxide and how they have compared with both the national and the WHO standards over the period 2011-2022. Although our air quality levels meet the UK legal standards, these may change and become more stringent in the future. The World Health Organisation have their own air quality guidelines (AQG) as a global target for national, regional and city governments to work towards improving air pollution. Most local authorities within England and Wales do not meet these AQG guidelines, however they set an aspirational target, a reminder that there is still room for improvement and that we should be working towards them. Therefore, through our Clean Air Strategy aims to improve our air quality in the South Tees beyond UK legal standards, to protect the health of our residents and to make our air as clean as it can be.
- 4.6 The strategy aims to raise awareness of the importance of air pollution, by setting out how the Council will maintain and improve air quality in collaboration with partners and our local communities. Improvements to air quality cannot be undertaken as a standalone local authority responsibility. There is a need for collaborative working across all sectors including our community, industries and businesses. Many of the measures which contribute to improving air quality are linked to regional and local spatial planning and our response to climate change. By delivering these together we can have far reaching benefits for South Tees and the wider area.
- 4.7 South Tees is proud of its heavy industrial heritage, along with its more recent expansion and development of industry that utilises cleaner technologies. Industrial and commercial enterprises are subject to robust regulation by both the Environment Agency (EA) and Local Authorities. Large planning developments are accompanied by Environmental Impact Assessments, inclusive of air quality and transport assessments, therefore with careful scrutiny of new developments, expansion of industry should not have an adverse negative impact on our existing good air quality.
- 4.8 The UK Government announced that it is mandatory for all Local Authorities which have not been required to have an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place to develop an Air Quality Strategy. An AQMA is required when a local authority establishes, through air quality monitoring, that an area within their district is not likely to achieve the national air quality standards. Neither Middlesbrough or Redcar and Cleveland are required to have an AQMA as we have no exceedances of the air quality objectives. The development of the South Tees Clean Air Strategy fulfils the mandatory requirement to have an Air Quality Strategy.
- 4.9 In 2017 the Government published the UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations (“The National NO<sub>2</sub> Plan”). The National NO<sub>2</sub> Plan used national



modelling of NO<sub>2</sub> levels and these identified Middlesbrough as a Local Authority where annual average NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations would persistently exceed the annual average limit. The two locations that the national modelling identified as exceeding the NO<sub>2</sub> limit value were both along the A66 trunk road corridor. As a result, Middlesbrough Council were required to put together a plan to address this matter. Detailed local modelling was carried out and provided the evidence that NO<sub>2</sub> levels were not exceeded in these locations. These findings were accepted by the governments Joint Air Quality Unit and no additional measures were needed to achieve compliance with the NO<sub>2</sub> standards.

4.10 The measures that improve air quality can also offer wider public health and wellbeing co-benefits, including an improvement in overall environmental quality, increased physical activity, reducing injuries and accidents, preventing social isolation, noise education, greater road safety and climate change mitigation.

4.11 The South Tees Clean Air Strategy identifies five workstreams for sustainable air quality improvements. These are:

- Planning for cleaner air (data & intelligence)
- Reduce vehicle emissions and promotion of active travel (alternative fuel/modal shift).
- Raise awareness of air quality (communications/engagement and awareness raising).
- Educate to improve indoor air quality.
- Enforcement.

4.12 Strategy work will be regularly reviewed with partners to ensure that it remains relevant to the delivery of the South Tees Clean Air Strategy. Implementation of the strategy requires collaborative working with internal teams and external organisations to improve the air for all within the borough and across the South Tees area. Progress reporting for the strategy will be undertaken by each council via their Annual Statutory Air Quality Status Report which is required to be submitted every June to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

4.13 Public consultation of a draft strategy was undertaken between 01 August and 22 August 2023, a survey was published on the council website, providing public access to the draft strategy, surveys were also sent to 59 target groups, including cabinet members of both local authorities, to encourage feedback. A total of 10 responses were received following consultation. Each response was reviewed and some minor amendments were made to the draft strategy resulting in the final strategy.

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

5.1 The UK Government as part of the publication of the Environment Act 2021 announced that it will be mandatory for all Local Authorities who have not been required to have an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place, to develop an Air Quality Strategy by 2023. As Middlesbrough has not had to declare an AQMA due to the national air quality

objectives not being breached we are required to develop an Air Quality Strategy. On this basis, there is no alternative to this proposal.

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

### **6.1 *Financial (including procurement and Social Value)***

There are no financial implications associated with this strategy, the actions are delivered by the partners and stakeholders. The costs of managing the air quality stations are met from the revenue budget.

### **6.2 *Legal***

To comply with the requirements in the Environment Act 2021, those local authorities which have not declared an Air Quality Management Area are required to have an Air Quality Strategy in place.

### **6.3 *Risk***

There are no risks associated with this report. The current economic environment and associated budget constraints may result in changes to the delivery of local services, local and national policies, and this may impact on the ability to deliver the strategy action plan.

### **6.4 *Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion***

Protected groups will not be adversely affected by the decision. An initial Impact Assessment has been carried out and no negative or adverse impacts have been identified. Poor air quality can affect anyone who lives, works, or visits the South Tees area. Improvements to air quality have a positive benefit for all and having an Air Quality Strategy in place will help work towards achieving the cleanest air.

### **6.5 *Climate Change / Environmental***

The implementation of the Clean Air Strategy will contribute towards the council priority of climate change and enhancing the natural environment reducing vehicle emissions, promoting active travel, and improving indoor air quality.

### **6.6 *Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers***

There are no adverse impacts of the Clean Air Strategy on looked after children and young people.

**6.7 Data Protection**

The proposed decision does not involve the collation, use or release of personal data

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline

**Appendices**

1	South Tees Clean Air Strategy
2	Air quality monitoring results for Middlesbrough 2011-2022
3	

**Background papers**

Body	Report title	Date

**Contact:** Judith Hedgley/Emma Tindall

**Email:** [Judith.Hedgley@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Hedgley@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

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**DRAFT**



# The South Tees Clean Air Strategy

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## 1. FOREWORD

**Air quality affects us all and is one of the most challenging public health problems in the 21st century that requires a system-wide, partnership and community response to tackle it.**

Good air quality plays a key role in good health. Poor air quality adversely impacts on our health in a number of ways: the lung development in children, heart disease, stroke, cancer, exacerbation of asthma and increased mortality, amongst other health effects.

Although we all breathe the same air, air pollution affects certain populations disproportionately, such as the very young, older adults, adults with pre-existing lung and heart conditions and disadvantaged communities. So, improving air quality helps to protect our communities, the most vulnerable and also addresses the unfairness in health outcomes experienced in the South Tees.

Individuals have little control over the level of pollution that they and their families breathe. By understanding how air quality impacts on health and what contributes to worsening air quality, we can plan the action we need to take to protect our communities in the South Tees. Working collectively at a local, private sector, public sector, community and individual level we can improve the air we breathe in our own neighbourhoods.

Whilst the Environment Act 2021 placed a duty on local authorities to produce a Clean Air Strategy, in the South Tees we had already started developing our strategy.

This Clean Air Strategy demonstrates that the air quality in the South Tees is good and meets the UK legal standards. However, the World Health Organisation advocate that no level of air pollution is safe, and we should be aiming to improve beyond UK legal standards. We have been monitoring air quality in the South Tees for over 30 years and we have seen significant improvements. Some air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide from coal, and lead from petrol, are fractions of their previous levels. However, to protect the long-term health of our residents in the South Tees we aim to take all available steps to improve air quality further – to make it “as clean as it can be”.

Air pollution includes both indoor and outdoor forms. In relation to outdoor air pollution one of our key challenges is to change our transport systems to reduce local road-related air pollution and adopt new ways of getting about. Improving public transport, creating more green space and increasing walking and cycling as part of our daily lives is a key part of this, and will bring other benefits to both physical and mental health as well as improving air quality. These are all part of our action plan.

Indoor air pollution is becoming an increasing proportion of the problem. Much time is spent indoors whether this is for work, study or leisure. Many indoor spaces are

public spaces, including health facilities, schools, other public buildings, and also shops and workplaces. Just as with outdoor spaces, in public buildings and some residential properties people have little control over their exposure to air pollution. So, we also need to plan how we will improve indoor air quality.

This strategy aims to raise awareness of the importance of air pollution, setting out how each Council will maintain and improve air quality in collaboration with partners and their local communities, working together to improve the air that we breathe and to make it “as clean as it can be”.

Compliance with air quality standards are assessed annually and this strategy will be reviewed annually in accordance with these results.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

Historically the South Tees has a legacy of heavy industrial land use.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Cleveland became a centre of the ironstone mining industry, with this vast supply of raw material Middlesbrough saw the rapid development of its iron and steel industries becoming established as one of the largest ports in Britain. In more recent years the area became known for its petrochemicals sector and the rapid expansion of Teesside. An inevitable legacy of this industrial heritage has been the pollution which accompanied rapid industrial expansion in the years before modern legislative controls. Air and water pollution from industrial installations and smoke pollution from domestic fires have since been brought under control by a variety of national environmental protection and public health legislation, including the Public Health Acts, the Environmental Protection Act and the Clean Air Acts, but pollution of land continues to be a ongoing concern.

Air pollution arises from many sources and can travel over long distances and when pollutants combine with each other they create different pollutants. Emissions from distant and local sources can build up into high local concentrations of pollution<sup>1</sup>.

Poor air quality has the potential to affect the whole population of South Tees, some 280,400 people (Middlesbrough Council 143,900 and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council 136,500)<sup>2</sup>.

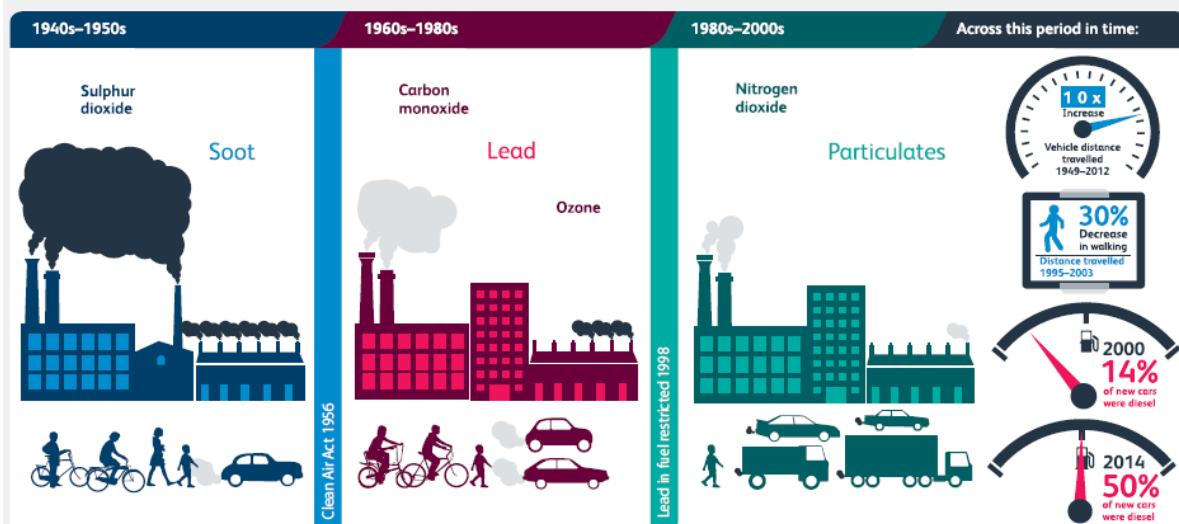
Air quality across South Tees has improved over the last 50 years, however the changing sources of air pollution provide new challenges to tackle, reduce, and eradicate for future generations.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Government Clean Air Strategy, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Census 2021 Data, Census – Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) visited 25/07/2022

**Figure 1: Exposure to pollutants over time**



Source - Every Breath We Take: The Lifelong Impact Of Air Pollution. RCP, Feb 2016

Improvements to air quality cannot be undertaken as a standalone factor, collaborative working between Local Authority departments, organisations, businesses and residents is essential. Many of the measures which can contribute to improving air quality are linked to regional and local spatial planning and our response to climate change. Therefore, delivered together can have far reaching benefits for South Tees and the wider area. Both authorities have made commitments to climate change, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council (RCBC) through the Climate Change Strategy<sup>3</sup> and Middlesbrough Borough Council's (MBC) Green Strategy<sup>4</sup>

The Environment Act 2021<sup>5</sup> (EA2021) has provided Local Authorities with additional powers to investigate and enforce smoke emissions from domestic heating appliances. Restrictions are now in place to prohibit the sale of the most polluting fuels such as loose coal and bags of wet wood below 2m<sup>3</sup>, for domestic heating appliances.

The development of a voluntary South Tees Clean Air Strategy (CAS) began prior to the pandemic in 2019. The UK Government has recently announced that it will be mandatory for all Local Authorities who have not been required to have an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place, to develop an Air Quality Strategy (AQS).

<sup>3</sup> RCBC Climate Change Strategy, <https://greenerfuture.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> MC Green Strategy, <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/environment-and-public-protection/green-strategy>

<sup>5</sup> Environment Act 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

### 3. LOCAL AIR QUALITY

Since statutory limits were imposed by the Government, over the last three decades, air quality across the South Tees has complied with the legal air quality objectives. However, our aim is to continuously improve air quality beyond compliance, our vision is to make our air, 'as clean as it can be'.

The Annual Status Reports (ASR) of both Authorities, which are submitted to Defra in June each year, can be found for MBC<sup>6</sup> and RCBC<sup>7</sup> on the public website.

The pollutants which are associated nationally with air quality are monitored across the South Tees. These include:

- nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>),
- sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>),
- particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and
- ozone (O<sub>3</sub>).

The datasets for MBC are located on the UK-Air website<sup>8</sup> and similarly for RCBC at the Air Quality England website<sup>9</sup>. Both local authorities also have an extensive network of diffusion tubes located across each Borough which are used to monitor NO<sub>2</sub>. Many of these diffusion tubes are focused around schools, the main transport routes, and housing.

The graphs below show the trend data for each Local Authority area since 1998 for the main pollutants, PM<sub>10</sub> PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>.

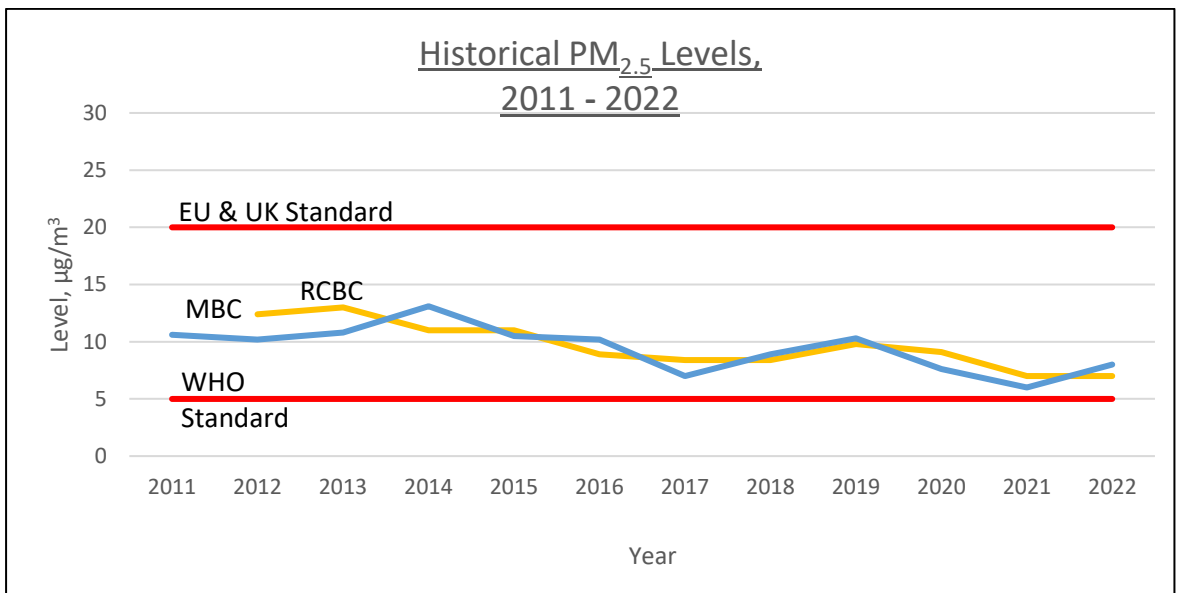
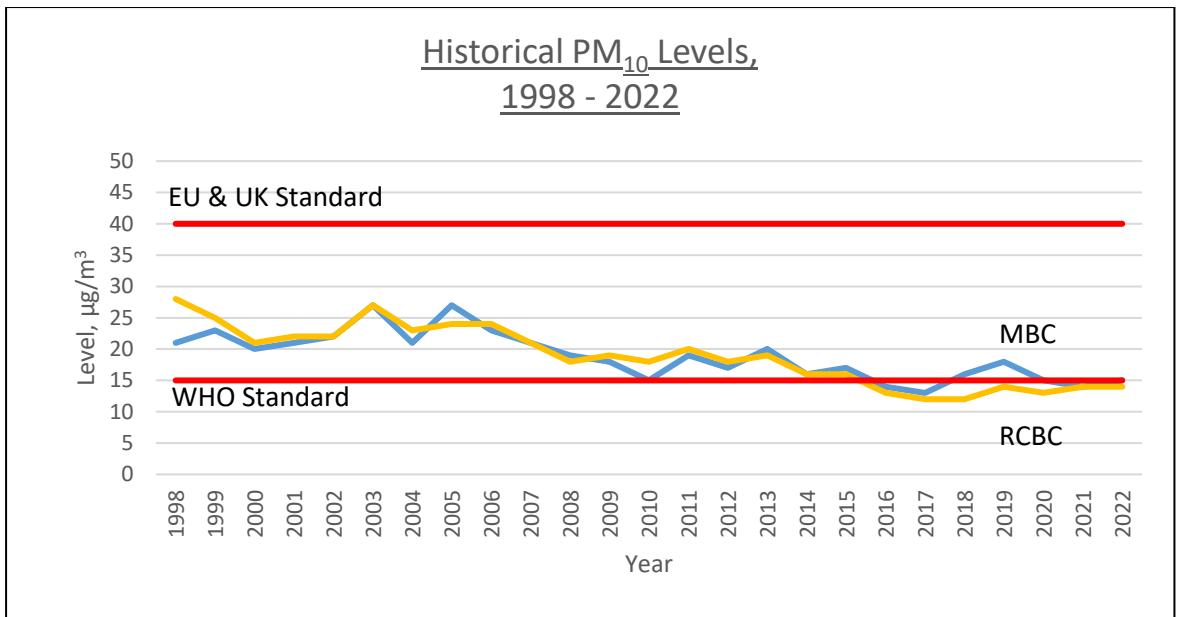
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<sup>6</sup> MBC <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/environment-and-public-protection/advice-and-information/air-quality>

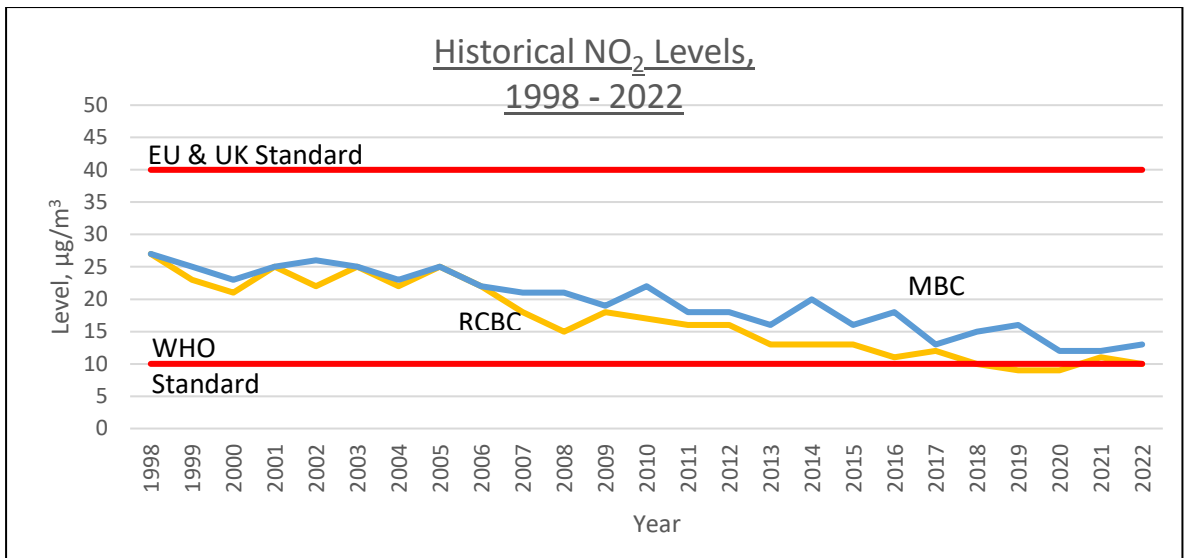
<sup>7</sup> RCBC <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/community-safety/environmental-protection-and-sustainability/air-quality>

<sup>8</sup> [https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/networks/site-info?site\\_id=MID](https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/networks/site-info?site_id=MID)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/local-authority/?la\\_id=279](https://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/local-authority/?la_id=279)

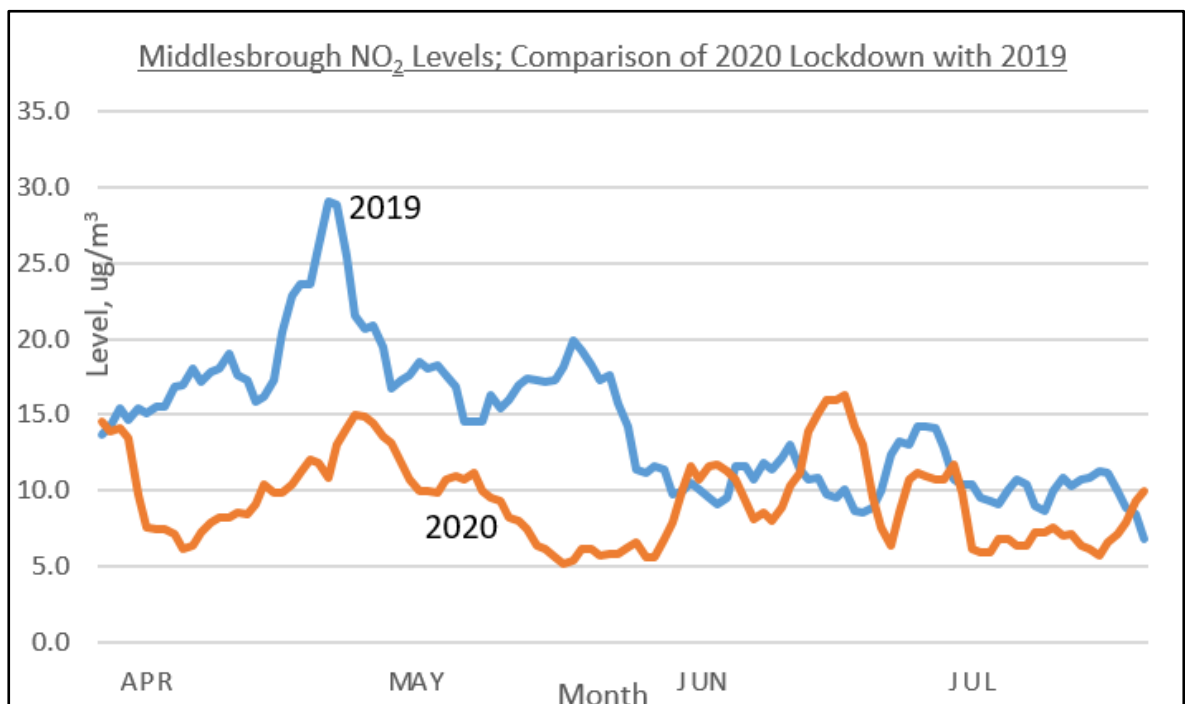


PM<sub>2.5</sub> values for Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council from 2011 until 2020 were calculated from PM<sub>10</sub> data using the recognised method by Defra. Values from 2021 are provided from a dedicated PM<sub>2.5</sub> analyser.



During the Covid-19 pandemic controls were in place to restrict daily activity away from the home to essential travel for key workers and shopping for essential goods. This resulted in a reduction in the number of vehicles on the road and consequently air quality was affected in different ways across South Tees.

In Middlesbrough, the impact of the Covid lockdown was clearly positive for air quality during the months of the initial restriction on non-essential travel. The measurement taken for the graph below came from the Breckon Hill monitoring station, located in a mostly residential area situated in close proximity to what would normally have been a busy urban transport route.

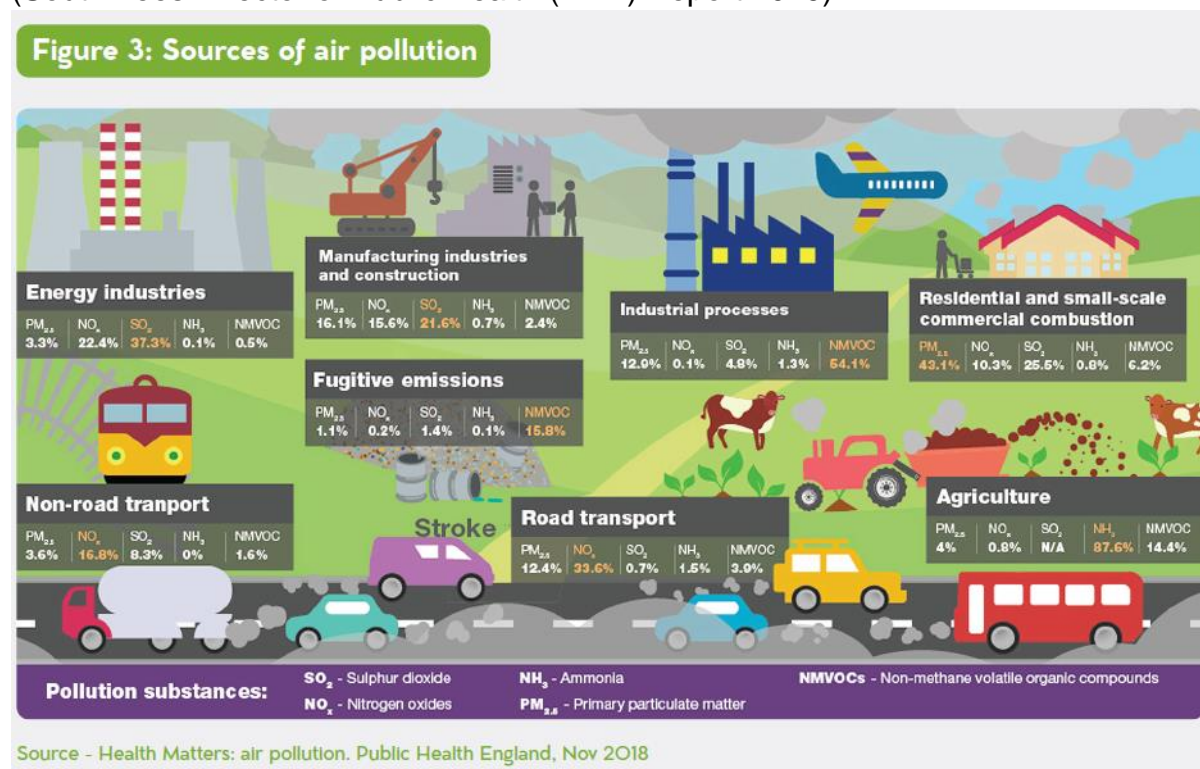


In Redcar and Cleveland, there was no discernible difference in air quality during the lockdown period of the Covid pandemic. Geographically there is less housing located upwind of the monitoring station therefore the impact of reduced vehicle use by households did not impact on the nitrogen dioxide levels recorded. In addition, the diffusion tube located on the A66 / West Lane (RCBC) main arterial route which is influenced by traffic serving the large industrial /chemical complexes also showed no noticeable reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels. This is perhaps not unexpected given this is a main arterial route used by key workers and key industries which continued to operate as normal throughout the Covid pandemic.

## 4. AIR POLLUTION AND HEALTH

In 2022 the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published new estimates for the burden of long-term exposure to air pollution in 2019 in the UK being an effect equivalent to 29,000 to 43,000 deaths for adults aged 30 and over<sup>10</sup>.

Air quality is the largest environmental health risk in the UK. It shortens lives and contributes to chronic illness. Health can be affected both by short-term, high-pollution episodes and by long-term exposure to lower levels of pollution, (South Tees Director of Public Health (DPH) Report 2019)<sup>11</sup>.

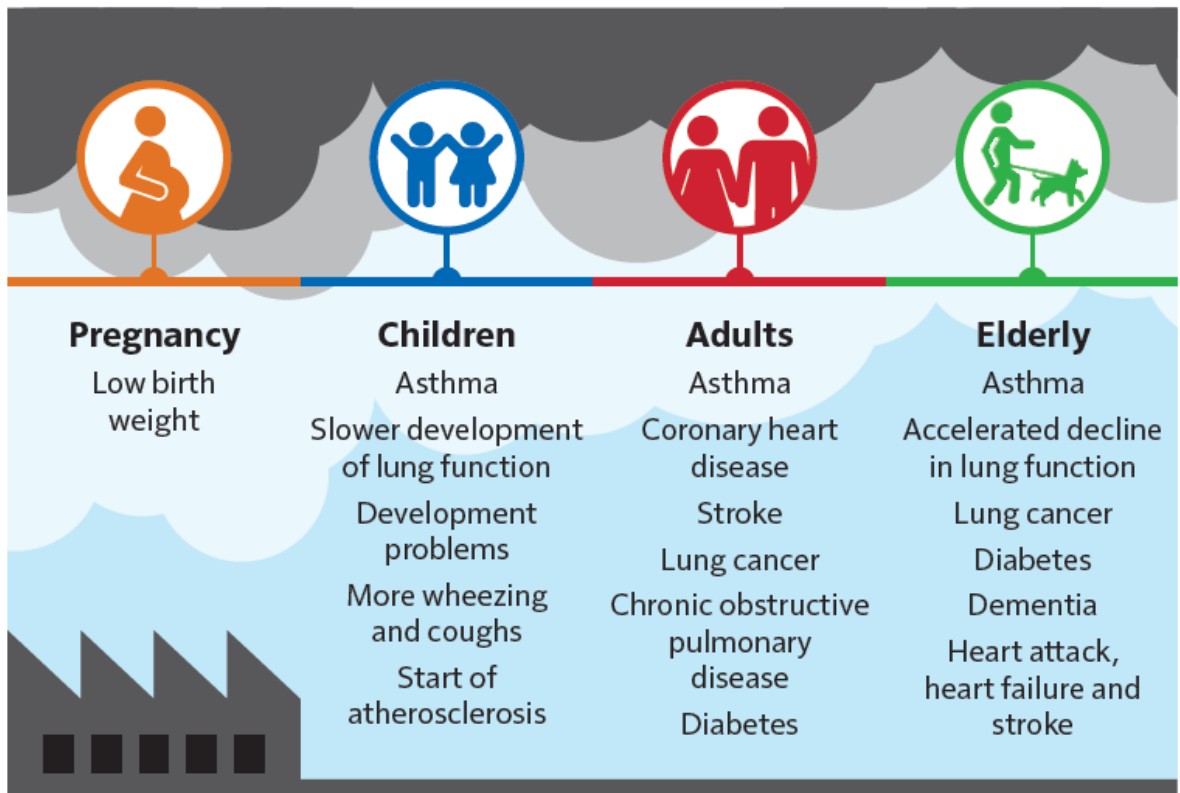


There is currently no clear evidence of a safe level of exposure to air pollution below which there is no risk of adverse health effects. Air pollution affects all people across all life courses from being in the womb to end of life.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chemical-hazards-and-poisons-report-issue-28>

<sup>11</sup> South Tees DPH Report 2019,

<https://moderngov.middlesbrough.gov.uk/Data/Executive/202006161300/Agenda/att1018246.pdf>



Source: Adapted from Public Health England (2018)<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1: Health effects of air pollution throughout life**

12

Tragically, 2020 saw the UK’s first cause of death listed as air pollution. Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, aged 9, died in 2013 from an asthma attack. Ella had lived in close proximity to the busy South Circular Road in Lewisham, south-east London. An inquest ruled that air pollution was a material contribution to her death<sup>13</sup>.

NICE guideline [NG70] aims to raise awareness of outdoor air quality and health<sup>14</sup>.

People are also exposed to poor air quality within indoor environments. The following sources are contributors to poor indoor air quality (Health Matters Guidance, November 2018).

- Carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulates from domestic appliances (boilers, heaters, fires, stoves and ovens), which burn carbon containing fuels (coal, coke, gas, kerosene and wood).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2022-air-pollution>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-responds-to-coroner-after-ella-kissi-debrah-inquest>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng70>



- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) from cleaning and personal care products, building materials and household consumer products (paints, carpets, laminate furniture, cleaning products, air fresheners, polishing).
- Environmental tobacco smoke and second-hand smoke. Advice and support can be accessed via the South Tees Smoke Free Alliance<sup>15</sup>.
- Radon from naturally occurring radioactive gas that is released from the ground as the earth decays. There is an increased risk of lung cancer if exposed to high levels of radon for a long time, as it is the second highest cause of lung cancer after smoking. It is generally not a problem in outside air but can accumulate in buildings. The areas affected by radon in the Redcar and Cleveland area, and across the UK can be viewed on the UK Radon website<sup>16</sup>. Middlesbrough have no areas identified as radon concern.

Indoor air quality is the only air pollution that individuals have some control over. NICE guideline (NG149) aims to raise awareness of the importance of good air quality in people's homes and how to achieve this<sup>17</sup>.

Although air quality in the South Tees consistently complies with the legal standards, the South Tees Clean Air Strategy, in conjunction with additional cross-cutting policies / guidance, aims to improve air quality even further. Residents' actions and behaviour changes, no matter how big or small are vital to make a difference at the local level.

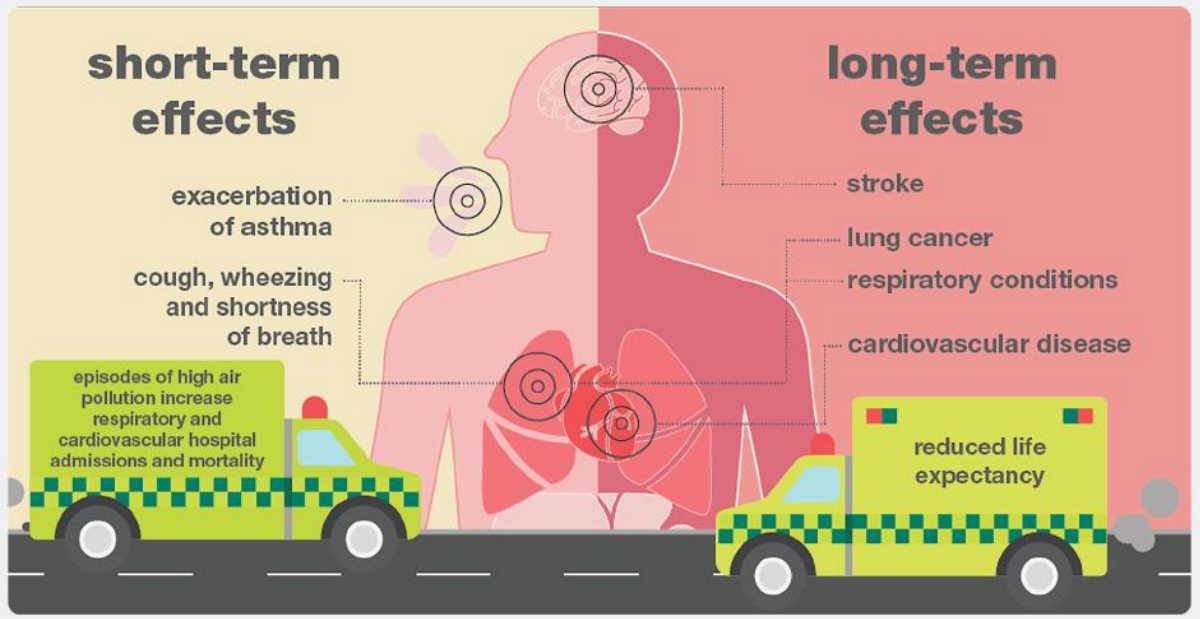
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<sup>15</sup> South Tees Smoke Free Alliance, <https://www.stopsmokingsouthtees.co.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> UK Radon Maps, <https://www.ukradon.org/information/ukmaps>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng149>

**Figure 5: Health effects of air pollution**



Source - Health Matters: air pollution. PHE, Nov 2018

The measures that improve air quality can also offer wider public health and wellbeing co-benefits, including an improvement in overall environmental quality, increased physical activity, reducing injuries and accidents, preventing social isolation, noise reduction, greater road safety and climate change mitigation, (South Tees DPH Report, 2019).

Local health statistics across the UK are revised regularly and are available via the following link <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles>

## 5. ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Improving air quality has long been on the agenda for the South Tees area, and many changes have already been implemented which will have contributed to an improvement in air quality.

### Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)

- The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan 2020 – 2030 was adopted in January 2020 and provides an investment framework to deliver a world-class transport system. A Transport Investment Prospectus has also been developed setting out a statement of ambition to Government for further devolved transport funding.
- Roll-out of two EV charging projects within RCBC and MBC live from October 2022 in Loftus (12), Redcar (18), Guisborough (12) and in MBC at Binks Street (3), Buxton Street (4), Stewart Park (1), Zetland Multistorey (5) and Captain Cook multistorey (6).
- The Tees Flex service was launched in February 2020, providing an on-demand bus service to areas of the region previously not well served by public transport. The service has been well received and seen strong passenger growth despite the impacts of Covid-19. The three-year trial has now been extended for a further 18 months from February 2023.
- A pipeline of new private sector investment enquiries of more than £5billion, with the potential to create and safeguard more than 7,500 jobs. Of this pipeline several major investments are already well under way such as Anglo American's Woodsmith Mine connection to Wilton International, with some nearing completion, such as MGT's Tees Renewable Energy Plant.
- Net Zero Teesside is the UK's most developed and deliverable carbon capture, utilisation and storage project that aims to make the Tees Valley the world's first decarbonised industrial centre<sup>18</sup>, The multibillion-pound project is being delivered by a consortium of the world's largest oil companies, BP, Equinor, Shell, Total and ENI. Led by BP, the project will be operational by 2030. The process removes CO<sub>2</sub> from heavy industry and powerplants and transports it by pipeline to storage sites located several miles under the North Sea. The scheme plans to capture up to 10M tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions each year, equivalent to the emissions associated with the annual energy use of up to three million UK homes, meaning it will play a huge role in the UK's ambition to be net zero by 2050.
- Introduction of a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which sets out the ambition to deliver 92km of new walking

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.netzeroteesside.co.uk/>

and cycling infrastructure, including several new routes in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland.

- Completed Middlesbrough, Linthorpe Road Phase 1 scheme provides a brand new, segregated route leading directly into the town centre from Linthorpe Village.
- Working in partnership with Sustrans to provide practical advice and support to people living and working in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland, through the network of Active Travel Hubs<sup>19</sup>.

### South Tees Development Corporation

- Master Plan 2017 25-year vision for the redevelopment of the former Redcar Steelworks site, introducing 'clean' technology and future carbon capture<sup>20</sup>.

### Highways & Transport

- Redevelopment of Middlesbrough Railway Station, first phase completion December 2021, platform extension of 75m to allow direct trains to London, £34m upgrade, refurbishment of station, £2.67million of DfT funding and £9.65million from the Getting Building Fund was secured for the upgrade of Middlesbrough Station ensuring the full funding package is in place for delivery.
- Improvements to major roads and traffic signalling, 'through-about A66' with removal of Cargo Fleet roundabout, Flatts Lane / Swan's Corner reconfiguration.
- Continued implementation of the Urban Traffic Management System on the A66 to improve traffic management.
- Pedestrianisation of major town centres across the South Tees.
- Procurement of cleaner fleet vehicles across each Borough.
- Car anti-idling signage at the Redcar Central Station Road crossing since July 2021.
- RCBC and MBC introduction of Zapcharged EV chargers since August 2022 within Council operated car parks across the Borough.
- RCBC EV chargers within fleet operated buildings for use by Council vehicles.
- Achieved 18.9% increase in the level of zero emission vehicles in the Council's fleet against target of 20% by March 2023.

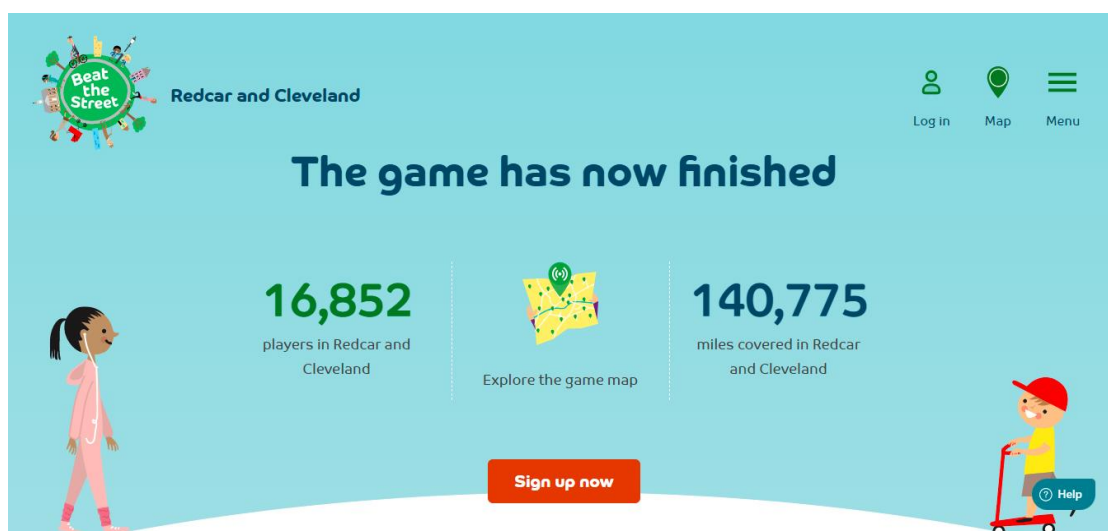
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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.letsgotoeesvalley.co.uk/ways-to-travel/cycle/?tab=Active%20Travel%20Hubs&#panel-3>

<sup>20</sup> <https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/stdc/>

## Active Travel

- Five Active Travel Hubs commissioned across the Tees Valley including from bases at Middlesbrough and Redcar. The Redcar Hub will carry out outreach work to reach communities throughout the borough. Hubs will offer residents advice and information about walking & cycling, guided walks & bike rides, cycle repairs & training courses and secure cycle storage etc.
- RCBC plans for cycling and walking investment covering 10 proposed schemes across the borough.
- Sustrans grant £665,478 improving a section of The Lines/Black Path from Ormesby High Street to South Bank (part of Teesworks to Nunthorpe active travel route).
- Bikeability cycle training providing children and family with lifeskills to cycle confidently and competently on today's roads.
- Dr Bike sessions in Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough fixing bikes and providing road safety for school children.
- Linthorpe Road cycle investment.
- Promotion of £2 bus fare price cap between January and March 2023.
- Success in receiving funding from the UK Government 'Levelling Up' initiative, January 2023, to receive £20M investment in the Newham Grange highway scheme will unlock 800 homes in Middlesbrough, while new pedestrian and cycle tracks will better connect Guisborough town centre to Teesworks and the North York Moors National Park.
- You've Got This South Tees Delivery Pilot to encourage physical activity.
- Beat the Street game to increase physical activity across South Tees encouraged people to walk and cycle rather than using a car.





### Energy Efficiency of Homes

- Improvements to housing becoming more energy efficient Green Homes Deal (LAD2) RCBC £2million investment covering 258 measures across 195 homes.
- Home Upgrade Grant (HUG1) supported by TVCA, for measures installed in homes across Redcar & Cleveland, Stockton and Darlington. This scheme is currently awaiting agreement for extension until July 2023 and will see improvement to a projected 236 homes across the Tees Valley.
- A further round of Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) funding was announced in November 2022 (HUG2). A consortium bid between Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland and Darlington Borough Council was submitted at the end of January 2023. The bid for funding has been successful and it is anticipated that 300 homes across the four participating Tees Valley local authority areas will be improved. This scheme begins in Autumn 2023 and will run until March 2025.
- Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) Regulations, Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) project. RCBC were successful in a bid for £36,610 to support private rented properties being rated an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D or above. The project targeted two postcode areas with the greatest proportion of rented properties in EPC category E and below. The project identified 157 properties; 75 properties improved their rating, 64 were found to be no longer subject to MEES Regulations and 18 properties were subject to proportionate enforcement action.

- Middlesbrough identified 84 Properties that had a registered EPC rating of F or G meaning they were substandard. The properties were upgraded to have an EPC rating of A to E, which brought them into compliance with the laws on minimum energy standards in rented accommodation.

### Community & Council Initiatives

- Safe /Green alley spaces in South Bank as part of You've Got This 'Growing Active Partnership' to encourage local residents to take part in physical activity by taking control of green spaces and making alleyways safer using Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Safer Streets initiative to provide local residents with key access to alleyways.
- Installation of electric charging points in Council Car Parks and fleet depots across South Tees.
- Publicity campaign relating to efficient and compliant use of wood burning stoves (RCBC).
- Replacement of existing street lighting with LED across South Tees.
- Electricity supplies from renewable sources.
- Separation of waste streams.
- Regulation of businesses who hold an Environmental Permit to release pollutants to the atmosphere.
- Smoke Control Areas across the South Tees<sup>21</sup>.
- MBC salary sacrifice scheme has resulted in over 70 EV vehicles being purchased by staff.
- RCBC salary sacrifice scheme has resulted in 12 electric vehicle and 11 hybrid vehicle purchases by staff since the scheme started in 2012.
- The Covid-19 pandemic provided opportunities for instigating new ways of working, post Covid South Tees has achieved extensive hybrid working.
- Both RCBC and MBC provided feedback in April 2023 on the consultation regarding Defra's National Draft Air Quality Strategy.
- Smarter working practices utilised within the South Tees Authorities including hybrid working opportunities and consolidation of office space.
- Between April 2022 and December 2024 Northern Gas Networks undertook survey work in preparation for a potential domestic hydrogen fuel trial within the Redcar area. Should the project have been approved this would have resulted in creating the UK first hydrogen village. The Government decided in December 2023 to not support the proposed pilot project.

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<sup>21</sup> Smoke Control Maps UK, <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/sca/>

This is just the beginning of the story; the South Tees vision is to realise continuous improvement to air quality for the benefit of everyone.

## **6. OUR FIVE WORKSTREAMS FOR SUSTAINABLE AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS**

1. Planning for cleaner air (data & intelligence).
2. Reduce vehicle emissions and promotion of active travel (alternative fuel/modal shift).
3. Raise awareness of air quality (communications/engagement and awareness raising).
4. Educate to improve indoor air quality.
5. Enforcement.

## **7. PROGRESS CHECKING / ACCOUNTABILITY**

Through this dynamic strategy work will be regularly reviewed with partners (Section 9) to ensure that it remains relevant to the delivery of the South Tees Strategy. Implementation and progress with the South Tees Clean Air Strategy requires collaborative working with internal teams and external organisations to improve the air for all within the South Tees area. Progress reporting for the strategy will be undertaken by MBC and RCBC via the annual statutory air quality report to Defra submitted in June.

The current economic environment and associated budget constraints may result in changes in the delivery of local services, local and national policies, and these would require changes to action plans.

At a local level topic-based task groups will provide operational delivery of the five priority areas, comprising cross-departmental local authority teams across the South Tees and willing partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Engagement with community leaders, businesses, local communities, and schools is paramount to the delivery of this strategy. Information will be shared using social media platforms and established community groups.



## 8 PERFORMANCE MEASURES & MILESTONES

South Tees aims to make continuous improvements to air quality. This will be addressed with the following performance measures action plan.

Reference	Detail	Start Date (if relevant)	Finish Date (if relevant)	Actioned By	Update frequency
<b>DATA &amp; INTELLIGENCE</b>					
DI01	School Air Quality Zones Contract – Redcar & Eston School Sports Partnership Community Interest Company (CIC), included installation of air quality monitoring devices outside schools and is now implemented and incorporated into the Creating Active Schools Framework.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Public Health Teams, Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC), Groundworks Northeast	April annually
DI02	Utilisation of Public Health England’s Outcome Framework Data in the planning, monitoring and	Ongoing	N/A	STPH Public Health Intelligence Specialist	April annually

	reporting process, fingertips data.				
DI03	Submit Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) annual status report to Defra.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	June annually
DI04	Provide statutory update on progress with the South Tees Clean Air Strategy to Defra.	Annual	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	June annually
DI05	Update through South Tees Public Health topic area (Ill Health Prevention)	Annual	N/A	STPH Advanced Public Health Practitioner	Quarterly
DI06	Air Pollution and Carbon Emissions Net Zero Project (APACE Net Zero)	Ongoing	N/A	TVCA	Quarterly
DI07	Collaborating with registered providers to gather data to demonstrate meeting of carbon targets and net zero.	Ongoing	Annual review	Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) RCBC Housing Standards Team Thirteen and Beyond	May annually

DI08	Update on Bikeability and Dr Bike statistics.	Ongoing	Annual review	Sustrans RESSP MBC Environment City	May annually
DI09	<p>Promotion of affordable warmth schemes across the South Tees area.</p> <p>Ongoing regional collaboration to secure funding to implement schemes.</p> <p>RCBC:- Ecoflex4, HUG2, Boiler upgrade scheme, Great British Insulation Scheme</p> <p>MBC: - Promotion of Ecoflex schemes to deliver on cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, inefficient heating replacements and solid wall insulation</p>	Ongoing	Annual review	Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) RCBC Housing Standards Team (Affordable Warmth) Regeneration Team, MBC	Quarterly

	for eligible properties. Home Improvement Loans through the promotion of the Staying Put Agency that provides money to help older and vulnerable people living in Middlesbrough, whose property falls below the Decent Homes standard.				
<b>ALTERNATIVE FUEL / MODAL SHIFT</b>					
AF01	Partnership with TVCA to offer free travel for school aged children during school holidays (TVCA Kids go free by bus this summer).	Ongoing	Annual review	TVCA	April annually
AF02	Proposed trial for 50 on-street electric vehicle charging points with Ubitricity.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC Environment and Community Services	June annually

AF03	Increase the level of zero emission vehicles in the Council's fleet to 20% by 2024 (RCBC)	Ongoing	N/A	RCBC Climate Change, Growth, Enterprise and Environment	June annually
	To replace the Council's Fleet with zero emission vehicles by 2029 (MBC)	Ongoing	2029	MBC Environment Services	
AF04	Redcar & Cleveland to be carbon neutral by 2030.	Ongoing	2030	RCBC Climate Change, Growth, Enterprise and Environment	June annually
AF05	Redcar and Cleveland to become 100% clean energy supply by 2050.	Ongoing	2050	RCBC Climate Change, Growth, Enterprise and Environment	June annually
	Purchase energy from green or renewable fuel sources to be carbon neutral by 2030.	Ongoing	2030	MBC Environment Services	
AF06	New waste facility at South Bank	Ongoing	NA	TVCA and Circular Fuels Ltd.	June annually

	operational from 2025, which will explore carbon capture technology.				
AF07	Explore transport infrastructure improvements that work to reduce pollution.	Ongoing	2030	RCBC Transport, Growth, Enterprise and Environment, MBC Economic Growth and Infrastructure	June annually
AF08	<p>Involvement with Teesside University Hydrogen Hub trials.</p> <p>Redcar &amp; Cleveland Borough Council were part of two bids into Innovate UK for the Tees Valley Hydrogen Transport Hub. The bids were not successful but an additional vehicle from a different successful bid is to be trialled within the borough.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>June 2025</p>	<p>MBC Economic Growth and Infrastructure</p> <p>RCBC Climate Change, Growth, Enterprise and Environment</p>	June annually
AF09	Trial large hydrogen vehicles	Ongoing	June 2025	RCBC Climate Change, Growth,	June annually

	as part of the Tees Valley Hydrogen Transport Hub			Enterprise and Environment	
AF10	Employ sustainable transport initiatives through City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and Local Implementation Plan for Transport in conjunction with TVCA.	Ongoing	2027	MBC Economic Growth and Infrastructure, RCBC Growth Enterprise and Environment	June annually
AF11	Promote the implementation of an ultra-low emission vehicle infrastructure across the South Tees.	Ongoing	N/A	RCBC Transport, Growth, Enterprise and Environment, MBC Economic Growth and Infrastructure	June annually
AF12	Explore opportunities with organisations to encourage the use of cleaner commercial vehicles.	Ongoing	N/A	TVCA	June annually
AF13	Create environments	Ongoing	2025	You've Got This (South Tees Initiative)	June annually

	which encourage physical activity.				
AF14	Explore opportunities with APACE NETZERO to understand the influence of maritime operations on air pollution in South Tees.	Ongoing	N/A	TVCA RCBC and MBC Environmental Protection Teams	March 2025
AF15	Explore opportunities with APACE Net Zero regarding access to their unique solution for acquiring local emissions inventories (resolution 100m) that can serve as the baseline for monitoring and validating the impact of decarbonization measures.	Ongoing	N/A	TVCA RCBC Climate Change, Growth, Enterprise and Environment	March 2025
<b>COMMUNICATION / ENGAGEMENT &amp; AWARENESS RAISING</b>					
CE01	Introducing 'clean air awareness' around schools on a targeted basis	Ongoing	N/A	STPH	May annually



	and introducing materials on air quality to link to the national curriculum. The intention is to test whether the materials and overall approach are acceptable and engaging for pupils, schools and communities with a view to wider scale roll out in future years. Part of the Creating Active Schools Framework				
CE02	Identify and promote funding streams that are available to everyone to improve air quality.	Ongoing	N/A	STPH Empowering Communities Team	June annually
CE03	Public engagement events across the South Tees area to raise awareness of air quality related issues including in support of annual	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	June annually

	Clean Air Day / Car Free Day.				
CE04	Identify hotspot areas for targeted action and make this data central and accessible to other stakeholders within the private and public sector. – Air quality data is available to all stakeholders using the following link <a href="https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/">https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/</a> . In addition data including previous Annual Status reports are available using the following link, MBC <a href="https://middlesbrough-council-middlesbrough.opendata.arcgis.com/search?sort=name&amp;tags=air%20quality">https://middlesbrough-council-middlesbrough.opendata.arcgis.com/search?sort=name&amp;tags=air%20quality</a> and RCBC <a href="https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/co">https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/co</a>	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	Ongoing

	<a href="#">community-safety/environmental-protection-and-sustainability/air-quality</a>				
CE05	Promoting positive messages to raise awareness of outdoor air pollution	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	June annually
<b>ENFORCEMENT (proportionate in accordance with local enforcement policies)</b>					
ENF01	Applicable planning applications to include an air quality assessment in line with the NPPF.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC and RCBC Development Control and TVCA planning applications.	June annually
ENF02	Enforce the new provisions within the Environment Act 2021 with regards to Smoke Control Areas, wood burning stoves and domestic chimneys.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	April annually
ENF03	Enforce statutory nuisance provisions within the Environmental	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	April annually

	Protection Act 1990 with regards to bonfires.				
ENF04	Enforce the provisions of the Clean Air Act 1990 with respect to dark smoke.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	April annually
ENF05	Engage with businesses that hold Environmental Permits to ensure they comply with emission limits and where necessary undertake enforcement action for non-compliance.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	April annually
ENF06	Provide and maintain an effective air quality monitoring network.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	April annually
ENF07	Provide advice and data to the public with concerns about their local air quality.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Environmental Protection Teams	April annually
<b>EDUCATE IMPROVING INDOOR AIR QUALITY</b>					
IAQ01	Communications campaign to increase	Ongoing	N/A	STPH / Smoke Free Alliance	Quarterly updates

	awareness of sources of indoor air pollution and maximising Making Every Contact Count (MECC).				
IAQ02	Encourage people to give up smoking (Smoking Cessation Service, South Tees Smoke Free Action Alliance).	Ongoing	N/A	STPH	Annual updates
IAQ03	Working with registered providers to communicate with residents and to raise awareness of indoor air pollution.	Ongoing	N/A	MBC & RCBC Housing Teams Smoke Free Alliance	June annually

## 9 KEY PARTNERS

Environment Agency	
Tees Valley Combined Authority	
Net Zero Teesside	
Sustrans	
Let's Go Tees Valley	
South Tees Development Corporation	
Circular Fuels Ltd	
Northern Gas Networks	

## 10. APPENDIX / REFERENCES

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Beat the Street, <https://www.beatthestreet.me/>

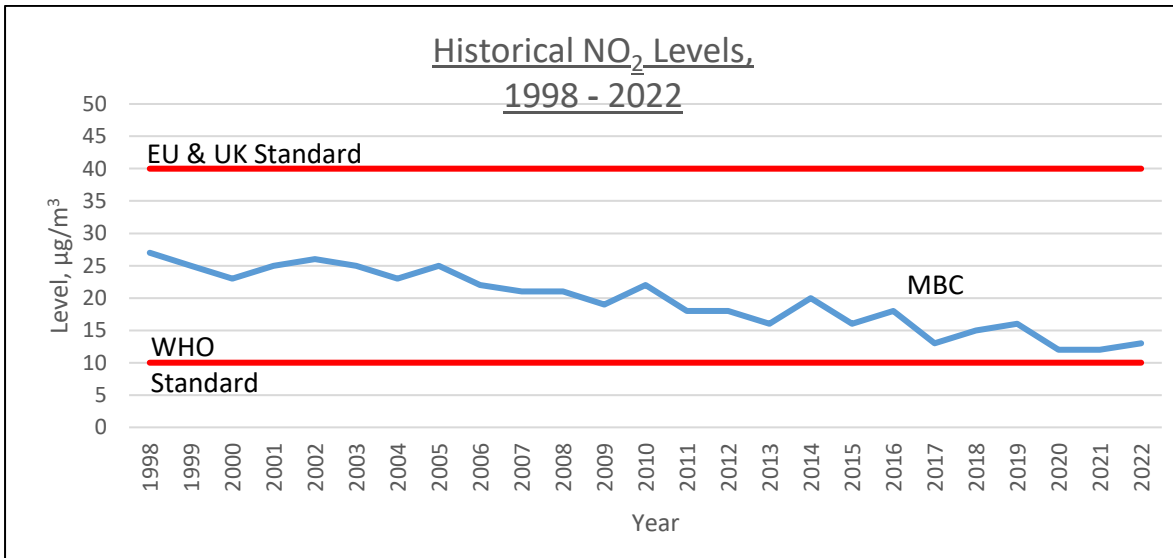
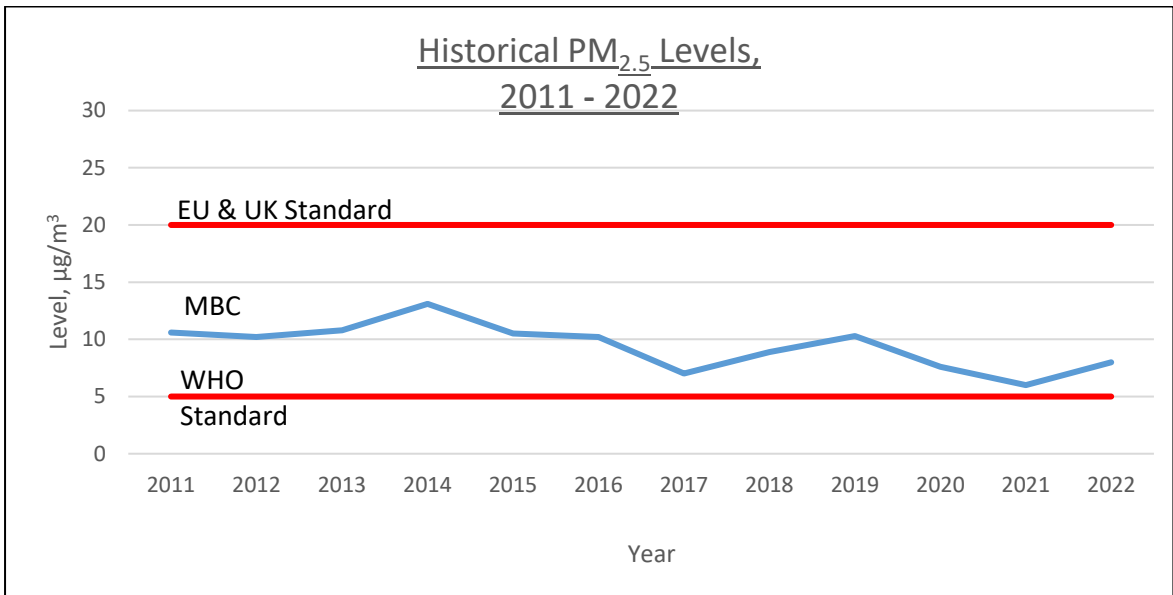
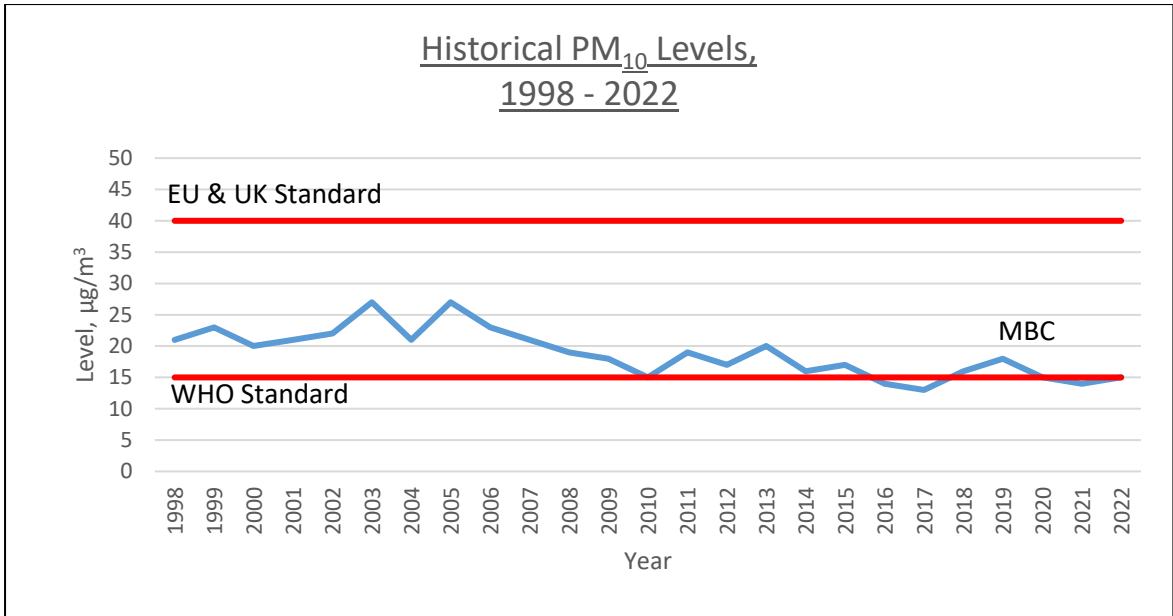
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Recommendation	RAG rating	Current Position	Future Actions with timeframes
<b>Short Term recommendations</b>			
<p><b>1</b> Continue to embed the Agile Planning system and recently acquired Power BI system into the DM process, make time to provide (and maintain) a practical guide to the system for case officers. The Power BI system should be used to create a single (and simply laid out) performance management report summarising live cases for the team as well as individual caseloads, for sharing across the team on a weekly basis to enable targeted support and shared commitment to meeting performance thresholds.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports available in Power BI providing details of individual officer performance</li> <li>• Developed and implemented review processes for performance management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports to be developed and utilised to provide performance data to senior management and planning committee. (ongoing)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b> Encourage the whole Development Control Team to work together from the office for one day each week. This will mean addressing practical barriers to team working, for example, “block booking” space in the shared office.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development Control team are together within the office two days a week.</li> <li>• Monthly team meetings diarised.</li> <li>• Ad hoc team meetings arranged to discuss specific issues e.g. Nutrient Neutrality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to identify a dedicated ‘pod’ for the planning service is part of wider corporate transformational considerations in terms of maximising the most efficient use of corporate buildings (Sept 2024)</li> <li>• Ensuring all staff have access to monitors at work station (Sept 2024)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b> Strengthen management capacity for service transformation across Development Control reducing the load of day-to-day responsibilities on the current DC Manager, allowing more time to focus on the implementing improvements we set out. This may involve existing (or new) staff taking on a team leader or supervisory role for more junior Development Control staff as well as giving greater authority to Principal Planning officers to undertake routine tasks like signing off reports by more junior staff.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals/Seniors have been given the role of mentoring and supporting new officers (3 new officers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms part of wider transformational proposals for the Service, which will include the introduction of a team leader post within the Development Control team. This post will take some of the day to day responsibility of the DC Manager to focus on introducing wider improvements to the team. (Sept 2024)</li> <li>• Wider transformational proposals are looking at how the wider planning function works holistically, including planning policy, conservation, enforcement, and development management (Sept 2024)</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b> Case officers should work with their line manager or a more senior officer to review applications at an appropriate stage after the consultation end date, to enable better case management and ensure straightforward decisions are issued as soon as possible.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers aware of roles and responsibilities and who to speak to for advice and guidance.</li> <li>• Fortnightly 1:1s held between case officers and manager to review cases</li> <li>• Ad hoc meetings held as required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to review processes and improve/amend as necessary (ongoing)</li> </ul>

Recommendation	RAG rating	Current Position	Future Actions with timeframes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-introduction of corporate appraisal process to support staff and aid development.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5</b> Identify an officer to make some immediate updates to the website to reduce time spent on queries and complaints, e.g. the standard of applications required; local validation list and protocol for resubmitting invalid applications or amending validated applications; clearer sign-posting to Planning Portal for advice; and availability of the pre application service.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer identified to work on review of web site.</li> <li>Corporate Digital team have been engaged with and are assisting with review of Planning web pages and ensure consistency with corporate identity.</li> <li>Public survey launched to understand how the web site is used and provide feedback on restructuring/ amending web pages to enable a more effective one stop digital offering</li> <li>Regeneration Scrutiny panel currently considering Planning capacity and have focussed on improvements to the Planning web pages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes to web to be introduced by Sept 2024</li> <li>Officer to be made responsible for ensuring web pages are kept under review and updated (ongoing)</li> </ul>
<p>Take a firm position on the provision of non-key services such as informal telephone advice on permitted development, to minimise the interruptions. The technical team should be able to direct callers to a web page or the pre application service and advise that it is not possible to provide advice over the phone because of potential misunderstandings and resource constraints.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of a paid for pre application service has allowed staff to direct enquiries to web pages, requiring minimum input from staff.</li> <li>Measures have already seen a significant reduction in contact from members of the public/agents/developers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web pages in process of being reviewed (as per recommendation 5) to further reduce the need to contact officers and minimise disruptions (Sept 2024)</li> </ul>
<b>Medium Term recommendations</b>			
<p><b>7</b> Bring together existing process notes and guidance for case officers into a single DM manual, making the most of current examples as well as completing the work underway.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of individual process notes have been prepared covering                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of the Planning IT (Agile) system.</li> <li>Enforcement processes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process notes need to be brought together into one manual (Dec 2024)</li> </ul>
<p><b>8</b> Develop standard wording and templates for reports to ensure they are of an appropriate length and detail for each</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three sets of standard templates have been prepared covering:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These will be monitored and kept updated as needed</li> </ul>

Recommendation	RAG rating	Current Position	Future Actions with timeframes
<p>type of development and can be prepared with minimal time spent on more routine applications.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telecoms;</li> <li>• Appeals, and;</li> <li>• SPD requirements householder developments. SPD/NPPF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current templates need to be formatted into working document/manual (Dec 2024)</li> <li>• Design SPD to be reviewed and ton wide design code to be introduced</li> </ul>
<p><b>9</b> Develop and agree a consultation protocol with both internal and external consultees, with agreed standing advice for more straightforward applications (e.g. Highways, drainage and environmental health). This should be regularly reviewed with consultees to ensure it remains fit for purpose.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed with external consultees to understand requirements.</li> <li>• Meetings arranged with internal consultees to discuss agreed standing advice and which applications they need to be consulted on.</li> <li>• Introduction of standard conditions for use by internal consultees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard wording and procedures/ processes to be finalised (Dec 2024)</li> </ul>
<p><b>10</b> Take a stronger line on rejecting poorly presented or incomplete applications as well as limiting the number of amendments to a validated application. This means enforcing the Council's current policy and allowing only one opportunity for amendments.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions and guidance provided to officers.</li> <li>• Manager discusses in 1:1 with officers.</li> <li>• Any issues arising out of implementation of approach are discussed with management and in wider team meetings.</li> <li>• Agents have been contacted to make them aware of the Council's approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce approach with further guidance published on web site. (Sept 2024)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Long Term recommendations</b></p>			
<p><b>11</b> Build on the work already started by the Development Control Manager to improve relationships with local agents and developers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formally establish an agent's forum, enabling local agents to meet and discuss issues with managers in the team DM.</li> <li>• consider the establishment of an accredited agents' scheme that allows the most trusted agents to be fast tracked through the validation stage. Agree priority work issues to help the speed of decision making – e.g. quality of applications, use of extensions of time, introduction of new technology.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Agents have been contacted setting out changes to working practices.</li> <li>• Select number of local agents were utilised to trial introduction of pre application charges and help inform shape/format of forms and processes.</li> <li>• Developer day held with key developers and agents (Nov 2023) covering number of aspects of bringing Council owned housing sites forward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current priorities are centred on implementing other recommendations. Number need to be in place before setting up forums.</li> <li>• A programme of Developer days/events with local agents to be developed to cover subjects such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working relationships between LPA and agents what works and how can it be improved. Understanding each others expectations</li> <li>• Design – including launch of design code</li> <li>• Other planning matters/issues/topics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Recommendation	RAG rating	Current Position	Future Actions with timeframes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish agents forum (frequency to be determined – either quarterly or bi-annually)</li> </ul>
<p><b>12</b> Develop a stronger corporate role for planning, with DM officers more closely involved in corporate projects to help shape proposals as they develop and streamline planning application and decision-making stages of regeneration schemes.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DM staff form part of corporate project teams e.g development/regeneration sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further work required to embed planning staff in wider corporate projects at conception stage (ongoing)</li> </ul>
<p><b>13</b> Using the advice and good practice available on the <a href="#">PAS website</a>, continue to develop and improve the pre-application offer of the service to maximise income and meet customer needs.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise opportunities to attend PAS training events and workshops to improve staff knowledge and skills.</li> <li>North East Heads of Planning event being arranged with PAS to discuss the pre application offer with view of introducing best practice across the region (April 2024).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise PAS services to provide committee training</li> <li>Further explore guidance/advice/good practice available from PAS</li> <li>Continue to work with PAS to seek improvements to service delivery (both for DM and Plan Making)</li> </ul>

-  Recommendations fully met
-  Recommendations in process of being implemented
-  Recommendations yet to be actioned.

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Legal and Governance Services
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<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
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<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
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<b>Title:</b>	Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board: Third Update Report
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<b>Report for:</b>	Information
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Delivering Best Value
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<b>Key decision:</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>	
That Executive notes the third report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board.	

<b>Executive summary</b>	
The Board's third report sets out the background to its appointment, a summary of activity to date, an overview of progress to date and views on the transition process towards business as usual good corporate governance.	

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To present the third progress report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board, which sets out the background to its appointment, a summary of activity to date, an overview of progress to date and views on the approach to transition towards business-as-usual, whilst demonstrating good corporate governance.

**2 Recommendations**

2.1 That the Executive notes the content of the third progress report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board.

**3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

3.1 The Council must continue to respond effectively and at pace, to ensure effective delivery of the planned improvements as set out in both the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and the Section 24 report, in order to address the concerns articulated regarding culture, governance and financial challenges.

3.2 This progress report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board provides an independent view of progress made to date, on the understanding that the expertise and advice provided will assist the Council in its improvement journey.

**4 Background and relevant information**

4.1 In September 2023, the Council appointed a discretionary Independent Improvement Advisory Board, comprised of the following members:

Name	Experience / speciality
Wallace Sampson OBE	Local authority CEO (Chair)
Ros Jones CBE	Unitary local authority Mayor / Leader
Suki Binjal	Unitary local authority Monitoring Officer
Chris Buss	London Borough and Unitary local authority Chief Finance Officer
Mark Edgell	LGA Regional Lead

4.2 Following a decision to extend the appointment of the Board extended on a non-statutory basis for a further six months until March 2025, the Finance lead Chris Buss, has offered his resignation due to capacity issues and other commitments already in place for that that extended period.

4.3 The Council acknowledges and thanks Chris Buss for his contributions and support on its journey to date. An alternative source of financial expertise support is currently being explored and expected to be appointed by the next Board meeting in August.

4.4 The Board’s role is to provide oversight, support and challenge to the Council’s improvement and transformation journey, with particular focus on ensuring



compliance with the Council's Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999, notably:

- Cultural and governance issues, including those identified through previous Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) any future, external auditor reports.
- Financial sustainability, including a balanced medium-term financial strategy aligned to the Council Plan.

4.5 On 30 January 2024, the Council's Best Value Notice was extended on a non-statutory basis by government for a further six months. The Notice states that during the next six months, government expects the Council to:

*'Continue to work with the Independent Improvement Board established in Middlesbrough to support the Council to deliver the Council's locally led improvement strategies, organisational transformation and to monitor progress of the application of the improvement board recommendations and delivery of improvements against the serious concerns highlighted by the external auditor, published in July 2022, around governance arrangements, and cultural and governance issues further investigated in the CIPFA review published in September 2022.*

*Continue in your efforts to deliver against your agreed action plan, accepted at full Council on 30 November 2022, at pace and to meet the set milestones and success measures established.*

*Continue in your efforts to implement cultural change, particularly in relation to the relationships between officers and members, and that this will be an important continuing focus of the Independent Improvement Board.*

*Work with the Department as you deliver on your Best Value requirement to secure the financial recovery and return to financial sustainability through setting a balanced 3-year MTFP over the period to 2026/27.'*

4.6 As well as the activity contained in the notice, the Board also oversees progress by the Council towards implementing the actions arising from the Section 24 Statutory Recommendations of the External Auditor, dated 21 August 2023 and presented to Council on the 18 September 2023.

4.7 The Council are in ongoing contact with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide all required information to enable the department to complete its review of the Best Value Notice. This third progress report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board will also be a source of evidence for the department.

Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board reports

4.8 The Board reports every six months to Members on its view of the Council's progress against its improvement plan and the Section 24 action. Appended to this report at Appendix 1, is the Board's third formal report for member consideration. The next planned report of the Board will be to Council in October 2024.

#### Board views

4.9 The Board and the Council continue to be focussed on the following themes as we progress on the improvement journey:

- Delivering cultural change
- Ensuring financial strength
- Maintaining a strong focus and pace on transformation
- Planning for the transition to business-as-usual continuous improvement and good governance, post-improvement journey.

4.10 The Board recognises the significant amount of activity the council has undertaken around governance, culture and financial management since it last reported to Members in its Council report in March 2024. Its report sets out its views in detail on the current position in relation to each of the above themes. It is the Board's view that:

- 'there has been a significant improvement in fostering more positive relationships, behaviours, and organisational culture in the last 12 months. Examples of these efforts have included, though are not limited to: conducting survey with councillors and staff; establishment of thematic cross party working groups for councillors to increase cross party working and engagement; regular briefings for councillors; direct and regular engagement of the Mayor with council staff; and increased focus on staff recognition. These, along with other measures, are impacting positively on perceptions of councillor and officer relationships, which can be seen through anecdotal evidence, as well as in survey results.'
- 'There is greater visibility of leadership and improved relationships both internally and externally. There is evidence of a much stronger political will to change the Council. The recent decision to open a number of Deputy Chair positions on Committee appointments to opposition groups is a positive example of this, and there is appetite for further steps in this direction.'
- 'The 'guard rails' the Council is putting in place to develop and embed positive cultural change are positive'.

4.11 This is a very welcome assessment of the Council's progress in transforming its culture.

4.12 The Board is also assessing the Council's response to the financial challenges it has faced. Both the Board and the Council's Leadership Team and Executive recognise the scale of this challenge. The Board's report contains key messages around this including:

- 'The Board recognises the Council's significant efforts in reducing the overspend pressures within the 2023/24 budget. With a £11.5 million overspend at quarter

one, this was successfully reduced to £3.6 million by quarter four<sup>1</sup>. This reflects the impact of expenditure control measures and fast-tracking delivery of savings proposals and would have been lower if predicted capital receipts had been realised which would have enabled the Council to fund approved transformation costs from this resource. It will be important to build on this practice as the Council seeks to strengthen financial controls further. The Council also had a significant under achievement in its capital expenditure for the year. The inability to adequately programme manage this expenditure has an impact on the Council's ability to accurately predict future costs. The Council should consider ways of improving the financial and programme management of this key area.'

- 'one-off use of reserves, together with a request for exceptional financial support from the Government, provides time for Middlesbrough to develop its Transformation Programme to deliver further savings and achieve financial sustainability in the long term. It is imperative the Council delivers on this.' The Board is urging a relentless focus on the 24/25 budget '.
- '2024/25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): Since the last Board report there has been a significant amount of activity on measures designed to ensure the 2024/25 budget and savings within the MTFS are deliverable. The 2024/25 budget includes £13.9 million of savings/income generation, rising to £21 million by 2026/27. Generally, delivery is in the early stages, linked to the corporate transformation programme which became mobilised around the start of the financial year. With the fundamental link between transformation and savings, the Council needs to have clear controls in place to ensure delivery is on time. It is clear from the early transformation work that there will be challenges to ensure delivery during the 2024/25 financial year. It is particularly critical that the Council focuses on delivering transformation projects in Adults and Childrens Services in order to deliver savings. The Board would encourage the Council to develop alternative options to balance the budget in the event that some proposals are either delayed or do not materialise.'

### Next steps

- 4.13 This third report recommends that the Council continues its positive progress and pace, taking the required steps to ensure it considers the following, as part of its approach:
- Maintain a strong focus on embedding, driving and measuring outcomes to demonstrate lasting impact
  - Ensure the transformation programme delivers the required savings
  - Deliver a smooth leadership transition in recruitment of Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer posts
  - Deliver a communications plan that staff will fully understand, which clearly articulates the vision and values of the organisation.
- 4.14 The Council welcomes this ongoing support and the positive nature of the Board's report.

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

5.1 Not applicable.

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

***Financial (including procurement and Social Value)***

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

***Legal***

6.2 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

***Risk***

6.3 If the Council fails to respond effectively to the issues identified in the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and the Section 24 delivery plan, this will have a negative impact on the following strategic risks:

- Failure to meet a balanced budget.
- Risk of an unlawful decision by the Council.
- Corporate governance is not fit for purpose.

***Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion***

6.4 Not applicable.

***Climate Change / Environmental***

6.5 Not applicable.

***Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers***

6.6 Not applicable.

***Data Protection / GDPR***

6.7 Not applicable.

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

6.8 Not applicable.

**Appendices**

<b>1</b>	Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board: Third Update Report
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## Background papers

Reporting body	Report title	Date
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Lessons Learnt: Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council	5 Aug 2021
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Boho X: Draft findings from internal audit and proposed management response	6 Apr 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Audit Results Report 2020/21	22 Jul 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Statement of Accounts 2020/21	22 Jul 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Lessons learned: Best Value and external assurance within other councils.	22 Jul 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Commencing a corporate governance improvement journey	22 Jul 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Journey: CIPFA findings and next steps	19 Oct 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and progress update	30 Nov 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	External Audit: Value for Money Governance Update	5 Dec 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and progress update	18 Jan 2023
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Statement of Accounts 2020/2021	28 Apr 2023
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Auditor's Annual Report – Year Ended 31 March 2021	29 Jun 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Next Steps	5 Jul 2023
Council	Section 24 Statutory EY recommendations	18 Sep 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan	18 Sep 2023
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Lessons Learnt: Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council	5 Aug 2021
Audit Committee	Section 24 Report – Delivery and oversight arrangements	5 Oct 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	25 Oct 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	29 Nov 2023
Executive	First Quarterly Report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board	17 January 2024

Audit Committee	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	1 Feb 2024
Audit Committee	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	14 March 2024
Council	Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board: Third Report	27 March 2024

**Contact:**

Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Governance, Policy and Information  
[Ann-marie\\_johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Ann-marie_johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

**Middlesbrough Council Independent Improvement Advisory Board:  
Third Update Report  
June 2024**

**PURPOSE**

1. This is the third report of Middlesbrough's Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB).
2. As set out in its Terms of Reference, the MIIAB will provide a written report on its activity, quarterly and alternating between reporting to the Council's Executive and Full Council. In line with this timetable, this third quarterly report is provided to the Executive.

**BACKGROUND**

3. At the invitation of the Council, and in association with the Local Government Association, the MIIAB was established in October 2023. It is a non-statutory Board which brings together independent expertise from across the sector. It is part funded by the UK Government as part of the LGA's sector improvement programme.
4. The Board was established to provide oversight, support and challenge to the Council's improvement and transformation journey. This includes a focus on helping the Council ensures compliance with its Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999; particularly around:
  - 4.1. Cultural and governance issues, including those identified through the previous Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) review, progress towards implementing the actions arising from the Section 24 Statutory Recommendations of the External Auditor and any future external auditor reports.
  - 4.2. Financial sustainability, including a balanced medium-term financial strategy aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan.
5. It should be noted that matters around Children's Services remain the responsibility of the Middlesbrough's Children's Improvement Advisory Board.
6. Underpinning the Council's improvement journey is a formal 'Best Value Notice' issued by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 24 January 2023. Within the Notice, it is clear that a failure by the Council to demonstrate continuous improvement may be judged to contribute to Best Value failure and the Secretary of State will consider using their statutory powers as appropriate.
7. That Best Value Notice was extended by DLUHC on 30 January 2024, for six months. The Notice sets out the Department expectations that the Council to continue:
  - To work with the Independent Improvement Board.
  - Efforts to deliver against its agreed action plan, accepted at Full Council on 30 November 2022, at pace and to meet the set milestones and success measures established.

- Efforts to implement cultural change, particularly in relation to the relationships between officers and members.
  - To deliver on Best Value requirement to secure the financial recovery and return to financial sustainability through setting a balanced 3-year MTFP over the period to 2026/27.
8. The fact DHLUC extended the Best Value Notice for a further six months is significant. On the one hand this can be seen as a positive reflection of the improvement that the Council has made since the original notice was issued in January 2023. On the other hand, a six-month timeframe is relatively short. It therefore puts pressure on the Council to continue to deliver improvement at pace, if the Government is to be minded to remove the Best Value Notice in the summer, rather than extend or consider more formal forms of statutory intervention. At the time of writing, the timeframe for DLUHC confirming a decision on its review of the Best Value Notice is not known, and the impact of the 4 July General Election on this timeframe unclear.

#### **ACTIVITY TO DATE: OCTOBER APRIL – JUNE 2024**

9. Since the MIIAB's last update report in March 2024, there have been some changes to the MIIAB's operations, notably:
- 9.1. Introduction of an additional Board member with expertise in Childrens and Adults Services to provide additional 'People services' focus.
  - 9.2. Move to a 6 weekly meeting cycle to release council capacity away from supporting the MIIAB's and towards supporting its improvement work.
  - 9.3. Extension of the MIIAB's Term of Office until 31 March 2025 to align with the planned recruitment and transition to a permanent Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.
10. Since the MIIAB's last update report, the Board has met formally twice, as well as numerous other informal interactions. Through these formal meetings the MIIAB has engaged with key elected politicians and officers at Middlesbrough Council, including the: Mayor, Executive, Interim Chief Executive, Leadership Management Team (LMT), Head of Financial Planning and Support, Head of Governance, Policy and Information, Head of Strategy, Business and Customer, Head of Human Resources, and the Chair of Middlesbrough's Children's Executive Improvement Board (CEIB).
11. In addition to the Formal Board meetings, activity and support has included:
- 11.1. Meeting regularly (informally) to discuss and consider the progress the Council is making regarding its improvement journey.
  - 11.2. Holding a meeting with all Political Group Leaders.
  - 11.3. Holding a meeting with the Chair of Audit Committee, Chairs of Scrutiny Committees, and members of the Constitution and Members' Development Committee
  - 11.4. Providing an anonymised channel of communication for elected members.
  - 11.5. Observing public council committee meetings online, and council Transformation Board meetings.



- 11.6. Holding meetings with a cross section of the Council's key strategic external partners.
  - 11.7. Regular contact between the MIIAB Political Peer and Middlesbrough Mayor.
  - 11.8. Regular meetings between the MIIAB Chair and Middlesbrough's Interim Chief Executive.
  - 11.9. Regular meetings between the MIIAB Governance Lead and Middlesbrough's Director of Legal and Governance Services.
  - 11.10. Regular meetings between the MIIAB Finance Lead and Middlesbrough's Interim Director of Finance.
  - 11.11. Regular meetings between the MIIAB People Lead and Middlesbrough Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Services.
  - 11.12. LGA provided Organisational Redesign support through the Decision-Making Accountability (DMA) approach.
  - 11.13. LGA Peer Challenge of Cultural Services.
  - 11.14. Offering support, including mentoring, for members of the Executive and LMT, and around councillor development.
12. The MIIAB is grateful for the constructive and open way the Council, at all levels, has engaged with it.

## **OVERVIEW: THE COUNCIL'S IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY**

13. It is evident from what the MIIAB has heard and seen that there are many dedicated, and hard-working elected members and officers focused on moving the Council forward on its improvement journey.
14. As the Council moves from "recovery" through to "reset" and on to "delivery", the MIIAB considers that there are four main areas on which the Council needs to focus to move from where it is now, to a situation where it is financially stable, sound in terms of governance and culture and safely away from the risk of government intervention. In other words, to a sustainable, fit for purpose Council. This report is therefore structured around these four areas:
- 14.1. Culture change
  - 14.2. Financial strength
  - 14.3. Transformation
  - 14.4. Transition to business and usual
15. The MIIAB's second report in March 2024, identified several areas of focus for the Council to support it on its improvement journey. These were:

### **Cultural change**

- 15.1. Continue to focus on alignment, implementation and embedding of strategies so they translate into tangible change in practice.
- 15.2. Further learning and development support for elected members to progress

understanding of respective roles, responsibilities, and behaviours, including a programme of top team development for the LMT with the Executive.

- 15.3. Progress a revised and effective approach to members' enquiries.

#### **Financial strength**

- 15.4. Review approach to generation of Capital Receipts identified to support Transformation Programme to mitigate risks against non-delivery.
- 15.5. Further review the Council-funded element of the Capital Programme to reduce the impact of capital financing on revenue costs.
- 15.6. Further develop and maintain far stronger financial discipline.

#### **Transformation**

- 15.7. Strong focus on robustness of Transformation Programme business cases to ensure realistic and deliverable savings identification.
- 15.8. Develop internal capability and capacity so there can be a seamless transition when the transformation consultancy support pares away.

#### **Transition to normal**

- 15.9. Ensure reorganisation resulting from transformation aligns with management structure change, future operating model, and with appropriate capacity and capabilities in the right places.
- 15.10. Maintain pace and focus to deliver quickly and sustainably.

16. In the past three months, a significant amount of activity has taken place by Middlesbrough Council around governance, culture, and financial management. It is the view of the MIIAB that the Council has listened to the above suggestions and worked positively to ensure they are taken forward within their improvement plans. Examples of how the Council has listened to the Board include, though are not limited to:

- 16.1. The development and alignment of key cultural change strategies. Paragraph 19 provides more detail of the progress made, whilst also recognising that implementation of the strategies are work in progress and as such the Council is not yet able to evidence outcomes and the impact that these strategies have made.
- 16.2. Significant progress towards embedding strong project and programme management arrangements to support the delivery of the Council's Transformation Programme. Paragraph 29 provides further details on this.

17. The MIIAB recognises these positive steps to embrace the Board's feedback, and encouraging progress made against the actions set out in the Council's [Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Notice Action Plan](#) around governance, culture, and financial management. Progress is inevitably at an early stage and not yet embedded. It is therefore too early to be able to evidence delivery of lasting outcomes. Lasting and sustained improvement inevitably takes time and requires embedding. There is much still to do and significant financial risks remaining. The Council's financial position continues to be critical, with delivery of 2024/25 budget a key risk. The Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) provides a crucial one-off opportunity from which to drive financial sustainability in the long term. The Council must successfully deliver on

this. To do so, it can build on the positive green shoots to date. A strong focus on future leadership transition, strengthening of financial controls, and on outcomes (rather than processes) as measures of success will be important.

18. Given the critical point in the financial cycle, the Board has, so far, had a particularly strong focus on the Financial Recovery and Resilience workstream. Going forward it intends to increase its oversight of cultural change, as this is what will take the Council towards a sustainable and successful future.

## CULTURAL CHANGE

19. **Strategy implementation:** The development, implementation and delivery of key cultural change strategies, policies and training programmes has continued in the past three months. Since the last MIIAB report, the People Strategy has been launched which sets out to establish Middlesbrough Council as “an employer of choice for the best people to deliver improved outcomes for the community we serve”. Development has also commenced on a new communications plan for the Council aligned to the Mayor’s vision, Council Plan priorities, cultural and governance improvement and Transformation Programme. As mentioned in previous reports, the MIIAB commends Middlesbrough’s progress in putting in place core strategies that are key tenants of its improvement journey, whilst also cautioning that these are still relatively nascent. As with any organisation, cultural change takes time to become established so alignment, implementation and embedding of these strategies will be critical to ensure they translate into tangible change in practice. At this stage, as to be expected, it is too early to establish a picture of how these interdependences are embedding and delivering outcomes. The Board will have a focus on this going forward as changes continue to mature.

20. **Delivery and impact:** The Council has made solid progress to date in progressing the actions set out in its [Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Notice Action Plan](#) which is commendable. At the time of writing, the Council was reporting:

- 77 per cent of actions in its Corporate Governance Improvement Plan delivered, and 96 per cent on target to be delivered.
- 87 per cent of actions in response to the Section 24 Notice delivered, and 93 per cent on target to be delivered.

The Council has identified key milestones and measures of success for each tenant of its improvement plans so that it can understand and track impact linked to its actions. There are some examples of progress, for example the review of the constitution has been completed, financial and contract procedure rules have been reviewed, and there has also been a review of the oversight arrangements for the Middlesbrough Company. However as mentioned above, for many areas it is too soon for demonstrable impact and meaningful change to be evidenced, and some success measures are focused on process, as opposed to indices that demonstrate meaningful outcomes. Both the MIIAB and the Council acknowledge that further work is required to understand how these targets relate to tangible lasting outcomes. The MIIAB would encourage the Council to

have a stronger focus on measuring impact.

21. **Culture, relationships, and behaviours:** As mentioned in previous report, there has been a significant improvement in fostering more positive relationships, behaviours, and organisational culture in the last 12 months. Examples of these efforts have included, though are not limited to: conducting survey with councillors and staff; establishment of thematic cross party working groups for councillors to increase cross party working and engagement; regular briefings for councillors; direct and regular engagement of the Mayor with council staff; and increased focus on staff recognition. These, along with other measures, are impacting positively on perceptions of councillor and officer relationships, which can be seen through anecdotal evidence, as well as in survey results.
22. There is greater visibility of leadership and improved relationships both internally and externally. There is evidence of a much stronger political will to change the Council. The recent decision to open a number of Deputy Chair positions on Committee appointments to opposition groups is a positive example of this, and there is appetite for further steps in this direction. There is however further to go with improvements in culture remaining a work in progress, including with councillors. For example, whilst the number of the code of conduct complaints against Councillors misuse of social media has reduced, complaints are still being received which are of a complex nature and at times can be challenging.
23. The 'guard rails' the Council is putting in place to develop and embed positive cultural change are positive and the MIIAB are keen to explore further in coming months the impact of the steps taken by the Council to address the cultural issues raised by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) [independent culture and governance report](#) on its organisational culture.
24. **Councillor Gateway:** A significant amount of activity has taken place in recent months to introduce a dedicated system for councillors to formally raise - and report - enquiries and service requests. This was in response to frustrations from councillors about the responsiveness and adequacy of responses to councillor queries. Activity has been user focused, codesigned with councillors, and supported by strong communications. The project – completed at impressive pace - went live on the target launch date of 1 July 2024. The MIIAB heard that feedback from councillors to date had been positive. The MIIAB were able to hear some of that feedback, first hand, from some opposition councillors. MIIAB are pleased that the Council will be reporting on user feedback on a quarterly basis and look forward to reviewing this in due course.

## FINANCIAL STRENGTH

25. **2023/24 Budget and Outturn:** As mentioned in previous MIIAB reports, it is evident that the Council acknowledges the scale of the financial challenge. It has continued to work hard over the past three months to improve the 2023/24 budgetary position. The Board recognises the Council's significant efforts in reducing the overspend pressures within the 2023/24 budget. With a £11.5 million overspend at quarter one, this was

successfully reduced to £3.6 million by quarter four<sup>1</sup>. This reflects the impact of expenditure control measures and fast-tracking delivery of savings proposals and would have been lower if predicted capital receipts had been realised which would have enabled the Council to fund approved transformation costs from this resource. It will be important to build on this practice as the Council seeks to strengthen financial controls further. The Council also had a significant under achievement in its capital expenditure for the year. The inability to adequately programme manage this expenditure has an impact on the Council's ability to accurately predict future costs. The Council should consider ways of improving the financial and programme management of this key area.

26. The £3.6 million overspend at 2023/24 financial year end, is largely reflective of financial pressures in Adults, Children's, Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) and Waste services. This shortfall was bridged from reserves. The combined balance on unrestricted usable reserves was therefore £12.1 million at 31 March 2024 (9.5% of 2023/24 net revenue budget of £126.4 million). This was below the opening combined balance of £15.6 million at 31 March 2023. This one-off use of reserves, together with a request for exceptional financial support from the Government, provides time for Middlesbrough to develop its Transformation Programme to deliver further savings and achieve financial sustainability in the long term. It is imperative the Council delivers on this. The MIIAB notes that although the outturn report showed 'one-off' variances totalling a £5.1 million net favourable variance, there were 'ongoing' adverse variances totalling a £8.7 million. This indicates that there are significant ongoing cost pressures that although included in the 2024/25 budget will need to be kept under review during 2024/25. The Board would encourage continued – and relentless - focus on this.
27. **2024/25 Budget and MTFs:** Since the last Board report there has been a significant amount of activity on measures designed to ensure the 2024/25 budget and savings within the MTFs are deliverable. The 2024/25 budget includes £13.9 million of savings/income generation, rising to £21 million by 2026/27. Generally, delivery is in the early stages, linked to the corporate transformation programme which became mobilised around the start of the financial year. With the fundamental link between transformation and savings, the Council needs to have clear controls in place to ensure delivery is on time. It is clear from the early transformation work that there will be challenges to ensure delivery during the 2024/25 financial year. It is particularly critical that the Council focuses on delivering transformation projects in Adults and Childrens Services in order to deliver savings. The Board would encourage the Council to develop alternative options to balance the budget in the event that some proposals are either delayed or do not materialise. (See Paragraph 30 for further details).
28. **External Audit:** Like many councils, Middlesbrough's external auditor providers will be changing effective from 2024/25 financial year and has again in common with other Councils unaudited accounts for years preceding 2023/24. The impact of this is that the action taken by the Council in response to the external auditor's 2023 Section 24 Notice will not be subject to formal review by either the outgoing auditors, or incoming ones. Although the incoming auditors will have regard to the Section 24 notice. This set of circumstances is not within the Council's control and is reflective of wider challenges with local government external audit environment. The Council are committed to external scrutiny and are engaging positively with both sets of auditors and national

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partners to seek to secure external audit assurance across its activities. It is disappointing that there has been ongoing slippage in the issuing of the Value for Money report due from the auditors for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

**29. Financial Management:** The Council commissioned CIPFA to undertake a review of its financial management practices using the CIPFA Financial Management Model as a framework for the review. The review gave the Council an overall score of two out of five. The review, however, identified that there are areas of significant weakness that the Council will need to address. In addition, the report acknowledges that there are some recent areas of improvement and a positive direction of travel. The Board is pleased that the Council plans to adopt the action plan included in the review as part of its overall improvement programme. This will be important to ensure that good financial management practice is embedded throughout the Council, as well as that the staffing structure within the Finance function is enhanced to ensure that it is fully fit for purpose with suitably, experienced qualified permanent staff.

## TRANSFORMATION

**30. Operationalisation:** The Transformation Programme has developed at pace. There are clear governance structures in place with political oversight, and some projects underway. The speed and robustness with which this has been stepped up is commendable. The MIIAB recently observed the Corporate Transformation Board and two thematic Transformation Board meetings. The MIIAB was impressed by the project and programme management arrangements in place, the strong financial focus taken, approach to risk mitigation, the interdependencies between the different projects and impact of broader council services such as customer and ICT. The Board noted that there was a good blend of representation between service and corporate representatives, and a clear focus by exception on projects that were highlighted as 'amber' or 'red'. Across the whole Transformation Programme the Council is in the early stages of change, and not yet at delivery. As a result, there is a risk (as noted at paragraph 27) that savings may not be delivered in year to support the budget, risking pushing further budget pressures downstream and beyond 2024/25. To mitigate this risk, it is imperative that the Council develops a pipeline of alternative savings or income generation opportunities that are ready to implement in the event that savings proposals within the transformation programme do not materialise.

**31. People Services:** Children's and Adult Services will be important planks within the Transformation Programme, being the largest elements of the Council's budget, and with evidence that elements of these services are spending more than those in comparable councils. The Board dedicated time in its April and May meetings to gain a deeper understanding and provide critical challenges to transformation plans in these two services. Whilst transformation is now mobilised and underway, this will need to be driven at pace to address the budget challenges that the MIIAB notes at paragraph 27 to this report.

**32.** The new leadership team in Children's Services is committed to delivering transformation to reduce demand and review the relatively high numbers of children in the Council's care. Progress is governed through the Children's Service's Improvement

Board, which is chaired by an independent DfE advisor. The Director of Children's Services and Assistant Directors welcome challenge and are receptive to working with partners to learn from best national practice to assist with the transformation of services. There is an increased focus on delivering services of the highest quality and to reducing the cost of placements so the service delivers good value for money. A recent SEND Ofsted inspection commended the Council and its partners for the very good services being delivered to children with special educational needs and disabilities.

33. There is experienced leadership in Adult Services where areas for transformation have been identified and a plan to deliver these developed. There is strong commitment to transforming adult social care services to both deliver savings but at the same time improve the lives of adults in Middlesbrough. Senior leaders have reached out to other councils to learn from best practice across the country, for example Derby, and are determined to explore the potential of artificial intelligence to deliver transformation. It will be necessary to implement national best practice to assist with the transformation of adult services in Middlesbrough. An external financial benchmarking review has been carried out to assist the service to identify areas where transformation will potentially have the greatest financial impact. It is recognised some work will take longer to embed and deliver cost reductions but the commitment remains nonetheless. It will be essential health partners are fully involved in delivering transformation plans relating to an asset based and reablement, delivery approach. The transformation plan will be governed by senior leaders within the Council, Hospital Trust and Integrated Care Board (ICB), with additional external challenge and support.

## TRANSITION TO BUSINESS AS USUAL

34. **Organisational design and stable leadership:** The Council has been in the process of designing a future organisational operating model for some time. In recent months there has been some activity, with the first phase of its review of its organisational design structure has taken place. The MIIAB encourages the Council to accelerate the pace of the development of its target operating model. In parallel to this, a timetable for recruitment to a permanent Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer has also been established. It is anticipated that both these roles will have been recruited to and have appointees in post by March 2025. It will be important to ensure that appointees to key roles – particularly these statutory officer roles – share the Council's vision and focus on continuing the improvement journey rather than promoting a change of direction.
35. These changes will be a critical moment for the Council, with organisational restructure bringing both risks and opportunities. As the Council looks to establish a fit for purpose Senior Leadership structure for its future operating model, it will be important that there is also a focus on ensuring changes do not unintentionally destabilise Middlesbrough's change journey.
36. The Board would encourage the Council to:
- 36.1. Have a clear focus going forward on leadership transition to ensure a smooth transition and mitigate risk.
  - 36.2. Be mindful of the need to sequence structural change activity in a manner that does not risk destabilising the Council's improvement journey.
  - 36.3. Have a strong focus on leadership development so that both the Executive and Leadership Management Team (LMT) are supported to lead the organisation



through change. The Board are pleased that the Council has developed a draft leadership development training programme for this which is currently being consulted on.

- 36.4. Secure buy-on from elected members, staff, and partners for planned changes to bring them on this change journey.

**37. Vision and partnership working:** In its last report, the MIAB welcomed the establishment of a vision for the Council articulated through the Mayor's priorities for the Town, and vision for Middlesbrough as a place and as an organisation. This vision does not however appear to be well understood by partners. The Council has rightly spent the last 12 to 18 months internally focused on the Council and its improvement journey from an internal perspective. As it continues to make positive headway on its improvement journey, the Council should consider looking externally as well. Partnership working is a fundamental enabler for any council – not just Middlesbrough - to be able to deliver sustainable services, and tackle challenges they and their communities face. This is equally true for Middlesbrough in the context of delivering outcomes across its Corporate Improvement Plan. The Board in recent months encouraged the Council to take time to share and articulate its vision to partners to support delivery of shared ambitions. In time, it should also progress its plans to develop and implement a clear place-based plan with appropriate partnership governance structures.

38. It is welcome that the Council has responded to this by sharing its vision for Middlesbrough as set out in the Council plan with all key partners, as well as communicating feedback from the MIAB's session with partners. Action has now also commenced to develop a partnership strategy, with partners invited to a series of sessions over the summer to co-produce this.

## LOOKING FORWARD

39. The Board would encourage Middlesbrough Council to continue its positive progress and not to take its foot off the gas in terms of pace and focus, and to consider the points raised by the Board, particularly in relation to:

- 39.1. **Outcomes and Impact:** Having a strong focus on embedding driving and measuring outcomes that demonstrate lasting impact, particularly around embedding cultural change.
- 39.2. **Financial Sustainability and Capability:** Firstly, ensuring that the Transformation Programme develops and delivers, on time, the savings required to support financial recovery. In the event that transformation savings cannot be delivered on time, the Council needs to have in place a robust plan to deliver alternative savings. Secondly, strengthening fit for purpose financial management capacity and capability in order to embed strong financial discipline.
- 39.3. **Transition:** Strong focus on leadership transition and ensuring changes do not unintentionally destabilise Middlesbrough's change journey.
- 39.4. **Communications and engagement:** Use the Council's Communications Plan as the mechanism for communicating and engaging with staff in order to embed



understanding of the vision and values for the Council, highlight the corporate importance of the Transformation Programme, and to deliver sustainable cultural change.

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Education and Partnerships
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Youth Justice Plan 2024/25
<b>Report for:</b>	Information
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Safe and resilient communities
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	Report is for information only
<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	Decision made by council

**Proposed decision(s)**

**To note** that Council approves the South Tees Youth Justice Service Youth Justice Plan for 2024/25.

**Executive summary**

The Youth Justice Plan is a legally required strategic document as set down by Section 40 the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and by National Standards for Youth Justice. Section 40 states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with partners, to formulate a youth justice plan which outlines how youth justice services in the area are to be provided and funded.

The plan provides an overview of the work of the Youth Justice Service over the previous year, including an overview of performance against the 3 main Youth Justice National Indicators:

- First Time Entrants
- Use of Custody
- Re-offending

The plan also outlines the priorities for South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS) in 2024/25, and how those priorities will be achieved.

**TO NOTE:** Youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'.

## **Purpose**

1. To seek approval of Full Council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. The STYJS Youth Justice plan 2024/25 (attached) requires approval by full council.

## **Recommendations**

2. That Council approves the South Tees Youth Justice Service Youth Justice Plan for 2024/25.

## **Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

3. In preparing this Youth Justice Plan a comprehensive consultation process was entered into and this included consultation with staff, partners, and young people. The purpose of the consultation was to share the plans and service priorities, as proposed by the STYJS management team and to secure the views of staff and partners on these proposals. This consultation ensured that all key stakeholders had a voice in the plan, and the actions detailed in this plan are owned by all.
4. The Youth Justice Board requires approval of the document as part of the grant terms and conditions. Failure to approve this plan would result in the council not fulfilling its statutory obligations and the service not receiving funds from the YJB to provide a statutory service.

## **Background and relevant information**

5. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) have issued a framework which Youth Justice Services must use when designing their plans and this is detailed in the YJB document Youth Justice Plans: guidance for youth justice services. This will assist the YJB to gather the information and data contained within the plan to support their oversight of services, offering more consistency of structure and content. This document allows for the YJS to present the plan covering all key areas of the work of the service, affording the YJS the opportunity to highlight achievements over the past year, challenges faced by the service in the delivery of services and to offer the scope for new priorities for the coming year.
6. YJS Management Boards should govern and own the process of producing the local youth justice plan; it is their opportunity to collectively shape the direction of the delivery of youth justice so that it best meets the needs of the locality, children, families, victims and communities. Opportunities for wider participation, significantly where children and their families can themselves shape and influence the delivery of your service, are also strongly encouraged. STYJS Management Board has overseen the production of this plan and approved its content. The plan will be governed by the STYJS Management Board which meets on a quarterly basis. The YJB Regional Advisor is a member of the STYJS Management Board and therefore has oversight of the progress against priority areas.
7. The priorities identified by STYJS to support the development of the service during 2024-2025 have been designed to reflect issues affecting the service at a local, regional and national level. Exploitation and Serious Violence are key issues and a significant

challenge not only for STYJS but across the partnership. Within the last year STYJS has built links with the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV), ensured staff have undertaken Trauma Informed Practice training to effectively support the needs of young people who commit serious violence offences and secured funding to introduce Custody Navigators to engage with young people in police custody. The challenge for STYJS during 2024-2025 is to ensure that services do not work in isolation to address such issues but engage with co-ordinated strategies to engage and support those young people at risk.

8. The priorities to support ongoing service development are:
- Priority 1: Prevention and Diversion- To further develop opportunities for prevention and early intervention with young people and their families.
  - Priority 2: Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation- To further develop practice to ensure that STYJS can respond appropriately and effectively to the needs of young people involved in or at risk of serious violence and/or exploitation.
  - Priority 3: Preparation for Inspection- To ensure that STYJS are fully prepared for the challenge of a potential HMIP Inspection during 2024-25.
  - Priority 4: Education, Training and Employment- To ensure that all young people supervised by STYJS have access to opportunities for Education, Training and Employment.
  - Priority 5: Resettlement- To ensure that young people are effectively supported upon resettlement to the community.
  - Priority 6: Restorative Practice- To establish a Restorative Culture in STYJS which supports effective work with the young people and communities we serve.
9. The Youth Justice Plan is underpinned by a Service Development Plan which sets out how each priority will be delivered. The Service Development Plan is attached to the YJ Plan as Appendix 4. The Service Development Plan is monitored on a monthly basis by the YJS management team who are responsible for the operational delivery of the YJ Plan. Progress against the Service Development Plan is also presented at the STYJS Management Board on a quarterly basis to provide assurance to Board members.

### **Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**

10. Do nothing – the Youth Justice Plan is a legally required strategic document as set down by Section 40 the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and by National Standards for Youth Justice. Not having a plan would result in the Youth Justice Board withholding all of the grant and therefore this is not a viable option.
11. Service priorities for 2024/25 were carefully considered by key stake holders, staff and partners and have been included in the current document. There were no other priorities put forward for consideration. The council can be assured that progress against priorities are monitored by the STYJS Management Board on a quarterly basis as is progress of the delivery plan.

### **Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

#### ***Financial (including procurement and Social Value)***

12. South Tees Youth Justice Service grant allocation for 2023/24 was £1,035,400. The grant allocation for 2024/25 has not been announced at the time of writing this report. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has notified STYJS there will be a delay in the announcement of a grant allocation for 2024/25 until after the general election. Advice received from the YJB is for services to set their budgets using last year's grant figure as an indicative figure.
13. As a statutory duty, local authorities are required to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. This duty is also outlined as a requirement of the terms and conditions of grant. The provision of youth justice services in Middlesbrough are set out in the South Tees Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 (Appendix1).
14. There is a statutory and legal obligation for South Tees Youth Justice Service to provide Full Council sign-off. Failure to do so could impact on receipt of the core grant (not being distributed or delayed) due to Full Council sign-off being part of the grant terms and conditions.
15. South Tees YJS grant from YJB for 2023/24 increased by £44,120 (4.5%) from 2022/23. As stated above, the grant allocation will not be announced for 2024/25 until after the general election. However, a reduction is not anticipated. The Service at budget setting expects to spend a similar amount to the previous year with inflation expected to fall, all things remaining equal around other costs to the service.
16. Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Hartlepool Local Authority put in income contributions along with Police and Probation 'in-kind' contributions to resources to the STYJS. Currently there are also additional grants that are being utilised to enhance the service. The YJB grant covers part of the structure. The financial risk, in particular, is around remand placements, is managed within the service finances. If this remand budget became overspent the STYJS Management Board would need to report and request funds from MBC and Redcar and Cleveland LA for the statutory Looked After provision. However, there has been no overspend in this budget in over 5 years. There is a financial risk within the terms and conditions of the grant, that Middlesbrough as lead partner, requires to submit this annual plan and is signed off along with commitments from partner agencies. Budgetary controls include monthly and quarterly budget monitoring and partnership reporting which would identify any overspend and remedial action, and the STYJS Management Board would need to enter discussions with partners to seek a solution within its own resources.
17. The table below shows forecasted income and expenditure for STYJS in 2024/25;

<b>2024/25 STYJS budget</b>	<b>£</b>
Forecast expenditure for the period 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025	1,547,600

Income - YJB Grant (assumed as per 2023/24 level – see para. 6.1)	(1,035,400)
Income - Police & Crime Commissioner	(80,000)
Income - Hartlepool Borough Council	(5,000)
Income - Redcar Borough Council	(200,000)
Income - MBC General Fund	(227,200)
Forecast net position 2024/25 at 31/3/25	0

**Legal**

18. Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services as per Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

**Risk**

19. The proposed plan will positively impact on the strategic risk that the “Council could fail to work effectively with partners”. It will do this by putting in place a plan which sets out how the Council and its partners will work effectively together to reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour in the town.

**Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion**

20. Not applicable

**Climate Change / Environmental**

21. Not applicable

**Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers**

22. South Tees Youth Justice Service has strong partnership arrangements with children’s services at strategic and operational levels and engage at a managerial level at a number of multi-agency forums designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people. Reducing the number of Children who are Looked After in the criminal justice system is a key priority for STYJS. The service work proactively with those young people who experience significant vulnerabilities including children in local authority care. Work with looked after children is in line with the national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers 2018.



**Data Protection**

23. STYJS works to all Middlesbrough Council policies and procedures including data protection. The service has a Privacy Notice in place explaining how data is collected and how it is used.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Approval of the Plan	Kay Dargue	10.6.24

**Appendices**

1	South Tees Youth Justice Plan 2024-25
2	<a href="#">Youth justice plans: guidance for youth justice services</a>
3	

**Background papers**

Body	Report title	Date

**Contact:**

**Email:** [Kay\\_Dargue@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Kay_Dargue@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

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# **Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025**

***Building bridges and changing the course for  
young people***

<b>Service</b>	<b>South Tees Youth Justice Service</b>
<b>Service Manager/Lead</b>	<b>Kay Dargue Head of Partnerships</b>
<b>Chair of the YJS Board</b>	<b>Rob Brown Director of Education and Partnerships-Middlesbrough</b>

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## FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE YJS BOARD

I am delighted to present the South Tees Youth Justice Plan for 2024-25. The last 12 months have certainly been busy with an increase in interventions delivered and significant progress made against the priorities from last year. This plan outlines performance and achievements, areas for development, and risks and challenges going forwards along with describing some exciting new projects such as the opening of the new child custody suite, an innovative project the service have been heavily involved in developing with Cleveland Police and partners.

In addition to Turnaround, the Service has also rolled out other key projects in 2023-24 including Immediate Justice known locally as 'Making Good' in conjunction with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Custody Navigator Project in conjunction with the Cleveland Violence Reduction Unit (CURV) bringing support to young people in police custody at the earliest stage. Although in its infancy, the Navigators project has already supported many young people from across the Cleveland area and continues to receive positive feedback from partners. These projects have naturally brought about recruitment of staff and resulted in the need for increased management capacity and an internal restructure to cope with the new demands of all three projects. In addition, the service has increased the provision of speech and language therapy which has resulted in more children receiving timely support as it is required.

The service has embraced changes brought about by the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) new performance and oversight framework, which brought in a new set of national key performance indicators. Furthermore, the service has engaged in consultation events held by HMIP in respect of the new inspection framework due to be published later this year to ensure we can be in a strong position to align quickly to any new standards required.

Violence and exploitation continue to be a serious concern in our locality. Consequently, this remains a service priority this year along with resettlement, Education, Training and Employment, and establishing a restorative culture to support effective work with the communities we serve. As Turnaround draws to a close, the service is committed to continuing with a prevention offer to ensure there are opportunities for our young people to engage in early intervention to prevent future contact with the criminal justice system.

Looking to the future, there are a number of challenges ahead, as funding streams for key projects come to an end and we continue to adapt to the complexities and needs of our young people. The future will present further challenges and uncertainty over budgets and the direction to be taken by the new government. However, the service continues to forward plan looking for new opportunities, innovation, and transformation, and I have every confidence the service will continue to adapt to the changing landscape and have a positive impact on young people who come into contact with the service along with the communities it serves.



Rob Brown

Director of Education and Partnerships, Middlesbrough Council

Chair of the South Tees Youth Justice Board

## INTRODUCTION, VISION AND STRATEGY

Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement a Youth Justice Plan setting out:

- How Youth Justice Services in their area are to be provided and funded
- How the Youth Justice Service (YJS) will be composed and funded
- How it will operate and what functions it will carry out
- The priorities for the YJS

In addition to the production of a Youth Justice Plan, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a range of other statutory duties on YJS, these include:

- Complying with National Standards for Youth Justice
- Compliance with requirements of Sections 38-40 of the Act

**South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS) is a statutory multi-agency partnership including:**

- Middlesbrough Council
- Redcar and Cleveland Council
- Cleveland Police
- Probation Service
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

**The strategic purpose of STYJS is:**

- To reduce first time entrants to the youth justice system
- To prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people
- Reduce the use of custody for young people (both sentenced and remanded)

**This Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 will provide:**

- An overview of STYJS performance and achievements during 2023-2024
- An overview of service developments during 2023-2024
- Details of STYJS structure and governance arrangements
- An overview of the principal partnerships STYJS engages in to support the delivery of services
- Assurance to the YJB in relation to STYJS plans for the use of our YJB Grant Funding
- Details of the principal areas for service improvement and development during 2024-2025
- Identification of any potential risks and challenges to the future delivery of Youth Justice Services
- STYJS strategies to mitigate against these risks

In addition, the Youth Justice Plan will also demonstrate how we intend to align our service priorities with those of the YJB Strategic Plan. The STYJS Plan will show how through our strategic priorities, we intend to respond to the YJB Strategic Objectives, with work to focus on how we engage with the communities we serve, how we promote the child first principle across all areas of our work and how we challenge all forms of disproportionality regarding young people in the Youth Justice system.

## The Principles and Values that underpin our work

STYJS embraces the YJB child first, ethos and this approach has been used to inform the values and principles which underpin our work with young people and their families. STYJS aims to work in partnership with young people, their families and all other services who are engaged with the young person to achieve effective and lasting outcomes through engagement, challenge and support. To achieve positive interaction the following values will inform and direct our work:

- Promoting engagement with the young person and their family to ensure their voice is heard in YJS processes
- All young people will be engaged as individuals with all interventions designed to meet their needs
- Young people will be challenged to take responsibility for their behaviours to protect the public and the communities we serve
- Intervening early to divert a young person away from crime and anti-social behaviour and prevent offending
- Ensuring a focus on the whole family in particular in the work of Turnaround and Prevention activities
- Working in partnership with other agencies to maximise opportunity and ensure access to services for all young people
- Identify and overcome any barriers to accessing information that can inform and guide our work
- Promote the rights of victims and ensure they have a voice in our work
- Engage with victims to ensure that they are satisfied with the services provided to them
- Provide high quality services that are effective, efficient and provide value for money

## Our Vision

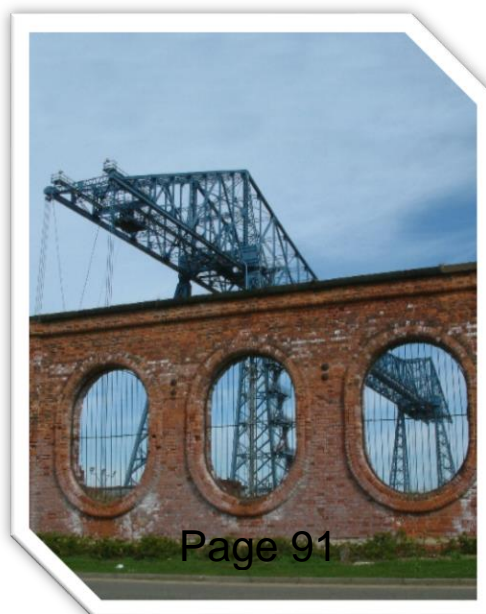
In line with the principles detailed above STYJS has established the following vision for the service, and this is shared by all staff, partners and stakeholders.

*“Building bridges and changing the course for young people”*

In addition, our mission statement has been designed to reflect the approaches taken by the YJS in our work with young people:

*“Working together to create a safe, positive community to allow children and young people opportunities to achieve their full potential whilst reducing offending behaviour”*

Discussions with young people and staff places significant emphasis on the word ‘opportunity’ and young people in particular are passionate about how their work with the YJS has created new opportunities for them.



## South Tees Youth Justice Service Practice Standards

The corporate governance for STYJS is provided by Middlesbrough Council. The STYJS sits within the Education and Partnerships section of Middlesbrough Children's Services. In partnership with Children's Services STYJS has designed a set of practice standards to inform how we model our behaviours and how we seek to deliver our work with young people to ensure that we place young people at the centre of everything we do. These practice standards are intended to direct the work of frontline staff and managers and detail a range of responsibilities.

The Practice Standards were revised in January 2024 to take into account changes in practice and shared areas of responsibilities across Children's Services and the YJS.

The practice standards identify the shared staff responsibilities as follows:

- I will make sure the young person and their care giver fully understands and is included at all stages of the Criminal Justice Process.
- I will always use language the young person and their care giver understands to explain what I and other services are doing in relation to the police, the courts and their Orders.
- I will always see the young person first and the offender second, conversations will be open and honest around both risk management and safety.
- I will ensure a young person's voice is part of the assessment and build on their strengths by involving them in the decisions around interventions and setting achievable targets.
- I will ensure I consider the victims of offences in our work and plans with a young person, enabling them to understand the impact of the offence on those harmed and offer the opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and repair harm.
- The YJS role is one of support and guidance, we are here to help young people make sense of their journey, whilst trying to repair harm and change behaviours, using a restorative and educational approach.
- I will work with outside agencies that are best suited to the young person's needs and assist young people in accessing and building supportive/positive relationships which can last past their time with our service.
- I will offer support to parents/carers, ensuring they have been referred to appropriate services whilst keeping them involved and updated on their child's progress.
- I will review plans regularly with young people and reflect on what is and what is not working well. We will celebrate young people's progress and success, whilst ensuring robust exit strategies are in place so to encourage desistance and progression in their lives.
- All work will be completed/delivered in a timely manner and in line with the standards set out by the STYJS Board, YJB and HMIP.
- Support will continue for the young person throughout their time with the service and interventions will continue to be delivered in a non-judgmental and safe environment.
- I will make informed decisions around risk, safeguarding and enforcement to ensure the victims and general public are protected as well as safeguarding the young people we supervise.

The practice standards identify the manager's Responsibilities as follows:

- I will provide monthly supervision with a focus on staff wellbeing as well as case supervision
- I will Quality Assure work in line with STYJS policies and procedures and provide constructive feedback highlighting both areas for development and areas of good practice



- I will ensure staff are given opportunities to engage with continuous professional development
- I will encourage staff to become involved in the ongoing development and progression of STYJS to ensure we continue to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we work with.

In addition to the above in order to respond to shared responsibilities for young people in custody the following Practice Standards have been added to reflect the joined up approach to supporting young people through resettlement by the YJS and Children's Services:

Responsibilities of the Youth Justice Service worker:

- I will work collaboratively with YJS and social care and ensure I continue my role as corporate parent to the young person whilst they are in custody, I will arrange meetings and undertake joint visits where appropriate and ensure all parties each other's responsibilities, including who is visiting and when
- I will visit the young person in the court custody setting after they have been remanded/sentenced to ensure that they understand what will happen next and that all important information is passed onto the secure placement they will be transferred to (secure children's home or young offenders' institution).
- I will visit the young person in the custodial setting within 2 weeks of them being sentenced to complete their initial sentence plan or remand review. I will ensure that the young person's parent/carer is supported to attend this meeting.
- I will visit the young person once a month whilst they are in custody
- I will begin preparations for the young person's release from custody 3 months prior to the release date and ensure the young person's pathway plan is fully updated. I will explain the licence conditions and what this will mean for the young person.

Responsibilities of the Social Worker:

- I will provide you £10 per week to support getting essential items whilst in custody
- I will visit every 4 weeks and review your pathway plan; this will include an exit strategy from custody
- I will ensure you have appropriate accommodation upon release and support in place to set up home

Responsibilities of Managers in both services:

- I will ensure at least 3 monthly joint supervision between social care and the youth justice service.
- I will carry out monthly supervision in between.

## **Consultation with Staff and Partners in the Preparation of the 2024-2025 Youth Justice Plan**

In preparing this Youth Justice Plan a comprehensive consultation process was entered into and this included consultation with staff and partners and young people. The purpose of the consultation was to share the plans and service priorities, as proposed by the STYJS management team and also to secure the views of staff and partners on these proposals. This consultation has ensured that all key stakeholders have had a voice in the plan and the actions detailed in this plan are owned by all.

YJS staff supported the service priorities and agreed that these reflect the issues and factors which impact on their work with young people. Staff felt that there had been some significant successes achieved by the service during 2023-2024 including:

- The introduction of the Custody Navigators, Turnaround and Making Good programme which have contributed to increasing our knowledge and understanding of the young people referred to the YJS
- The blending of the work across all areas of the service which have come together to ensure that increasing workloads can be effectively managed in the face of reduced resources
- The development of new Reparation schemes to broaden the experience of young people
- The support offered by the 'specialist' areas of the service to the work of case managers, including the input of SALT, Transitions, Police and the ETE staff
- The extension of 'positive' activities for young people including the holiday programmes and group based activity

YJS staff identified further areas of development which would further enhance our work with young people:

- Further extending the resources available to case working staff to respond effectively to the increasingly complex needs of some of the young people we work with
- Re-establish links with CAMHS and the Trauma Informed approach
- Further develop the scope of whole family working in the prevention service
- Extend the scope of group activity to focus on key issues impacting on young people eg Education and Employment, Substance Use, serious violent offending and use of weapons etc.

STYJS partners were consulted during the STYJS Executive Board Meeting in January 2024, and the service priorities detailed below were presented to board members for their consideration. Board members supported the service priorities presented by the YJS Management Team. Board members stressed the importance of Education, Training and Employment as a key priority citing this as one of the most important factors to prevent young people offending and the need to ensure STYJS is aligned with other strategic priorities including those of the YJB.

### **2024-2025 STYJS Service Priorities:**

The priorities identified by STYJS to support the development of the service during 2024-2025 have been designed to reflect issues which affect the service at a local, regional and national level. Consideration has also been given to factors impacting on the young people, families and the communities we serve to ensure that we can affect positive change in these areas.

The priorities to support ongoing service development will include:

- Priority 1: Prevention and Diversion- To further develop opportunities for prevention and early intervention with young people and their families.
- Priority 2: Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation- To further develop practice to ensure that STYJS can respond appropriately and effectively to the needs of young people involved in or at risk of serious violence and/or exploitation.
- Priority 3: Preparation for Inspection- To ensure that STYJS are fully prepared for the challenge of a potential HMIP Inspection during 2024-25.
- Priority 4: Education, Training and Employment- To ensure that all young people supervised by STYJS have access to opportunities for Education, Training and Employment.
- Priority 5: Resettlement- To ensure that young people are effectively supported upon resettlement to the community.
- Priority 6: Restorative Practice- To establish a Restorative Culture in STYJS which supports effective work with the young people and communities we serve.

## **THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS) delivers Youth Justice Services within the local authority areas of Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. Communities in both local authorities are impacted upon by a range of social, economic and environmental factors. Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland have been identified as two of the most deprived local authorities, as detailed in the

English Indices of Deprivation 2019 with communities being affected by high levels of unemployment, poor health outcomes, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, as well as challenges around educational access, inclusion and attainment. Both local authorities also experience higher than average numbers of children in the care of the Local Authority and significant pressure and demands placed on Children's Services and Early Help provision to support families in need. These communities have also been identified as experiencing higher than average issues of violent offending and offending where weapons have been used.

The geography and cultural make-up of the area presents further challenges. Redcar and Cleveland has large rural communities spanning across 96 square miles of rural land which can be isolated and transport links can be challenging. Middlesbrough is a compact urban community with a diverse ethnic and cultural make up, with large Asian and Eastern European communities. Young people face significant challenges in each local authority area and these impact on their behaviours and influence outcomes.



The behaviours of young people continue to be highlighted by negative factors including increasingly violent offending and the use of weapons. In addition, there are hot spot areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour by large groups of young people across both local authority areas, some of which receives national media attention. As a challenge to such behaviours the Cleveland Police area is a designated pilot area for the Immediate Justice initiative, the locally named 'Making Good' programme, and this offers opportunities to offer early intervention and prevention activity, delivering swift and restorative responses to those young people engaged in crime and anti-social behaviour in our communities.

The Cleveland Police area is also a designated Violence Reduction Unit area and the three Youth Justice Services in the Cleveland area have played a significant role with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to ensure that young people and early intervention and prevention are priorities for the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). Examples of such work include the development of a trauma informed, youth custody suite in Middlesbrough Police HQ supported by the introduction of Custody Navigators into the Middlesbrough Police Custody Suite, a high-profile project for CURV. The role of the Custody Navigators is to promote engagement and support young people during the 'reachable and teachable' moment offered by their presence in police custody.

STYJS has evolved in recent years to respond to changing local circumstances, social and economic factors affecting young people. The current service model is a traditional YJS model with operational teams delivering case management in each local authority. The operational teams are supported by a Resource Team which includes Restorative Practice, Education, Training and Employment Support, SALT, Preventions, performance management, service planning, policy and procedures and back-office support in the form of admin and information management services. The rationale behind this is to ensure that the service can meet the challenges placed by users and changes to legislation with a 'fit for purpose' structure which supports high quality service delivery but flexible enough to adapt to changing priorities. Central to this is the recognition that our staff will need to be well equipped with

the knowledge and skills to support a wide variety of service user needs and the risks posed by an increasingly complex and challenging cohort of young people.

The service structure has been enhanced further during 2023-2024 with the introduction of Turnaround, Making Good and the Custody Navigators and such projects have brought new staff and operational delivery structures which have also necessitated further investment in our management structure to support these teams.

### **The profile of young people who engaged with STYJS in 2023-2024**

During 2023-2024 STYJS delivered a total of 646 interventions with young people. This included with:

- 559 males, 86.5% of the cohort
- 87 females, 13.5% of the cohort

By local authority area the figures show that there were 367 (56.8% of the cohort) young people from Middlesbrough and 268 (41.5% of the cohort) from Redcar and Cleveland, with 11 (1.7% of the cohort) young people subject to caretaking by STYJS on behalf of other YJS.

These show an increase of 139 (11.5%) interventions compared to the figures for 2022-2023.

These figures show that STYJS worked with a similar proportion of girls and young women during 2023-2024 with this figure decreasing slightly to 13.5% of the cohort, from 13.9% the previous year. During 2023-2024 STYJS has continued to develop interventions to support the needs of girls and young women, and this has included the introduction of the 'Ladybugs' programme an intervention activity designed to offer girls and young women their own safe space to engage with staff and other partner agencies.

The age profile was:

- 12 (1.8%) aged 10 years
- 20 (3.1%) aged 11 years
- 43 (6.7%) aged 12 years
- 54 (8.4%) aged 13 years
- 90 (13.9%) aged 14 years
- 123 (19.0%) aged 15 years
- 152 (23.5%) aged 16 years
- 145 (22.5%) aged 17 years
- 7 (1.1%) aged 18 years

These figures show that the proportion of the cohort aged 10-14 years during 2023-2024 drop significantly compared to 33.9% of the cohort compared to 42.2% for the previous year. The figures also show that the peak age of offending continues to be the 16-17 age group. For females the peak age of offending is now 15-17 years.

The ethnic minority profile was:

- 560 (86.7%) White European
- 3 (0.5%) Black or Black British
- 16 (2.5%) Asian or Asian British
- 29 (4.5%) Mixed Race
- 14 (2.1%) Chinese or other Asian ethnic group
- 24 (3.7%) Not Known

These figures are consistent with the figures shown by the ethnic minority breakdown in 2022-2023, with the cohort being overwhelmingly White British. The figures for other ethnic groups are consistent with previous years with only slight increases compared to 2022-2023 and these figures show that there is no over representation from any ethnic groups.

Overall, the STYJS cohort continues to be white, male and this is consistent with the profile for the cohort in recent years. Overall girls and young women are not overrepresented in this cohort although data presented to the YJS Executive Board meeting suggest that girls aged between 15-17 years are becoming a more prominent group. This was recognised by the YJS, and the Ladybugs programme is now a key area of our intervention with girls and young women.

## Profile of Interventions

Data shows that during 2022-2023 the breakdown of interventions included:

13 (2.0%)	Prevention Cases
242 (37.5%)	Turnaround Programme
247 (38.2%)	OOCD (Community Resolution, Restorative Disposals, Outcome 22, YC/YCC)
118 (18.3%)	Court Ordered Programmes (Referrals Orders, YRO and DTO etc)
8 (1.2%)	Civil Programmes (CBO and ASBI)
18 (2.8%)	Remand Programmes (Remands to Youth Detention Accommodation (RYDA), LAA, Bail Support and ISS Bail)

These figures show that OOCs continue to represent the highest proportion of interventions delivered with young people and their families. Turnaround now represents the primary prevention activity offered by the STYJS. Court based programmes continue to represent approximately a fifth of the total interventions delivered, however we have experienced an increase in the use of Referral Orders during the second half of the year.

## Profile of the factors influencing the behaviours of young people:

An examination of 216 YJS assessments, undertaken with young people using the AssetPlus tool during 2023-2024 provides an illustration of the principal factors affecting young people and their behaviours.

The key factors that support the young person to desist from further offending behaviours include:

- Engagement and Participation
- Learning, Education, Training and Employment
- Family and wider networks
- Living arrangements, housing and financial considerations
- Resilience and goals
- Attitudes to Offending/Behaviours
- Substance Misuse
- How the young person relates to others

The information drawn from desistance factors in assessments shows that during 2023-2024 engagement and participation, learning, education, training and employment continue to be the most prevalent protective factors identified with young people. The influence of family, wider networks and living arrangements continue to be key factors in preventing further offending. This information suggests that where young people have a level of security and support from families, carers and a pro-social peer group and engage in ETE or with other services they have a more positive outlook, and this promotes positive outcomes as well as preventing further offending. Such desistance factors are broadly in line with the previous years and highlight the increasingly complex nature of the cohort of young people.

The key factors that increase the risk of the young person re-offending:

- Thinking and behaviour
- Features of lifestyle
- Emotional development and mental health
- Attitudes to offending and behaviours
- Substance misuse
- Learning, Education, Training and Employment
- Family and Wider Networks



- Parenting care and supervision
- Care History

The risk factors detailed above are broadly in line with those identified in the previous year and reflect the challenging nature of the cohort of young people who are referred to the STYJS. The above information continues to suggest that the risk factors influencing young people to re-offend are strongest around individual factors including self-identity, Attitudes to Offending and Thinking and Behaviour. The Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of young people is also a significant factor and reflects the influence of ACES and Trauma upon the young people we work with. The influence of a young person's legal status and care history have become areas of concern, and this reflects the increasing risks of exploitation for this vulnerable group.

STYJS will continue to monitor the nature of those desistance factors that impact on the young people we work with and seek to shape service delivery to respond and address these specific needs.

## Response to HMI Thematic Inspections

During 2023-2024 the following thematic inspection was undertaken which identified development actions for YJS:

*A joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention.*

The report for this inspection was published in November 2023 detailing a range of recommendations for Youth Justice Service Management Boards, YJS Managers, Childrens Services, Police Services and Central Government Departments and Services. With reference to YJS Management Boards and Service Managers the inspection recommended:

YJS Management Boards should:

- require detailed audit information on children who are subject to RYDA and on wider remand decision-making, including information on potential ethnic disparities at every stage of the youth justice system
- initiate a multi-agency review when a child is RYDA, which identifies reasons for the offending and missed opportunities to intervene
- address gaps in specialist provision for black and mixed heritage boys and their parents/ carers to reduce their likelihood of being subject to RYDA
- where they share a youth court area, in consultation with the court, conduct annual reviews of their joint working arrangements with those neighbouring YJSs.

YJS managers should:

- make sure that YJS practitioners and social workers have access to and use guidance and training that sets out how bail and remand processes work
- collaborate with their local police force to be able to contribute to police bail conditions to reduce the need for children to be brought before the court
- in collaboration with children's services, identify accommodation options for children at their first court appearance where there is a risk of RYDA, including bail and remand in local authority accommodation
- work with local defence solicitors to make sure that they are aware of data on outcomes for children in police custody, particularly the potential adverse impact of 'no comment' interviews.
- offer voluntary support to children who have been acquitted following a period of RYDA, including when they have reached the age of 18.

In response to these recommendation STYJS will be undertaking a review of all RYDA outcomes received during 2023-2024. The focus of this review will be to examine work undertaken with the young people subject to RYDA prior to them receiving these outcomes, what actions were undertaken by the STYJS to mitigate against a custodial remand and what were the final outcomes arising from each case. A report arising from this view will be presented to the STYJS Management Board and any actions or recommendations will be added to the service development plan.

In response to other recommendations raised by the inspection:

- STYJS management team undertake reviews of all custodial remand outcomes to ensure that these are both legal and appropriate.
- STYJS provide bail options to the court for the court where these can be safely managed in the community.
- The Children in Police Custody Group provides a forum to review all cases where young people have been held overnight or for over 12 hours and ensures that the PACE protocol is followed.
- With reference to voluntary support for children who have been acquitted following a RYDA, this has potential resource implications, but consideration can be given to including such responses as part of our prevention offer.
- With regards to the ongoing management of remand cases, joint working is in place with Children's Services and other partners to ensure opportunities can be identified to offer robust community intervention to offer to the court to reduce the risk of RYDA.
- There is a shared practice guidance with the Children's Services in each local authority which details how services will work together where a young person gets remanded.



## CHILD FIRST

During 2023-2024 STYJS has continued to underpin work with young people with the Child First principle. The approach of the service is to see every young person as an individual and ensure that all responses with the young person reflect their needs and interests and to ensure that the YJS and partners respond in a supportive and co-ordinated way. Young people are encouraged to engage and participate, and we seek to listen to them and ensure their voice can be heard and this approach will be enhanced during 2024-2025 to ensure that young people have a clear voice in how services are delivered with them.

During 2023-2024 we have sought to develop and shape our practice to ensure that this is responsive to individual needs and this approach has been informed by the following:

- Staff training and development- work has been undertaken with staff to ensure that the child first principle underpins all assessment and planning, and young people have a clear voice in this. All staff have been encouraged to focus on the needs and interests of the child with the offending behaviour no longer viewed as the central focus of our work. Staff are encouraged to focus on the positive influences and strengths in a young person's life and ensure intervention packages and approaches embrace these to support positive outcome focussed work.
- STJYS continues to take a trauma informed approach to our work with young people, and we believe it is important to base our work on the positives and strengths in a young person's life. The Trauma Informed model used by the YJS in partnership with TEWV CAMHS has been

paused during 2023-2024, however negotiations are ongoing to ensure a new model of delivery can be established to further enhance work in this area.

- During 2023-2024 we have further developed our partnership with the Speech and Language Service and extended the reach of this provision to include support to our prevention activity. The Specialist Speech and Language Therapist has provided an important point of reference to guide and support staff in how they deliver interventions and communicate with the young person. This approach is also supported by direct intervention with young people to assess and support the young person. Feedback from young people and families has been wholly positive with one young person stating:

*Thank you so much for all of your support – you get me!*

- During 2023-2024 we have continued to build on the success of our Tuff Tees and Ladybugs gender-based programmes to offer young people a safe space to engage with the service and our partners. During 2024-2025 we will be re-introducing the Pre Court intervention programmes to offer intervention with groups of young people supported by Turnaround, other prevention activity and OOCs.
- The Custody Navigator project has provided a mechanism to ensure that the needs and interests of young people are being identified and appropriately addressed in the Police Custody area. The Navigators are there to support and engage with young people, collaborate with other agencies in the custody area and provide ongoing support to young people to ensure they can access the services they need in the community.

STYJS has encountered differences of approach with partners who have enforcement responsibilities and communities affected by the behaviours of young people. This includes the responses to anti-social behaviour and the publicity of civil court outcomes which can conflict with the child first ethos. The YJS approach places an emphasis on the child and seeks to engage and challenge behaviours and this may not always have the immediate and visible response required by partners and communities.

## **VOICE OF THE CHILD**

The voice of the child is an important factor which underpins all our work with young people. During 2023-2024 STYJS has continued to promote the voice of the young person across all areas of our work, using self-assessments and learning style tools to ensure all work we undertake with young people reflects their experience and is delivered in ways which allows the young person to maximise their participation and involvement with the service.

STYJS has extended the provision offered by the Speech and Language Service and this now includes our prevention work and Turnaround. This role continues to assist and support STYJS staff, promotes engagement and support with young people and supports the training and development of STYJS staff. In addition, the Speech and Language Therapist has acted as an advocate for young people ensure that their voice is heard in such forums as School disciplinary processes, where the Therapist has provided input on the challenges facing young people including those with communication or neuro diversity needs.

### **What young people said about their YJS experience:**

STYJS provides all young people who have received an intervention with the service the opportunity to comment on their experience with the service through an online feedback survey. During 2023-2024, 273 young people responded and provided feedback through the survey:

- 95.97% said my YJS workers did enough to help me take part in the YJS work.
- 81.32% said the YJS helped me to feel safer.
- 91.21% said someone at the YJS asked me what I thought would help me stop offending.
- 85.35% said I had enough to say in what went into my YJS Contract/Intervention Plan.
- 93.77% said my work with the YJS has helped me realise I can change.
- 97.44% said the YJS took my views seriously.
- 99.63% said I have been treated fairly by the people who worked with me.



- 88.64% said I think the service given to me by the YJS was good.

These responses are consistent with responses provided by young people over previous years and show a high level of satisfaction in the work of the YJS and experience of young people. The survey provides further evidence of the work undertaken by YJS staff to engage young people, listen to what they have to say and support them to have their say in the work undertaken with them. This is reflected in the outcome to the question about the young person having a say in their contract/plan, with over 8 out of 10 young people saying they had an input into this. This reflects the ongoing developments we have made in the child first approach and ensuring that the voice of the young person and their parent/carer is heard and listened to. The outcomes from the survey have been used to target improvements in service delivery and how we engage with young people.

## **GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Partnership arrangements**

STYJS provides youth justice services for the local authorities of Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. Corporate governance arrangements are provided by Middlesbrough Council and STYJS sits within Middlesbrough Council Children's Services, in the directorate of Education and Partnerships.

This offers the YJS a broad remit, working across all children service areas ensuring links with those services that can maximise outcomes for young people, including early help and safeguarding services. The Head of Partnerships (the STYJS Manager) is line managed by the Middlesbrough Council Director of Education and Partnerships (Chair of the Management Board), who is also a member of Middlesbrough's Children's Services Senior Management Team. The Head of Partnerships contributes and consults with Redcar and Cleveland's Children's Services Management Team on a quarterly basis, providing updates on service developments and performance.

In addition to our links with Children's Services, STYJS has strong links across other services and partner agencies in both local authorities, including Education Services, Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams and Early Help and Prevention Services. These links ensure that processes are in place that can promote joined up working to support young people into services as well as placing STYJS in a position to influence decision making around issues such as anti-social behaviour and how these impact on young people. Relationships with partners are very mature and create an environment of mutual respect and trust which allows STYJS to promote our child first approach and secure buy in from partners.

STYJS is also a key partner in the new SHiFT programmes in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, with the Head of Service acting as line manager for the SHiFT lead in Middlesbrough. SHiFT is a new initiative that has been introduced in both authorities to support young people. SHiFT exists to break the destructive cycle of children involved in, or at risk of crime. The service works with children and young people up to the age of 25 for whom things are getting worse and who would benefit most from an intensive and therapeutic relationship. SHiFT aims to safely return children to Middlesbrough or Redcar and Cleveland who are currently cared for and placed outside of the local authority area, to return to live with their families or to live in a suitable setting closer to their family and community. In addition, SHiFT builds trusting professional relationships to support children with whom services have previously struggled to engage, but for whom risks are escalating, placing them at a heightened risk of becoming entrenched in criminal activity and/or exploitation.

STYJS also supports a range of partnerships which are essential to supporting and informing the work we do. These include:

- Work with Community Safety Partnerships in both local authorities with a focus on anti-social behaviour and problem solving with representation at the Community Safety Partnership meetings and AIM in Middlesbrough
- Working with the Safeguarding Children's Services in both local authorities to support service development, inspection readiness and service improvement. In addition, the Head of Service represents STYJS at the No Wrong Door Partnership meetings.

- Supporting Safeguarding Arrangements for children and young people, attending strategies, child protection and planning meetings for children and young people
- Ensuring representation at the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships, to monitor performance, support quality improvement and staff training and development activity.
- The Head of Service is the lead manager for the Middlesbrough Children's Trust and is a representative at the Redcar and Cleveland Young People's Partnership Board
- Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) arrangements for young people identified as at risk of this, in both local authorities, supporting both strategic and operational forums.
- The Head of Service is the lead officer with oversight of SHiFT and attends the partnerships boards in each local authority.
- The Head of Service currently chairs the Children in Custody group which reviews young people held in police custody and PACE decisions.
- Engaging in multi-agency forums for education, training and employment which focus on attendance, inclusion and behaviours in schools and to address issues impacting on NEETs.
- Attendance at the Prevent Bronze group to fulfil statutory duties relating to extremism and community tensions.
- Representation at the OPCC led CURV meetings to ensure involvement in the oversight of the work of the Violence Reduction Unit
- Representation at the Cleveland Local Criminal Justice Board
- Representation at the Strategic MAPPA Board

Within both local authorities STYJS have strong partnership arrangements with children's safeguarding services at strategic and operational levels. The STYJS Service Manager attends the South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership meetings, Corporate Parenting Board Strategic MACH groups and Strategic VEMT arrangements. This is supported operationally by attendance at a range of subgroups, learning and development forums and task and finish processes by other members of the management team.

In addition to the above, at an operational level STYJS is represented at a managerial level at a number of multi-agency forums designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people. These include:

- STSCP thematic groups
- CSE/VEMT Multi Agency and strategy meetings
- Safeguarding Risk Management Groups
- Vulnerable Young People's Groups
- Domestic Violence Partnerships
- Problem Solving Groups
- Education, Attendance and Behaviour meetings
- Early Help Huddles

STYJS also ensures attendance at any planning or strategy meetings for young people who are subject to Children's Services intervention.

Strong co-working arrangements are established at an operational level with both Children's Services Teams with clear systems in place for communication with in the two Local Authorities. The joint working agreements with both local authorities are subject to ongoing review and updated to reflect current practices. The STYJS safeguarding case managers provide another essential link to Children's Services teams in both Local Authorities as well as providing advice and guidance to colleagues on safeguarding issues and processes.

Arrangements are also now in place for YJS single points of contact for the two Multi Agency Children's Hubs and Early Help Hubs and this offers key points of contact for MACH/Early Help staff to contact for information and advice on young people known to STYJS. The MACH case admin has access to STYJS case management system 'Childview' this allows for checks to be made as a referral is received to the MACH to ascertain if the case is open to STYJS and ensure that joint working

commences at the earliest opportunity. These processes also assist with the identification of young people who could benefit from Turnaround support.

Reciprocal arrangements are in place to offer access to case management systems, and this allows YJS Service Support staff to access these systems to identify if new referrals are known to children's services and to access information. STYJS staff log new referrals into individual children's files where they are open to safeguarding teams and this ensures effective communication and joint working.

Joint supervision arrangements are now well established between the YJS and both Children's Services and this offers the opportunity to share decision making and agree strategies to meet the needs of young people known to both services.

The culture of working together among the youth justice services in the Tees Valley is well established and during 2023-2024 such collaboration supported the development of the Custody Navigators project and the introduction of the 'Making Good' Immediate Justice scheme.

One of our shared priorities during 2024-2025 will be to engage with the evaluation for the Custody Navigators project and use this to secure further funding for the project to ensure its continued delivery beyond March 2025. We will continue to work together to respond to challenges placed before us and continue to look for opportunities to develop services and improve practice. As a group we engage positively with the Cleveland Police and Police and Crime Commissioner, through a programme of monthly meetings. This has benefitted the youth justice services and we have achieved greater security in our funding from the OPCC.

The Trauma Informed Model of working with young people developed in partnership between the STYJS Cleveland area Youth Justice Services and TEWV NHS Trust has been paused due to issues over ongoing funding. During 2024-2025 STYJS in partnership with the ICB and the other Cleveland YJS will be negotiating a new model for this service, one which will offer wider capacity to support the YJS and ensure effective responses with young people. STYJS will also be re-establishing the pathways into the Forensic CAMHS to ensure that the needs of young people with emotional and mental health needs can be met, and they can be supported into services.

The accommodation arrangements of STYJS continue to offer co-location and co-working arrangements with the Middlesbrough Case Management and Resource Teams sharing an office space with Children's Services, Early Help and Education Teams. The Redcar Case Management Team will continue to be co-located within the Redcar Police HQ with links into Cleveland Police and Redcar Anti-Social Behaviour Teams. The YJS also has a full-time presence in the Youth Court and continues to provide a commissioned Court Service on behalf of Hartlepool YJS.

## **STYJS Management Board**

STYJS is accountable to a multi-agency Management Board, currently chaired by the Middlesbrough Director for Education and Partnerships. The membership and terms of reference of the Management Board are reviewed annually and membership is at an appropriate Senior Officer level to contribute to and support decision making in Management Board meetings. The Management Board is reflective of our statutory partners and other essential partners and consists of representatives from:

- Middlesbrough Council, Children's Services
- Middlesbrough Council Education Services
- Middlesbrough Council, Elected Member
- South Tees Public Health
- Redcar and Cleveland Council, Children's Services
- Redcar and Cleveland Council, Elected member
- Cleveland Police
- Probation Service
- Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The role of the Management Board is to:

- Provide strategic direction and challenge to the YJS management team on service delivery and development.
- Provide accountability for the performance of the service.
- Provide financial accountability to the service.
- Challenge partners with regards to their commitments to STYJS, including financial and resource commitments

The Management Board continues to ensure the multi-agency co-operation that enables STYJS to deliver effective youth justice services and improve outcomes for young people. Through a programme of quarterly meetings, the Management Board provides the strategic overview and direction and a framework for oversight and assurance for the work of STYJS.



The Management Board members provide links into other partnerships, and this offers the opportunity to promote the work of STYJS to a wider audience. This also offers the reciprocal arrangement where board members feed information from their partnerships to other board members and the management team to disseminate as appropriate to YJS staff.

During 2024-2025 we will be delivering development sessions with board members. The aim of these sessions will be to support board members to understand their role and responsibilities to the partnership, how they support the Head of Service, Service staff and seconded officers. In addition, there will be a focus on the new inspection standards and the expectations placed on board members. To support this, we will be drawing on materials and tools available through the Association of YOT Managers.

Also, during 2024 the responsibility of the chairing of the management board will pass to the Executive Director for Children's Services in Middlesbrough. This will offer a higher level of strategic oversight across Childrens Services locally and across the region.



## Links to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

The May 2024 Police and Crime Commissioner elections resulted in the election of a new PCC who also represents a different political party. This presents new challenges and new opportunities for STYJS as we develop new relationships and understand the priorities for the new PCC and how these can potentially impact on the work of the service. We will seek to work closely with the OPCC to develop services to young people, communities and victims of crime.

The OPCC continues to provide funding to STYJS to support the delivery of Out of Court Disposals, with specific reference to the delivery of the Community Resolution as the principal option to prevent young people entering the youth justice system, this has contributed significantly to reducing FTEs. During 2023-2024 the options for OOCDS have increased with the wider use of Outcome 22 as an educational intervention with young people, with the added offer of support from Turnaround.

During 2023-2024 STYJS introduced an Immediate Justice offer, locally branded as 'Making Good'. This programme aims to work with those young people who are engaging in anti-social behaviour in our communities and challenge them to engage with services and positive activities to divert them away from anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. Since the introduction of Making Good in September 2023 up to 31 March 2024 STYJS has engaged with 22 young people on this programme.

## Links to the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV)

Cleveland Police area is designated as a Violence Reduction Unit area and the OPCC has developed the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) to lead the delivery of the Violence Reduction Strategy locally. During 2023-2024 this partnership working with the OPCC and CURV has been further enhanced with the introduction of the Custody Navigators project, funded by the CURV. The Navigators provide additional support and engagement to young people in the custody area with the priority being those who have been arrested for serious violence offences. The project aims to build on the 'reachable and teachable' moments where a young person may be more receptive to intervention. Since the introduction of the Navigators 150 young people from the South Tees area have been supported in police custody. The Custody Navigators project is a central theme of the CURV model enabling services to engage with young people in police custody.

STYJS is a key partner in the CURV governance structures. As part of the oversight of CURV STYJS has secured representation at the strategic and operational meeting processes.

STYJS has also aligned itself with the CURV vision that allows...

*individuals, families and communities to live, learn and work in Cleveland free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence.*

This is reflected in the priorities outlined in this plan with a focus on prevention and diversion, challenging serious youth violence and exploitation seeking to ensure young people have access to support services with a specific focus on education, training and employment.

## Staffing

STYJS is staffed in line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), including, Social Workers, a Seconded Probation Officer (post currently unfilled) and Seconded Police Officers. The service will have 47 individual members of staff in 2024-2025 with no vacancies currently. This is an increase of 2 members of staff compared to the previous year. During 2023-2024 the staffing establishment was increased due to introduction of the new Making Good and Custody Navigator roles. One of the key risks and challenges for STYJS during 2024-2025 will be to secure the additional funding needed to secure the future of such roles. The service structure, detailed at appendix 3, shows how these staff are deployed. The service currently has 31 female members of staff and 11 males, with currently 5 vacancies which are currently being recruited to. In terms of ethnicity, 1 member of staff is of Pakistani origin, with the remaining staff being white British.

The majority of staff are employed by Middlesbrough Council on behalf of the partnership, with additional staff seconded from partners including Cleveland Police and the South Tees Speech and

Language Service. At present STYJS does not have seconded probation officer, despite this being part of the statutory requirements placed on our partners, there is currently an arrangement in place for the service to claim back the financial costs of this role. A pathway to access young people into adult services has been established and discussions are ongoing to secure the seconded officer.

STYJS has 3 core teams, these include 2 case management teams who service each local authority area and a resource team which works across the service area and supports the delivery of case management and service development activity.

The Case Management Teams are comprised of:

- An operations Manager
- Assistant Operations Manager
- Youth Justice Case Managers
- Probation Officer
- Support Workers

The Resource Team is comprised of:

- Partnerships Manager
- Prevention and Diversion Operations Manager
- 2 Assistant Operations Managers
- Education Training and Employment Specialist
- Restorative Justice Specialist
- Specialist Court Officer
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Prevention/Turnaround Case Managers
- Police Officers
- Restorative Justice Worker
- Custody Navigators
- Making Good Practitioner
- Support Workers
- Business Support Officer
- Business Support Workers

The YJS also has access to a Business Analytics Partner who is based within the Information and Governance Team in Middlesbrough Council and Finance support is provided by a Finance Business Partner from Middlesbrough Council's Finance Section.

The provision of a dedicated Court Specialist ensures that STYJS provides appropriate and timely responses to young people in the Court arena. The Court Specialist also advises and informs Court users and supports decision making. This Court Specialist is supported by other YJS staff during busy Court periods. STYJS also supports colleagues in other YJS areas delivering a Court service on behalf of Hartlepool YJS and supporting other services from the region when young people appear at Teesside Courts. The quality and the effectiveness of YJS staff in Court is recognised and valued by other Court users, including the judiciary.

STYJS structure ensures that the service is adaptable and responsive to changing needs and priorities, whilst ensuring both local authority areas are effectively served. This service model has supported us well in 2023-2024 allowing the service to absorb the challenges placed by introducing 3 new projects, Custody Navigators, Turnaround and Making Good without impacting on our ability to deliver core statutory services. The service model supports effective responses to the challenges posed by the changing nature of the types of offending we encounter with increases in serious and violent crime and the impact of forms of exploitation. The structure has also allowed us to develop opportunities to intervene earlier, expanding the opportunities at OOC, the delivery of Turnaround and group-based activity in the community and with schools. STYJS will continue to promote a learning and development culture in the service, which supports practice improvement and provides opportunity for staff development.

## Involvement of Community Volunteers

The work of STYJS is supported by a small group of volunteers recruited from our local community, who offer the service invaluable life skills, life experiences and local knowledge which can be used to great effect to engage and support young people. The main focus of this volunteer offer is with the Young People's Panels we deliver as part of the Referral Order and all volunteers receive a full training programme to equip them with the knowledge and skills to make a success of this role. Volunteers are trained to a Restorative Practice level 2 qualification and this training is enhanced by other opportunities reflecting emerging areas of practice with volunteers receiving training in the Trauma Informed Model, Speech, Language and Communication and Child First approaches.

## Staff Development and Training

An important factor in delivering high quality services is to develop the staff team to build an extensive skills, knowledge and experience base to fulfil the duties and requirements of their role. STYJS will be following the Middlesbrough Council People Strategy as we look to invest in our staff team to ensure that we have the right people with the right behaviours and skills to deliver the outcomes as detailed in this plan and the Council's Corporate Plan. STYJS continues to invest in our staff team using the following processes:

- Using the Middlesbrough Council Corporate Induction Programme for all new staff to ensure that they receive a co-ordinated introduction to the YJS, with all the necessary corporate training to meet statutory duties.
- Provide regular monthly supervision as a tool to support professional judgement, including regular performance related issues and staff development.
- Provide a process of annual appraisal and ongoing appraisal reviews to ensure performance is effectively managed and staff development opportunities can be realised.
- Provide opportunities for staff to access training and development opportunities to support their professional and personal growth, including.
  - Access to Middlesbrough Council Corporate Training
  - Access to the Youth Justice Application Framework
  - Accessing STSCP Training
  - Attending conferences and development sessions relevant to role

During 2023-2024 STYJS has embarked on a programme of staff development and team building sessions supported by Project Connect. These sessions have been designed to re-connect the service following the impact of COVID19, changes to the staff team with new members joining the service and the introduction of new hybrid working practices. The aim has been to support the staff team to re-establish meaningful connections and to re-build a team identity. This process will be further enhanced by the continued roll-out of restorative practice training across the whole service.

A key element of our training in 2024-2025 will be to deliver Restorative Practice training across all levels of the service to assist staff to develop skills in restorative approaches to support our work with young people and their families and support the development of a restorative culture and ethos across all levels of the service.

The service will align itself with the Middlesbrough Council People Strategy. This strategy forms part of the council Cultural Transformation Programme and the People Strategy has been designed to:

- employees and members have the knowledge and skills needed to maximise our ability to achieve improved outcomes for residents, within the future target operating model.

The People Strategy sets out to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels engaged and encouraged, with access to a diverse support and development offer, in order to be the best, they can be and deliver the best possible services they can.

STYJS delivers a programme of monthly team meetings with the full staff team. These meetings provide opportunities for professional collaboration among staff, with a focus on emerging issues and updates on service developments. The team meetings also offer an invaluable social function during the current hybrid working arrangements experienced by all staff, providing opportunities for the full team to come together and catch up with colleagues and friends.

## **RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

### **Budget 2024-2025**

The final grant figure from the YJB has yet to be set and information from the YJB indicates that there is the potential for a further delay in announcing the grant figure until after the upcoming General Election. Therefore, it is not currently possible to give a figure for the pooled income for 2024-2025. For the purposes of writing this plan, we will work on an assumption of a similar settlement to that of 2023-2024. The final budget figure will include contributions from partners as well as the YJB grant, plus the continued in-kind support of a seconded Probation Officer or a financial settlement if this post cannot be filled, 2 seconded Police Officers and the accommodation provided by Cleveland Police at the Redcar Police HQ. This figure will also include a £5000.00 payment from Hartlepool YJS for the provision of Court services.

During 2023-2024 STYJS has seen a reduction in contributions from local authority partners, reflecting the financial challenges faced by all services. This presents a renewed risk to the service and could impact on the level of service we are able to offer.

Staffing costs represent the largest expenditure item for STYJS and as detailed above during 2023-2024 STYJS has continued to invest in our staffing resources with the support of additional funding streams, securing new posts which will improve service delivery and promote positive outcomes for young people.

One of the challenges we need to consider when allocating resources will be the current high cost of living with continuing increases in the prices of the goods and services we use. Consideration will also need to be given to how this will impact on the young people and families we work with and how we respond to the challenges that families face.

### **YJB Grant Funding 2024-2025:**

The YJB grant allowance for 2024-2025 has not been agreed at the time of producing this plan. As a result, it is not possible to offer any indication currently as to how financial resources can be specifically allocated. This funding will continue to be the most significant element of the budget and continues to support the work we are looking to undertake in response to our priority areas and statutory duties. We look forward to the grant announcement and will make informed decisions on how this can be used based on data available to us and to invest in the priority areas detailed in this plan.

STYJS has been able to maintain service levels, sustain continuous improvements in our performance, achieving positive outcomes for the young people we work with. This has been achieved despite serving communities who experience significant levels of deprivation and with young people who demonstrate increasingly complex needs. The additional funding from the Youth Justice Grant has allowed STYJS to invest in access to a Speech and Language Therapist to support staff and engage with young people with language and communication needs.

The YJB Grant will continue to be used efficiently and to maximum effect to improve the range of services we have with young people.

### **Turnaround Funding 2024-2025:**

STYJS is to receive a grant of £242,159.95 from the Ministry of Justice to support the delivery of the Turnaround Programme during 2024-2025. This includes a grant of £15,244.85 to support young people accessing the programme from areas with high incidences of Anti-Social Behaviour. This funding will be used to assist STYJS to meet the target of 84 young people engaging in the Turnaround programme based on a 'base unit' of approximately £2,900 per child.



This funding will be used to support the programme and enhance activities with young people, a key element of this funding is the additional resource for Speech and Language Services we can offer through Turnaround.

### **Remand Framework for Children:**

The YJB Grant for Remands for 2024-2025 has been set at £95,005. This is an increase in the grant figure for the previous year of £71,300. During 2023-2024 the total remand costs for young people remanded from the STYJS area was £89,216.

It is anticipated that the costs for Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation will continue to present a significant risk to the YJS given the complex nature of the young people we work with, and the increasing risks to young people presented by forms of exploitation which can introduce young people into more serious types of offending. STYJS will continue to mitigate against remands to youth detention through the effective use of our court services and the offer to case manage young people in the community.

The remand grant is complimented by additional funding from the 2 local authorities, £30,400 from Middlesbrough and £35,120 from Redcar and Cleveland, and this additional funding will be used to mitigate against any additional costs over the allocated remand grant from the YJB.



### **Funding from the PCC:**

STYJS will continue to receive funding from the OPCC to support our early intervention and prevention work through the enhanced OOC model. During 2023-2024 STYJS has extended the OOC offer for young people with the increasing use of Outcome 22 as an educational intervention with young people, in many cases also supported by Turnaround. The extension of the provision offered as part of our OOC programme has led to a marked increase in work in this area and we continue to have low levels of re-offending by young people subject to OOCs.

During 2024-2025 STYJS will receive additional funding through CURV, of £177,668 to support the delivery of a Cleveland wide Custody Navigator project. This funding will continue to be used to support the staffing costs relating to the project with a small additional fund to support interventions and activities with young people. One of the priorities for the service during 2024-2025 will be to engage with the evaluation of the Custody Navigator project with the view to identifying future funding opportunities to support the delivery of the project beyond March 2025.

Funding for the Immediate Justice project will also come through the OPCC, the level of this funding is currently under discussion.

## PROGRESS AGAINST THE 2023-2024 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

During 2023-2024 the priorities for STYJS were to focus on further developing the prevention and diversion offer to ensure that we continue to reduce the numbers of young people entering the criminal justice system. In addition, there was also focus on challenging serious youth violence the most significant challenge we currently face in our work with young people, especially those most vulnerable and difficult to engage. Underpinning all our work has been the child first principle, responding to the needs of the individual child and ensuring they have a voice and are listened to.

The 2023-2024 the priorities to support ongoing service development included:

- Priority 1: Prevention- to further embed the Turnaround Programme and develop alternative Prevention opportunities to support partners who cannot benefit from Turnaround.
- Priority 2: Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation- to ensure a co-ordinated approach with partners to support the needs of young people at risk of or subject to serious violence and/or exploitation.
- Priority 3: Preparation for Inspection- to ensure that the YJS are fully prepared for the challenge of a potential HMIP Inspection during 2023-24.
- Priority 4: Education- to continue to engage with partners and ETE service providers to ensure the best outcomes for young people engaged with the YJS.
- Priority 5: Restorative Practice- to establish a restorative culture and ethos across all areas of YJS practice.
- Priority 6: Performance- to ensure that the YJS is fully prepared for the challenge presented by the new YJB performance framework.

The priorities in the Youth Justice Plan are supported by the service development plan which details the actions to be achieved in relation to each of the service priorities. The service development plan for 2023-2024 outlined a total of 35 individual actions across the 6 priority areas. The service development plan provides the framework for the YJS management team to monitor progress against the key actions related to each priority area, to identify where progress is being made and to mitigate against those areas where further development is required or provide explanations where this will not be met. This development plan is monitored monthly by the YJS management team at the monthly management meetings.

Progress detailed in the service development plan shows that 23 of the actions were achieved with a further 6 making significant progress. The remaining 6 actions were not achieved over the course of the year and these included actions linked to the preparation for inspection where delays in finalising inspection criteria have meant that this priority will roll over into 2024-2025. In addition, one of the challenges we placed on ourselves was to engage with schools to look at restorative approaches to prevent exclusions and to support disciplinary matters. Unfortunately, little progress has been made in this area, although the ETE Specialist has been able to engage with schools to discuss support for young people at risk of exclusion.

Achievements made against each priority include:

Priority 1: Prevention- to further embed the Turnaround Programme and develop alternative Prevention opportunities to support partners who cannot benefit from Turnaround.

- Turnaround was introduced in January 2023 and is now the main prevention offer available to STYJS and its partners.
- One of the challenges we have faced with regards to the Turnaround programme has been to identify and engage young people into the programme. High levels of young people supported by Children's Services under Child Protection and as children in care across both authorities has meant that many the young people, we identify for the programme are not able to benefit from such support.
- During 2023-2024 significant efforts were made to engage with partners in the Anti-Social Behaviour Teams to ensure that this pathway offered an effective route for young people to access Turnaround for additional support.
- A pathway for schools and other education providers was also identified through the Turnaround criteria.

- The priority to work towards meeting the Turnaround targets has meant that resource has had to be prioritised into this area.

Priority 2: Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation- to ensure a co-ordinated approach with partners to support the needs of young people at risk of or subject to serious violence and/or exploitation.

- STYJS has senior management representation on the CURV Strategic Board and the Tees Strategic Exploitation Group
- Representation is also in place with the operational Management groups
- The Custody Navigators are now embedded into the Youth Custody area and viewed as a valued resource by all key partners

Priority 3: to ensure that the YJS are fully prepared for the challenge of a potential HMIP Inspection during 2023-24.

- YJS managers attended the HMIP consultation seminars on the new Inspection criteria
- STYJS has provided feedback through the HMIP consultation process
- A programme of audits has been maintained to monitor YJS practice

Priority 4: Education: to continue to engage with partners and ETE service providers to ensure the best outcomes for young people engaged with the YJS.

- The STYJS ETE Specialist has established monitoring systems to allow for the tracking of the ETE status of young people
- The ETE Specialist has established links with leads across a range of Education Support Services and Schools
- The Inclusion Pathway has now been embedded as the primary pathway to support young people at risk of exclusion or poor attendance

Priority 5: Restorative Practice- to establish a restorative culture and ethos across all areas of YJS practice.

- Restorative Practice Training has been delivered to YJS Support staff and Managers
- STYJS follows the Victims Code of Practice to support our work with victims of crime
- STYJS has established a broad range of Reparation Activity to engage young people and provide opportunities for them to make positive contributions to their communities

Priority 6: Performance- to ensure that the YJS is fully prepared for the challenge presented by the new YJB performance framework.

- The upgrade to Childview, including for performance reporting was undertaken successfully
- All staff have been trained and supported to understand their responsibilities to assisting the YJS to achieve the performance targets
- The performance reporting remains a challenge, with issues with the Case Management System pulling through the appropriate data. We are assured that these issues will be resolved with subsequent updates

## PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES

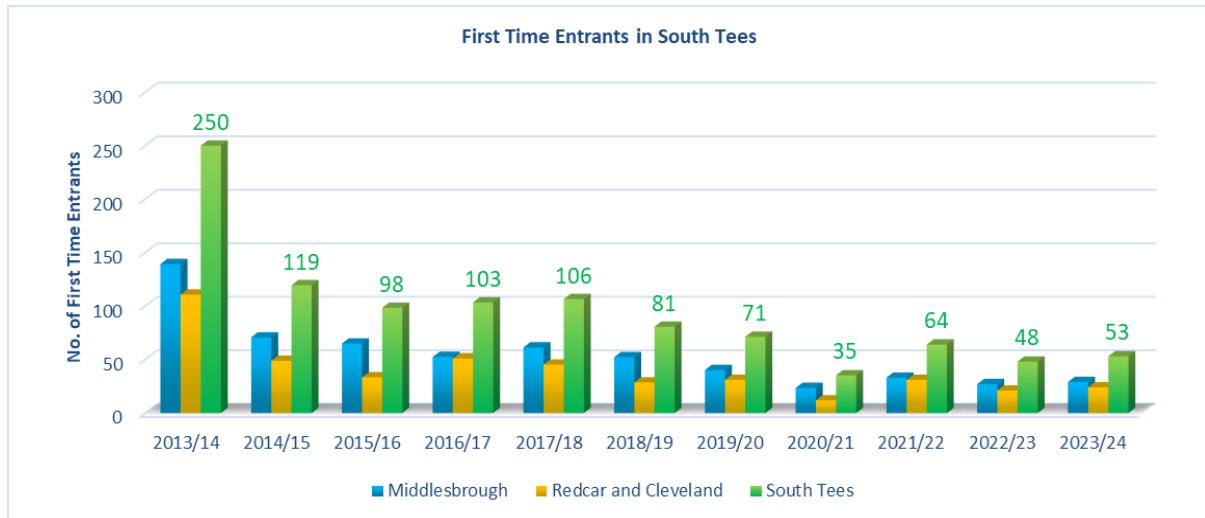
### National Outcome Measures

#### First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System:

During 2023-2024 there were 53 First Time Entrants (FTEs) into the Youth Justice system. This represents an increase of 5 FTES, 10%, from 48 the previous year, this included 29 from Middlesbrough and 24 from Redcar and Cleveland.

Despite this increase the figures for FTEs continue to be relatively low and demonstrate a 79% reduction for the numbers of FTEs from 10 years ago, 2013-2014. The trend for South Tees

continues to be downward over this period. STYJS continues to benefit from the enhanced OOD model currently being delivered in partnership with Cleveland Police and during 2023-2024 there has been an increase in the numbers of young people receiving Outcome 22 as a programme with many of these supported by Turnaround. The ending of Turnaround funding from March 2025 presents a risk to the prevention offer of STYJS and during 2023-2024 prevention activity will be subject to review to identify how the prevention offer will look after April 2025.



### Re-offending:

The re-offending cohort for 2023-2024 consists of 46 and this is an increase of 12 young people based on the cohort for 2022-2023. Broken down further to local authority area this cohort consists of 32 young people from Middlesbrough and 14 from Redcar and Cleveland. The increase in the cohort shows that there is now a trend for the re-offending cohort to be increasing in recent years.

Based on the available data on this cohort (to 31/12/22) a total of 12 young people re-offended or 26.1% of the cohort. This figure compares to a level of re-offending of 26.5% during the same period in 2022-23, where there were 34 young people in the cohort and 9 re-offended.

By area 6 young people from Middlesbrough re-offended, 18.8% of the cohort with these young people committing a total of 28 further offences during this period. For Redcar and Cleveland 5 young people re-offended or 35.7% of the cohort, with these young people committing 30 further offences.

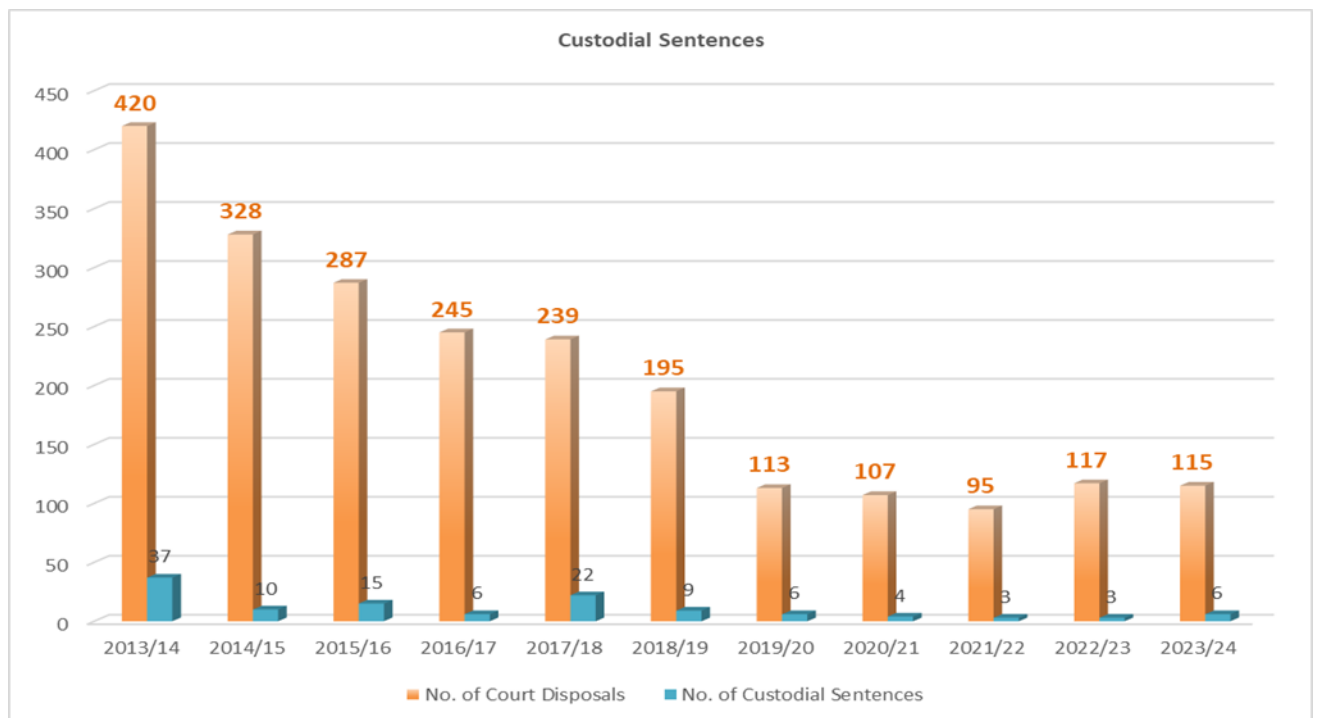
STYJS uses the re-offending tracking tool to monitor a number of cohorts to assess re-offending levels for live caseloads. These are monitored by the YJS management team on a monthly basis and enable us to identify and track those young people involved in offending and further amend our plans to challenge this behaviour.



### Use of custody - Custodial Sentences

During 2023-2024 there were a total of 6 custodial outcomes out of a total of 115 court outcomes. This represents an increase to the previous year's total of 6 custodial outcomes but maintains the relatively low numbers of young people entering custody as a result of their offending behaviour.

The overall custody rate for STYJS in 2023-2024 was 5.2% (6 out 115 court outcomes) and means that the custody rate was slightly above the indicative target of 5%. However, the figure does continue the trend of relatively low custodial outcomes compared to the figures for 2013-2014 and shows an 84% reduction in custodial sentences over this period.



All custodial outcomes are subject to scrutiny by STYJS Management Team to ensure that these are appropriate and from our reviews of custodial outcomes indicates that the young people we are working continue to be very complex and challenging with regards to the risks they pose to themselves and others, their engagement and compliance and levels of re-offending. This is reflected in the higher incidences of violent offending and use of weapons.

## Use of Custody- Remands to Youth Justice Accommodation

There were 6 remand episodes for 6 young people in 2023-2024 accounting for 272 remand bed nights. This is a decrease from the total young number people remanded in 2022-2023, and a reduction in the number of remand bed nights. All young people were aged between 15-17 years at the time of their remands and were all accommodated in a YOI. During 2023-2024, 1 young person was responsible for almost half of the remand bed nights (130) during a remand episode for the charge of attempted murder. Overall, the number of remand episodes reflect the serious nature of the offences committed by young people with 1 young person subject to a charge of murder, 1 young person subject to charge of attempted murder, 2 young people charged with Section 18 wounding, 2 young people charged with robbery and 2 young people charged with burglaries. The young person charged with murder was subsequently acquitted by court and as he was then aged 18 years, he declined further YJS support.

Young people were made subject to a custodial remand because bail was refused in all six cases due to the nature of the risks to the public and the seriousness of the offences. In 4 cases STYJS offered no bail package due to the seriousness of the offences and the difficulties managing the young person in the community.

Remands to Youth Detention Accommodation continue to be a significant financial challenge for STYJS with total remands costs of £89,216 for 2023-2024, which is significantly higher than the remand budget provided by the YJB and our partners.

All remand outcomes are subject to scrutiny by the STYJS Management Team to ensure that they are appropriate and in line with the alleged offending by the young person and meet the criteria for remands.

## New Key Performance Indicators

STYJS has supported the introduction of the ten new performance indicators introduced by the YJB from April 2023. The service has sought to provide complete and accurate returns as required by the YJB, however we have encountered some difficulties with the content and accuracy of our returns. Some areas of the return have proven difficult to extract data from the case management system and we are currently reviewing whether this is a data entry issue, software problem or misinterpretation of the YJB counting rules. As a service we hope to have resolved this by the time the April-June 2024 return needs to be submitted. We will continue to offer staff refresher training on case recording requirements to assist the service to deliver accurate returns.

## NATIONAL PRIORITY AREAS

### Children from Groups Which are Overrepresented

There are no concerns regarding over representation of young people known to STYJS based on demographic criteria, personal needs, legal status or issues of vulnerability.

As detailed previously in this plan the population of young people who offend and come to the attention of STYJS are predominantly white British and male and this group made up 86.5% of the cohort. With regards to ethnicity the population figures for STYJS are in line with those of the school population indicating that there are no concerns regarding disproportionality based on ethnic groups. By age the cohort is dominated by the 15-17 year age group who represented over 60% of the caseload in 2023-2024.

STYJS now has 2 well established gender-based group activities with Tuff Tees for boys and young men and Ladybugs for girls and young women. These groups are needs based and respond to interests of the young people, including input from partner agencies, leisure activities and life skills.

In regard to other factors impacting on the cohort, 16 young people who were in local authority care were on the YJS caseload in 2023-2024 representing 2% of the cohort. This figure is less than the national average of 3% for England and below the average for our statistical neighbours. STYJS



ensures that we have representations at the child in care planning processes and arrangements are in place for joint supervision with children's services to ensure joined up plans and interventions. In regard to SEND there were 65 young people assessed with special educational needs on the caseload during 2023-2024, approximately 10% of the caseload. STYJS ensures that there are effective information sharing arrangements in place with the SEND teams to support joint working where this is required.

STYJS acknowledges the findings of the recent HMIP Bulletin, 'The supervision of care experienced children in the Youth Justice System'. This bulletin highlights a number of concerns regarding the experience of young people who come to the attention of the Youth Justice Service and other partners. In order to measure ourselves against such outcomes we will be undertaking a benchmarking exercise with the findings reported to the management board.

Data shows that at any one time there are 30+ young people on the caseload who have been assessed as vulnerable, exploited, missing or trafficked and STYJS ensures that we engage with the local arrangements for joint planning and intervention to support these young people and divert them away into more positive lifestyles.

## **Policing**

STYJS has strong and positive links with Cleveland Police and the strength of this partnership is evidenced by the presence of 2 highly experienced and knowledgeable Police Officers in the service and the positive work which has been undertaken to establish the young person's custody area in Middlesbrough.

The YJS seconded Police Officers provide a key link into operational police activity, sharing intelligence and information from YJS staff and in the opposite direction from Police systems. The YJS Police Officers have access to all required Police systems, and this supports the referral process for OOC and the identification process for young people who could be referred to Turnaround. YJS staff use the Police Intelligence form to share any necessary intelligence and concerns with the Police Officers to feed back to Policing teams. The YJS Police Officers are also available as sources of information to Police colleagues and offer advice and guidance on the options available to engage a young person.

The Children in Police Custody Group, detailed below provides a forum for positive discussion and learning regarding young people's experience in custody. Also, the development of the young person's custody area and the work of the Custody Navigators, both detailed below, have helped to further develop relationships with the Police. The STYJS also contributes to the Police Custody Partnership forum for discussing issues arising from custody, sharing information and sharing good practice.

## **Detention in Police Custody**

STYJS takes the lead for a Cleveland area wide Children in Police Custody Group which monitors the experience of young people in Police Custody under PACE. The group meets quarterly with a strong involvement from most key partners, including Cleveland Police, Youth Justice Services and agencies working within the Police Custody area.

The purpose of this Children in Police Custody steering group is to scrutinise instances where young people have been held overnight or longer than 12 hours in Police Custody. This group offers the opportunity for professional challenge and multi-agency learning when PACE transfers have been unsuccessful. This scrutiny activity offers all stakeholders the assurance that children and young people have been held in Police custody appropriately, and the PACE protocol has been adhered to. All PACE bed information is also reported to the Director of Children's Services in Middlesbrough.

This group reports on a quarterly basis to the YJS Management Board which provides scrutiny and a performance framework for reporting into other strategic forums. Data from January and February 2024 shows that 39 young people from the South Tees area were discussed, with 6 PACE beds being requested. The outcomes from such requests showed that no children were transferred due to the lack of availability of beds, with 2 young people deemed unpracticable to transfer due to the time

of night and requirement to be at Court the next morning. The availability of PACE beds continues to be a challenge, and this is an area for ongoing discussion locally. The group are satisfied all children are safeguarded appropriately during their custodial episode, and most safeguarding referrals were made appropriately and in a timely manner.

STYJS provides an Appropriate Adult service to support young people in custody within the Police Juvenile Custody area in Middlesbrough. The service is available for all instances where parents or other trusted adults and social are unavailable or unable to attend to support the young person in Police Custody. As well as meeting the needs of young people in the South Tees area the service also supports young people from other YJS areas who have been arrested locally. This service is also provided out of office hours by the Emergency Duty Team.

During 2023-24 STYJS played a lead in development of the bespoke, trauma informed, juvenile custody area within the Middlesbrough Police HQ, in partnership with Cleveland Police and the OPCC. This has created a safe space for young people in custody with their own access routes, and access to a breakout room for young people away from the adult area. The custody area provides trauma informed approach and additional support to young people is provided by the Custody Navigators, Mitie Nurses, Liaison and Diversion staff and the Custody Substance Misuse Team. STYJS played a lead partner role in this project with Cleveland Police, providing opportunities for young people to be engaged in the design and painting of the cells and other areas in the Young Person's Custody area. This project came about as a response to a challenge placed on Cleveland Police by the Inspectorate of Constabulary following an inspection of Cleveland Police, to make the custody area a younger person friendly environment. This project has transformed the environment in the Custody area and improved the young person's experience at this stressful time. One of the added benefits of this project is that it will mean that no child will ever need to come in to contact with an adult offender during their detention in Police Custody.

A key part of this project is the support offered by the Custody Navigators who are available to engage with young people at the 'reachable and teachable' moment when the young person enters the custody area. The Navigators have also been able to offer the young people intervention and diversion tools which can assist them to cope during the custody experience.

## Prevention

As detailed previously, Turnaround provides the primary preventions programme available to the YJS. During 2023-2024 242 young people were referred to Turnaround with 77 young people agreeing to engage with the programme and 65 young people successfully completing. STYJS has faced some significant challenges in regard to the identification of young people for the Turnaround programme, with high levels of deprivation, exploitation and violent and serious offending meaning that many young people receive children's services intervention under child protection or children in care. As a result, this had limited the numbers of young people who can benefit from the programme. Nevertheless, a number of young people have engaged in the programme and received positive outcomes, with no young people returning for YJS intervention as a result of offending behaviours.

The anticipated ending of Turnaround funding presents a challenge for STYJS with regards to establishing an effective preventions offer from March 2025. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders and staff to identify an appropriate model of service provision for early intervention and prevention from April 2025.

STYJS continues to deliver school-based group programmes and the Tuff Tees and Ladybugs programmes, and these will be enhanced by the re-introduction of our 'pre-court' programme during 2024.

## Diversion

The principle diversionary provision offered by STYJS is the enhanced OOC which we deliver in partnership with Cleveland Police. This scheme is based on referrals from Cleveland Police which are screened by the YJS Police Officers and duty manager to ensure they are suitable for an OOC as opposed to prosecution. This decision is based on any known previous history of the young



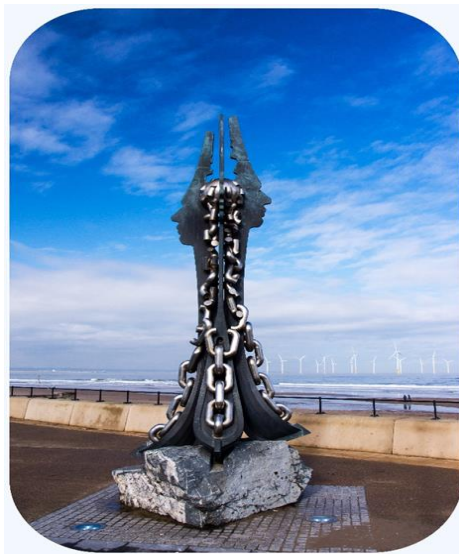
person, levels of engagement with previous programmes and the nature and seriousness of the offence. The referral is subsequently reviewed at the OOCB Panel, following assessment of the young person before a final decision can be made on the most appropriate option to be offered to meet the needs of the young person and respond to the needs of victims and communities.

The OOCB offer includes a range of interventions including Outcome 22, Restorative Intervention, Community Resolution, Youth Caution and Youth Conditional Caution, with Outcome 22 also supported by Turnaround where appropriate. There is no escalator for these outcomes with the young person able to receive any intervention which the Panel deems most appropriate to challenge their behaviours.

During 2023-2024 there were 247 OOCB outcomes with 10.9% going on to re-offend and be re-referred to the YJS. Offending for Community Resolution the principal OOCB programme was 6%.

There is a Cleveland OOCB Scrutiny Panel which provides oversight of the OOCB process which meets quarterly to review a sample of cases. Internally STYJS undertakes periodic audits of OOCB cases and reviews of the decision-making process, and all assessment and planning are subject to QA. The most recent audit was undertaken in July 2023 and this audit found:

- 92% of assessments were judged to be of the required standards
- Challenges were identified in regard to risk judgements in some cases
- 93% of cases showed good levels of engagement with consideration given to the learning and behavioural needs of young people
- 93% of cases showed that there was a strong partnership approach in cases
- 93% of the young people successfully completed the programme
- Only 1 young person (7%) went on to re-offend



## Remands

STYJS takes a proactive approach to reducing the use of Remands to Youth Detention Accommodation and seeks to offer the most appropriate options to the court. The introduction of the Custody Navigators has provided an opportunity to engage early with the young person in the youth custody suite to allow staff to build relationships, get to know the young person and build trust.

When considering options for young people at risk of Remand to YDA, STYJS Court staff will engage in discussion with other relevant court users (CPS and defence for example) to discuss what we feel is an appropriate option based on the nature of offending and the risks presented by the young person. All options will be considered including bail support and remands to local authority care where this is a suitable alternative to a remand to YDA.

During 2023-24 there were 18 remand outcomes including 6 RYDA for young people, 2 Remands to Local Authority Accommodation, 5 ISS Bail and 5 Court Bail.

The 2023 Standards for Children in the Justice System audit identified that the STYJS Remand Strategy was out of date, and this will be updated and revised during 2024-2025.

## **Restorative Approaches and victims**

When considering this section of the Youth Justice Plan it is important to differentiate between Restorative Justice and work with victims and the Restorative Practice which we seek to inform all our work.

With reference to restorative justice and victims of crime STYJS is compliant with the Victims Code of Practice and we seek to engage with all victims who wish to participate in restorative interventions. During 2024-2025 our focus will be on the timeliness of our engagement with victims to ensure the victims voice can be heard in decision making processes, including OOC Panels, Referral Order Panels and Pre-Sentence Reports. Focus will also be on what support can be provided to victims including referrals on to specialist support services and assistance with schemes such as Criminal Injuries and the Victims Right to Review. We will continue to assess victim satisfaction as this provides an indicator of the effectiveness of our work.

During 2023-2024 STYJS has sought to extend the range of reparation activity we can offer to victims and young people and there has been an increase in schemes working in shops, working with community gardens, a community mural and the In/Out of the Cold Homelessness project. The introduction of the community allotment has provided us with a scheme to contribute to the work of food banks by donating produce.

With reference to Restorative Practice, our aim is to have restorative principles and approaches as the underlying culture in our work. This offers the potential to build on our strengths and the strengths in the young person's lives through a high challenge and high support approach. To support this approach, we have embarked on a rolling programme of staff and volunteer training to raise awareness of this restorative approach and build the skills and knowledge base we need in the service to underpin this.

STYJS recognises the importance of effective support and guidance for our staff who are working with victims of crime. During 2024-2025 we will be seeking to identify a suitable local partner who can support our staff and provide reflective supervision for their work with victims.

## **Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding**

The Home Office Serious Violence Duty requires organisations to work together to challenge, prevent and reduce incidents of serious violence to make communities safer. STYJS adheres to this approach. Serious violence and exploitation are significant factors in the lives of the young people we work with and the YJS seeks to work with our colleagues in the Police, children's services and other public and voluntary sector services to co-ordinate our response to these issues.

STYJS reports all serious incidents which require notification to the YJB in a timely manner. YJB guidance requires all YJS's to report incidences of offending by young people relating to Murder/Manslaughter, Attempted Murder, Rape, Grievous Bodily/Wounding with intent Terrorism or where a child dies while they are on the YJS Caseload. Between April 2023 to March 2024 STYJS submitted 5 serious incident notifications to the YJB, this reflects the increasing seriousness of offending by young people.

STYJS plays a significant role in CURV, the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence with representation at both strategic and operational level enabling the YJS to have a voice in key decision making. The introduction of the Custody Navigators is an example of this joined up approach. Working in the police custody suite the Navigators provide an opportunity to engage with young people involved in serious and violent offending and offer them support and access to services. The Navigators work pro-actively with other services in custody to ensure a joined-up approach to meeting the needs of the young person and provide ongoing support in the community

where this is needed and the young person agrees to engage, including those young people released on bail or released under investigation.

STYJS is also represented by the Head of Service in the Tees Strategic Exploitation Group and representation is also in place at VEMT groups and vulnerable children/risk management groups in both local authorities. These also for a co-ordinated case level approach to supporting the young person with each agency accountable for their role in the young person's plan.

The introduction of SHiFT in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland offers a new intensive approach to working with young people at risk of exploitation. STYJS is co-located with the Middlesbrough SHiFT team, and we hope to develop strong working arrangements with both Teams as their practice becomes more embedded.

## **Working with Families**

The focus of much of the work of the STYJS is with the individual child, however in all cases we seek to engage with parents and carers to ensure that they can be supported to assist our work with their child. STYJS engages with Early Help services to offer pathways for those families which need more support, and we work closely with the Supporting Families Service to ensure that families can be identified for additional support where required.

Turnaround offers a whole family approach, and we assess the needs of all family members to ensure that the young person who was the basis of the referral can be supported in a wholistic way through support to parents and siblings.

The prevention group programme Tuff Tees and Ladybugs also offer support to siblings of young people engaged with this service. In this way we hope to maximise engagement and meet the needs of all family members where appropriate.

One of the challenges facing the YJS in regard to working with families is the absence of a suitable and accessible parenting offer which could support our work and support the parents of the young people we work with.

## **Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement**

STYJS has experienced a rise in the use of custody during 2023-2024, with 6 young people receiving custodial outcomes at court, and this represents a doubling of the figure of 3 outcomes for 2022-2023. This increase is representative of the challenges the YJS faces with regards to increases in serious and violent offending and the impact of exploitation on an already vulnerable group.

The resettlement of young people has been identified as a priority in this plan. STYJS recognises the importance of a co-ordinated and positive resettlement approach, and we seek to ensure that all sentence planning is robust with discussion taking place from the point of sentence on the most appropriate license conditions to help support the young person back into the community.

STYJS also recognises the importance of resettlement planning, and we seek to ensure that this starts at the earliest stages. We undertake a multi-agency approach to build on the strengths identified with the young person and address any challenges to effective resettlement with discussions undertaken through the ETE Specialist who will act as a broker to ensure education, training or employment needs are a focus in the resettlement plan. Ongoing liaison takes place with children services and the allocated social worker, to ensure their duties to the young person are fulfilled and appropriate plans for release are in place within a timely manner. All young people are visited in line with the required standards, a minimum of once per month and families are actively encouraged and supported to attend visits and review meetings.

Case managers adopt the STYJS Trauma Informed Model during their assessment process which ensures where additional needs are identified, provisions in this area can be prioritised during the custodial period of the young person's sentence and continued support arranged for the community element.

STYJS continues to work with the Transitions Programme, which includes supporting young people as they leave custody and return to the community.

One of the challenges facing STYJS regarding the resettlement of young people is the transition process for those young people who reach 18 years of age during the custody and upon release. Pressures in the adult estate has meant the STYJS is continuing to hold case responsibility for young people in custody after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday as part of Operation Safeguard. For young people in the community the absence of a seconded Probation Officer has meant that STYJS has had to develop a bridging plan with the Probation Service locally through a named officer to support transition into adult services upon release.

An area for development for the service, in partnership with custodial establishments is the use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). STYJS will be investigating opportunities for the use of ROTL to support young people into ETE placements, build relationships with family and secure suitable accommodation on release.

## **Education Training and Employment**

2024-2025 will be a year of transition for STYJS as the Education Training and Employment Specialist who has been employed by the service since 2020 has moved on into a new post with SHiFT in Middlesbrough. The ETE Specialist has laid solid foundations for the service with effective information sharing arrangements with schools and other ETE providers, the Inclusion Pathway and joined up approaches to meet the ETE needs with education support services and the NEET teams.

The ETE Specialist role has re-established links with all education, training and support providers in the South Tees area, supporting this work with guidance documents and protocols to ensure joint approaches and the sharing of information. Links have been established with SEN, Inclusion, Schools, PRUs and other providers to ensure that where required additional support can be offered to assist young people to engage or re-engage with education. STYJS has joint working protocols in place that allows the service to share information and data on a monthly cycle on school age young people. This information goes to the virtual school, SEN and Inclusion team. This allows for robust and stronger partnership working and provides one consistent message to the family.

A key part of the work of the ETE specialist has been to challenge issues of attendance and inclusion and work in this area has included the Inclusion Pathway in the Middlesbrough area which is designed to improve access to education, attendance, and behaviours in schools. Arrangements are also in place with colleagues in Redcar and Cleveland to share information and undertake joint work with young people at risk of exclusion.

STYJS will be recruiting to the post of ETE specialist as a matter of priority and one of the challenges for the new worker will be to consolidate the work of their predecessor and build on any identified gaps in provision.

Following a successful community reparation scheme, delivered in partnership with a local social housing provider, STYJS are currently exploring an opportunity to develop a pathway for young people to access apprenticeship opportunities with this housing provider. This will be explored further during 2024-2025.

## **STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM**

In 2023-2024 STYJS undertook a self-assessment exercise to review practice against standard 2, Work in Courts of the Standards for Children in the Justice System, as required by the Youth Justice Board. The self-assessment allowed STYJS to rate itself against the 22 actions in this standard. STYJS rated itself to be Outstanding in 11 of the actions, Good in 7 actions and Requires Improvement in 4 of the actions, this outcome was validated and agreed by the YJB.

The self-assessment audit found a number of strengths in STYJS practice in Court, with a designated Court Specialist Officer, supported by other case management colleagues providing a high-quality service and also providing this service for Hartlepool YJS. In addition, the preparation and presentation of reports to Court was found to be a strength with reports being judged as of high



quality and child focussed, based on the feedback we receive from the Court and reports are always delivered in a timely fashion.

The self-assessment also placed some challenges on the service including for us to improve the recording of how parents/carers are informed of court outcomes, how we monitor and challenge any issues of disproportionality as well as identifying the need for an up-to-date remand strategy for the service. Such challenges have been acknowledged by the YJS and the management board and plans have been put in place to address these issues.

During 2024-2025 STYJS will engage in any further self-assessments of the Standards as required by the YJB. To judge compliance against the Standards as part of our ongoing programme of audits, checks will be undertaken to ensure continued good performance against the Standards for Children in the Justice System.

STYJS has a programme of audits every year to assist us to monitor practice, highlight areas of good practice and areas for further development, training and learning. During 2024-2024 the theme of such audits will focus on all areas of case management as we seek to prepare ourselves against a potential HMIP inspection.



Mural by young people in partnership with the YJS, other partner agencies and local residents

## PRIORITIES FOR STYJS IN 2024-2025

Following consultation with all stakeholders the following priorities have been identified by STYJS during 2024-2025. These priorities were presented to the YJS Management Board in January 2024 and received the Management Board's agreement.

### **Priority 1: Prevention and Diversion- To further develop opportunities for prevention and early intervention with young people and their families.**

The Turnaround Programme was introduced in January 2023 and is now the primary non-statutory prevention programme offered by STYJS. This programme is now established and provides a successful option for engaging young people and their families, securing positive outcomes for those who have engaged in the programme. Data for the programme to date shows that none of the young people who have completed a Turnaround intervention have returned to the service via a criminal justice pathway.

Turnaround funding is scheduled to come to an end on 31 March 2025 and information received from the Ministry of Justice indicates that the Turnaround programme will cease. Therefore, it is essential that the YJS starts making plans for how our prevention services will look beyond March 2025. This will include ongoing review and audit of Turnaround work to monitor the effectiveness of this provision.

Discussions will be undertaken with all stakeholders including YJS staff to identify how the YJS prevention offer will look post March 2025, including taking on board learning from Turnaround, the group work activities we deliver, including Tuff Tees and Ladybugs. One of the options available to the service will be to re-establish a prevention model similar to that which we delivered pre-Turnaround, although this is likely to be influenced by the funding and resources available to deliver this work. One of the benefits of this model was that it allowed a range of partners, including schools and other education providers to refer into the service without some of the barriers presented by the Turnaround Criteria.

**Priority 2: Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation- To further develop practice to ensure that STYJS can respond appropriately and effectively to the needs of young people involved in or at risk of serious violence and/or exploitation.**

Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation continue to represent the most significant challenges to the STYJS in our work with young people. During 2023-2024 we have continued to experience a significant increase in the willingness of young people to use weapons and to engage in serious types of offending. The challenge for the YJS is to continue to ensure that services do not work in isolation to address such issues but engage with co-ordinated strategies to engage and support those young people at risk of exploitation or becoming involved in violent offending.

The Custody Navigator scheme funded by the CURV programme, was introduced from July 2023 based within the Young Person's Custody Suite in Middlesbrough Police HQ. The Custody Navigators provide a new service, taking a trauma informed and child first approach to engage with young people involved in serious violence offences, who are brought into the Police Custody area at that 'reachable and teachable' moment at the point they are arrested and open to additional support and provide ongoing intervention and support to divert them away from offending behaviours.

The Custody Navigators have proven to be a highly effective and valued service, providing essential support and engagement to young people in the custody area. This project is funded until March 2025 as part of CURV and therefore discussions will be ongoing during 2024 with regards to securing the future of this provision. STYJS will be actively engaging with the evaluation of the programme which we hope will provide the evidence to highlight the benefits brought by the Navigators and support future funding decisions.

The introduction of SHiFT in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland offers a further opportunity to develop a joined-up approach to work intensively with the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of becoming involved on forms of exploitation and serious offending.

**Priority 3: Preparation for Inspection- To ensure that STYJS are fully prepared for the challenge of a potential HMIP Inspection during 2024-25.**

It is 5 years since STYJS was inspected by the HMIP, receiving a very positive Good Rating across the whole service area and Outstanding Ratings across all but one area of our case management practice. The challenge is now to ensure that the YJS has further developed following the 2019 inspection, taking into consideration the challenges faced by the service brought by changing working arrangements and the significant issues faced by our young people brought by high levels of deprivation, issues of serious violence and exploitation.

Audits and quality assurance processes undertaken by the YJS show that there continues to be a high level of quality in our practice. During 2024-25 we will continue our programme of audits and will also seek to benchmark ourselves against the most recent Inspection Criteria and against the outcomes from other YJS services who have been inspected.

During 2024 STYJS will also be delivering a development session with Management Board members to ensure that they are equipped with a full understanding of the Inspection Criteria and the role that they will play in this.

A new Inspection Framework has now been established and this is planned to be rolled out during 2024 with the first inspections likely to be in early 2025. There is a significant likelihood that STYJS could be subject to an early inspection, given that we were the first YJS to be inspected under the previous framework. Therefore, we need to prepare ourselves for the potential for inspection.

**Priority 4: Education, Training and Employment- To ensure that all young people supervised by STYJS have access to opportunities for Education, Training and Employment.**

The introduction of the ETE Specialist following the previous YJS inspection has proven to be a considerable success with this role having proven to be effective in re-establishing our relationships with schools and other ETE providers, developing the inclusion pathways for young people. In 2024 the postholder moved on into a new opportunity with the SHiFT programme and therefore we face a renewed challenge to identify the right person to move this work forward.

Previous successes include the Inclusion Pathway, in Middlesbrough, which has allowed YJS staff to engage with partners in education and schools to ensure that those young people at risk of exclusion or with poor attendance levels receive the support they need to re-engage with school. The challenge for the new post holder will be to build on this success and engage with partners to ensure that we maximise opportunities for young people.

During 2024-25 we intend to embed our practice and build on our relationships with ETE providers to ensure that the YJS is in a strong position to respond to the new ETE KPI set by the YJB.

**Priority 5: Resettlement- To ensure that young people are effectively supported upon resettlement to the community.**

One of the challenges faced by the Youth Justice Service currently, is an increase in the numbers of young people being made subject to Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation and young people receiving custodial outcomes at court. Therefore, we must ensure that young people receive an effective and supportive experience in custody which contributes to and supports successful resettlement into the community.

Recent research has shown that the experience of young people in custody can best be described as mixed and this includes arrangements made to support their contact with their families and professionals as well the preparation time given to supporting effective resettlement and reducing re-offending.

During 2024-2025 we will be looking to review the custodial offer we make with young people, including the levels of support we offer the young person and the plans we make to support the young person's return to the community. This will also include looking at how other services continue to provide support the young person and ensure that we have a co-ordinated plan for the young person's resettlement.

**Priority 6: Restorative Practice- To establish a Restorative Culture in STYJS which supports effective work with the young people and communities we serve.**

South Tees Youth Justice Service achieved Registered Restorative Organisation approval by the Restorative Justice Council in 2023 and we hope to build on this success during 2024-2025.

The process for developing our submission for the Registered Restorative Organisation Approval showed that although positive steps had been made in our practice there was still challenges to be faced in establishing a truly restorative culture across all areas of the YJS. During 2023-2024 we have sought to further improve our restorative practice with training for Support Workers and Managers and we have also broadened the scope of the reparation work we are offering to support the re-assurance of victims and communities



Therefore during 2024-25 we will be continuing with our programme of training for staff in restorative practice and ensure that all policies and procedures and information we share with young people and victims reflects our restorative culture in terms of language, presentation and how we deliver services.



## CHALLENGES AND RISKS

The environment in which we work continues to be very difficult and challenging. The financial situation continues to present significant risks to the YJS budget with the potential pressures of higher case numbers, increases in remands and the challenging nature of our young people. Some highly successful projects face uncertain future, and this will impact on service delivery as we move forward.

Risks and challenges include:

### 1. Funding for the YJS

During the past year and going forward into 2024-2025 STYJS has benefitted from additional short-term funding to support the delivery of Turnaround, Custody Navigators and Making Good. Current indications are that these funding streams will come to an end in March 2025. This leaves significant question marks over the future delivery of these projects all of which have provided considerable success. STYJS will be working with partners to identify new sources of funding to continue the delivery of these projects or to offer alternative arrangements for service delivery.

Pressures on local authority budgets has resulted in both local authorities taking the decision to reduce their contributions to the STYJS budget, with Redcar and Cleveland reducing its contribution by £69,000 and Middlesbrough making a £7,000 reduction. Such reductions create significant risks for the future of service delivery and could mean that although the YJS will continue to deliver its statutory functions, delivery of non-statutory functions may be limited, and such a reduction will impact on other services provided by STYJS.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to present additional financial challenges for the YJS and the people we work with. The increasing costs of goods and services and staffing costs are not taken into consideration with regards to partner contributions to the budget and this, with the impact of the reductions detailed above add to the pressures on the YJS budgets. In addition, the impact on the young people and families of the cost-of-living crisis will further exacerbate the high levels of deprivation faced by our communities.

### 2. The new Key Performance Indicators

STYJS has embraced the new 10 new KPIs for YJS Partnerships introduced during 2023-2024 and significant work was undertaken to prepare staff and support upgrades to the case management system. However there have been some challenges presented by the new KPIs particularly with reference to the accuracy of reporting and missing information from reports. STYJS continues to work with the YJB and our software partners CACI/Child view, to roll out



the new software to assist YJS staff to record and report accurately to support the reporting of our performance against the 10 KPIs.

### **3. Access to Specialist Services: Mental Health**

During 2023-2024 STYJS was advised that the funding to support the delivery of the Trauma Informed Care Pathway for young people had come to an end and at that time there was no additional funding available to support the TIP pathway.

With the support from the Commissioner from the Integrated Care Board, funding to re-introduce a TIP model has now been secured and currently discussions are ongoing over the form any new service delivery model will take.

Access to Mental Health Services for young people continue to be a challenge, to mitigate against this, discussions are underway to re-establish a pathway into the FCAMHS services locally.

### **4. Access to Specialist Services: Health Practitioner**

STYJS does not have a designated Health Practitioner who can support case managers with health concerns and access health information to inform assessment and planning. This is a significant area of concern and a gap in our statutory duty. Previously the YJS commissioned a practitioner from the School Nursing Service, and this helped develop a pathway into services. During COVID19 this pathway ceased to be effective, and the service has not been able to rebuild the access we need.

### **5. Re-offending**

Re-offending by young people continues to present significant challenges for the YJS. We are now experiencing increases in the number of young people identified in the January to March cohort, the young people tracked for the re-offending KPI. This situation is also impacted upon by the challenges presented by the current YJS cohort many of whom are involved in serious and violent crime and are exploited or are at risk of becoming victims of exploitation.

STYJS will continue to track and monitor our quarterly cohorts to identify those young people who are re-offending and in particular those young people whose behaviours present the most significant concerns.

### **6. Use of Custody**

The increasing complex and challenging nature of the young people we work with will increase the risk of young people receiving custodial outcomes, including sentences and remands. This is evidenced by the relatively high numbers of custodial remands for young people during 2023-2024. Increasing youth violence and violent offending creates a risk that more young people will become involved in criminal exploitation, violent behaviours, use of weapons with higher volumes of offending. The challenge for the YJS is to continue to work with the Police and the Courts to provide meaningful community outcomes for young people.

### **7. Preventions**

The expected ending of Turnaround funding from March 2025 presents a challenge to STYJS with regards to how preventions services will look like after April 2025 and how these will be delivered and resourced. During 2024-2025 STYJS will be looking to learn from our Turnaround programme to identify areas of success and use this to continue to deliver a prevention service in the future. In addition, we will be working with staff and other stakeholders to examine potential future prevention services and how best these can be delivered.

## **8. Access to services to support young people who sexually offend**

Currently STYJS has access to no service provision to provide support and intervention for young people who have engaged in sexual offending or abuse. Previously support could be accessed through Adolescent Forensic Service offered by CAMHS and discussions are ongoing to establish a pathway with the FCAMHS service to support work in this area. YJS staff have been trained to deliver AIM3, but this can only offer a short-term solution which can only be delivered during the period of YJS intervention.

## **9. Provision of a Seconded Probation Officer**

STYJS continues to have no seconded Probation Officer and we have been advised by the Probation Service that they will be unable to provide a seconded Probation Officer to the YJS as is their responsibility under Section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This will mean that the YJS will have to operate outside of the Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System and the Youth to Adult Transition Protocol and means that we are no longer compliant with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as a Youth Justice Service Partnership. This will inevitably mean the timely and safe transition of young people into adult provision will be affected by this. To mitigate against this a pathway has been established through a link worker in the Probation Service for transitions cases to be received, however we are encountering delays in the process and new guidance has meant that some young people continue to be supported by STYJS beyond their 18th birthday. STYJS have claimed financial recompense from Probation to enable the service to invest in additional staffing which can fill the gap created by the lack of a Probation Officer.

STYJS is aware of the ongoing 'Probation Reset' programme and we will work with Probation locally to understand what this means for the transition of young people and other areas of joint working.

## **10. First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System**

During 2023-2024 STYJS has experienced a steady increase in the numbers of First Time Entrants into the criminal justice system including a 200% increase during the third quarter of the year, October to December 2024. The YJS has experienced a number of years whereby the number FTEs has decreased there are now concerns that this may be the start of an upwards trend.

STYJS will continue to offer a range of diversionary OOC interventions to engage with young people and divert them away from offending and the introduction of a more wide-ranging preventions offer will also make a positive contribution to reducing offending and diverting young people away from the criminal justice system.

## **11. Serious and Violent Offending**

During 2023-2024 STYJS has experienced a significant increase in young people becoming involved in forms of serious and violent offending, including attempted murders, woundings and robbery offences. The Custody Navigators were introduced to provide support and intervention to young people in Police custody and following the introduction of the project to March 2024 150 young people from the South Tees area have engaged with the provision, including 139 young people arrested for serious and violent offences. Many of these young people are involved in organised crime groups and subject to forms of exploitation.

This presents a significant challenge to the YJS and other services to develop responses that can respond to the needs of young people involved in serious and violent offending and offer them opportunities to move away from such offending lifestyles.

Such behaviours present other challenges to the service, including increasing the risks to staff safety. To mitigate against such risk, we are delivering training on staff safety and personal protection.

## 12. 2024 General Election

The upcoming General Election presents a level of uncertainty for Youth Justice Services. The YJB has advised that due to the election there will be further delays in the announcement of the youth justice grant, and this causes uncertainty over funding levels which also impact on YJS's capacity to plan effectively. In addition, a new government will bring new direction and potential changes to the criminal justice system which could have implications for future service delivery.

## EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE AND INNOVATION

STYJS has sought to continually develop and improve our practice to ensure the best possible services to the young people we work with and the communities we serve. To this end we have welcomed opportunities to build new and innovative areas of practice and extend the services we offer. STYJS believe that we are innovative and seek to invest in activity which is proven in practice and promotes the best possible outcomes for young people. During 2023-2024 this has included:

### Prevention Intervention and Turnaround

The Turnaround Programme has developed to become the primary preventions offer during 2023-2024. There have been some challenges to the development of the programme in the STYJS area much of this driven by high levels of deprivation which has led to large numbers of children receiving input from Children's Services and therefore limiting their availability options for Turnaround. However, those young people engaged by Turnaround have benefitted from the additional support the programme offers including financial benefits and support, extended intervention and support from YJS staff and partners and the offer of Speech and Language Therapist intervention.

In addition to the case working of preventions cases, STYJS has also delivered the gender-based Tuff Tees and Ladybugs group-based programmes to support young people. These interventions delivered in partnership with the South Tees Public Health Service provide a safe space for young people, life skills interventions and access to other support services where these have been identified. During 2023-2024 we have invested in new equipment including Virtual Reality headsets to offer different ways to deliver intervention with young people.

Further group work opportunities will be provided by the re-introduction of our pre-court intervention programme during 2024-2025. This provision will focus on delivering a programme of interventions targeted towards those young people referred to the YJS for OOCs. The programme will provide a child first approach delivering life skills, inputs from other services and challenge around the impact and consequences of the young person's actions and behaviours.

### Interventions in Education Settings

As part of the Preventions offer STYJS has continued to deliver our school-based programmes, delivering intervention in schools and alternative education providers. Such interventions have focussed on issues including exploitation, violent crime, vaping and knife/weapon-based crime. The interventions have been well received by education providers and during 2024-2025 we hope to extend the reach of such interventions to include year 6/7 young people transitioning from primary to secondary school. To maximise the impact of such work we will also be seeking to co-ordinate delivery with other services including the Police and voluntary sector.

### Holiday Intervention Programmes

As part of our diversion activities with young people STYJS has introduced a programme of targeted holiday intervention. This was identified as a gap in provision for young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour and STYJS sought to fill this gap. The activities have included such things as quad biking, arts activity, cooking and activities on the YJS allotment. There has been a good response to such activities, and these have included some of our hardest to reach young people who have actively participated and engaged well in the programmes offered. Feedback from young people

has been overwhelmingly positive and such work helps to build relationships between YJS staff and the young people we work with. Future schemes are also planned for the summer holidays in 2024 and we hope to enhance the offer by joining with other services and securing additional funding to support such activity.

### Custody Navigators

Introduced into the custody area in Middlesbrough Police HQ from July 2023 the Custody Navigators, funded by CURV, is unique project to provide support and intervention to young people who enter the police custody area. The aim of the Custody Navigators is to engage and provide immediate support with young people at that 'reachable and teachable moment' as the young person enters police custody and may be more receptive to the support offered. The project aims to work with those young people arrested for serious and violent offences, offering support in custody and in the community where the young person agrees to engage. Between July 2023 to March 2024 150 young people from the South Tees area have been supported by the Custody Navigators, including 139 arrested for serious and violent offences.

One of the successes of the Custody Navigator project has been the valued placed on the Navigators by other services in police custody, including detention officers, Police, the Mitie Nurses and Liaison and Diversion. The Custody Navigators have successfully developed effective working relationships and developed pathways with partners to maximise the support for young people.



**Breakout room in the youth custody suite**

More importantly the Custody Navigators are highly valued by young people who recognise the support now available in police custody. Young people now have access to a breakout room to reduce time spent in cells and are offered diversionary toys and activities to assist them during their period in custody.

Feedback received from young people, parents and partner agencies describe the Custody Navigators as 'approachable', 'knowledgeable', 'providing re-assurance' and 'kind'. One parent commented:

*Working extremely well with my son helping to support in making the right choices encouraging courses and help.*

A young person stated:

*"Never been arrested before and I didn't know what was happening, but I'm not as scared now I know what is happening and I've got to speak to you out of that horrible box"*

Case study of young person who has been supported by the Custody Navigators:

*First time arrest for female aged 17 who was brought in for affray, criminal damage and possession of a weapon (Machete).*

*Initially, this female was reluctant to engage in support from all services offered in custody. However, when stood at the booking in desk awaiting charge decision, she was encouraged to speak with K from the Custody Navigator team which was agreed too. K and female spent 1 hour and 40 minutes discussing circumstances she was facing in the community and her frustrations from previous support she was offered but wasn't listened too.*

*Female was then released on bail.*

*Female was then in regular contact with K via email as her phone had been seized from Police to support their investigation.*

*K supported the female in the community to complete a housing application, sign up for the 12-week Princes Trust Programme, re-engage into CAMHS support and access the YJS Turnaround project.*

This programme will be further enhanced by the introduction of an Enhanced Case Worker from May 2024, who will offer a Navigator type support to vulnerable adults in police custody. In addition, CURV are also funding Navigators to support vulnerable people in the Accident and Emergency Department at James Cook Hospital in Middlesbrough.

### Youth Custody Suite

In addition to the Custody Navigator project, STYJS has also played a lead role, with Cleveland Police and the OPCC in the design and delivery of a trauma informed, young person custody area at Middlesbrough Police HQ. This has included artwork painted on cell walls based on designs prepared by young people, a breakout room to offer young people time out of cells, young people have their own entry point and reception and a small exercise area. This means that no child will ever need to come in to contact with an adult offender during their detention. This project will not only benefit countless children for years to come but it also shows the strength in the partnership and Cleveland Police's vision to work differently in this area with children.

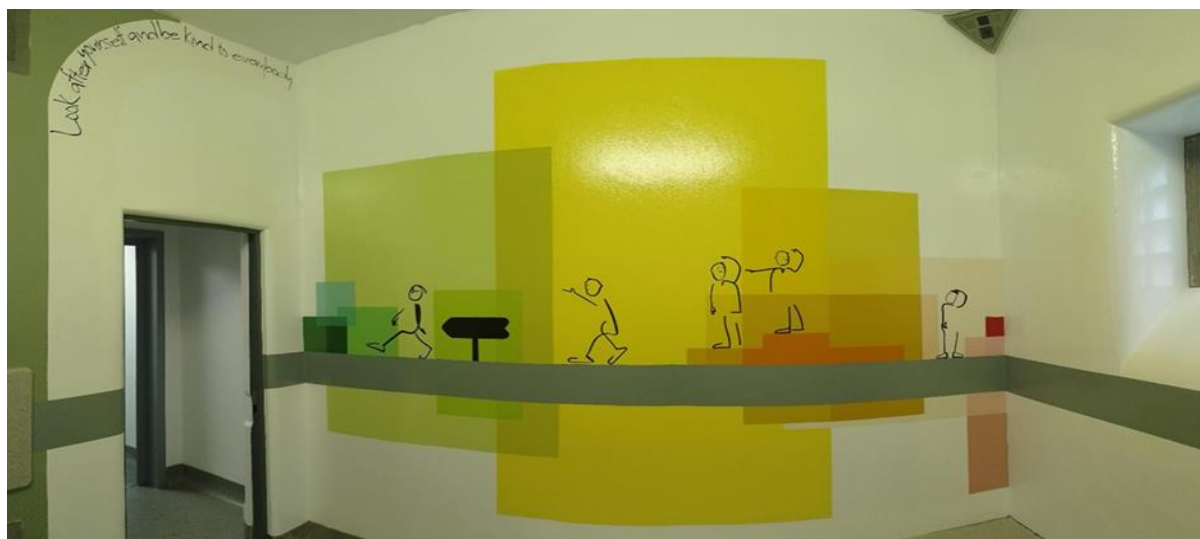


Image from the Youth Custody Suite at Middlesbrough Police HQ

### Inclusion Pathway

In January 2023 STYJS introduced the Inclusion Pathway for STYJS Case Managers to refer into the STYJS Education Training and Employment (ETE) Team for support for young people who are at risk of falling out of Education and Training. This pathway is designed for young people open to the STYJS and is to promote engagement in the education system, improve attendance, prevent exclusions (fixed-term and permanent), improve attainment, and deliver targeted educational support.



The Inclusion Pathway is supported by partners in Education and is designed to deliver effective practice in respect of partnership arrangements with Schools, Colleges and Training Providers which actively support the delivery of education.

During 2023 the Inclusion Pathway engaged with 89 young people identified as at risk of exclusion and/or poor attendance. The average attendance for all young people in the first month of commencement was 74%. The attendance was then captured on case closure and the average attendance increased to 87%. Therefore, giving a total of 13% increase in attendance for year 2023.

With reference to exclusions in the 2021/22 academic year there had been 120 permanent and fixed term exclusions for children open to the STYJS in Middlesbrough. This relates to 34 students, 4 of whom were excluded permanently. The Inclusion Pathway commencement dates were from Jan 2023 to Dec 2023. Over the course of this period there were 107 exclusions giving a decrease of 13 exclusions.

### Speech, Language and Communication

Since January 2023 South Tees Youth Justice Service has commissioned a highly specialist speech and language therapist (SALT) for 0.6WTE to meet the needs of the YJS service including Turnaround.

The Therapist has proven to be a highly successful resource for the YJS offering advice and guidance to staff, training in communication and language, support and intervention with young people and support to parents. Since the introduction of the SALT offer in January 2023 80 young people have been referred to service (31 from Redcar and Cleveland and 49 from Middlesbrough), with 65 young people receiving intervention.

In addition, the Therapist has worked closely with the ETE Specialist to challenge schools where a young person has been at risk of exclusion and promote the benefits of greater communication and language awareness to understand a child's behaviours and responses. Of the 80 young people referred for SALT intervention 34 young people had received a permanent exclusion from school.

The work of the Speech and Language Therapist is highly valued by staff, young people and parents. YJS staff view the SALT offer to be effective to their work and describe how the Therapist can always respond appropriately to the needs of young people.

Comments from parents show the value such work brings, with one parent stating:

*Just wanted to say thank for all of your help and support over the months. Finally, after your help I am getting somewhere.*

A young person commented:

*Thank you so much for all of your support – you get me!*

### Making Good/Immediate Justice

Part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, STYJS in partnership with the other Cleveland YJS and the OPCC launched the Making Good Immediate Justice Programme in September 2023. The aim of Making good is to engage with young people who have been referred following incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour. The Programme challenges such behaviours and engages young people into activities to repair any harm caused. Since the introduction of Making Good, 28 young people have been referred to the programme, with 18 being contacted within 48 hours and 6 completing the activity.

Case Study Child L:

*L came through to the Making Good programme on a referral from a Stage 2 Warning letter from Community Safety. The behaviour complained about is in relation to L being part of a group that were heaving intoxicated on the Esplanade at Redcar. Due to possible risks, it was necessary for Officers to bring L home. L's mum agreed for*

*her to participate in the Making Good Programme and specifically requested an intervention around alcohol due to concerns that L's behaviours were being influenced by alcohol use.*

*As part of the programme L engaged in 2 intervention sessions including a focus on ASB and her alcohol use. Work focussed on how L's behaviours can impact on victims and the community with an additional focus on the long-term impact of alcohol and risks caused by spiking of drinks. In addition, L completed a reparation activity in the Red Lion Garden in Redcar, and as part of this activity discussed how the garden was a haven for elderly residents with work focussing on clearing weeds and debris to improve access.*

*Through Making Good Intervention L has had the opportunity to open up and reflect on her history with anti-social behaviour, reflect on how this can affect herself and others within her community and she has now given something back to her community in the form of reparation. Workers involved feel like L has been focussed and possibly even felt a sense of accomplishment about completing the programme.*

*Feedback from L and her mum has been positive:*

*L stated: "I liked E (the worker). I found her very easy to talk to, she said she was not strict and found her very funny. L enjoyed her time with E doing the gardening."*

*Mum stated "I found E to be a lovely person, I must admit I was quite nervous at first and wasn't sure what to expect, but I needn't have worried as she was a normal person, easy to talk to and very friendly. I am thankful for all the advice and time that she has spent with L."*

## LOOKING FORWARD

Looking Forward to 2024-2025 there are a number of challenges facing the service and many of these are outlined above. With challenge comes opportunity and the STYJS will be looking forwards to further developing the scope of our work, with a specific focus on prevention and diversion and establishing a child focussed, restorative culture in the service.

- Prevention will be a significant area for development during 2024-2025 and the end of Turnaround presents a significant challenge to the service. There are uncertainties over funding, however STYJS will be looking forwards, engaging with key stakeholders and staff to identify a new model for prevention which creates opportunity for young people and supports them to move away from offending behaviour.
- The new SHiFT programmes in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland create opportunities for positive engagement with our most vulnerable and at-risk young people. As a key partner in both areas STYJS will be supporting the development of the SHiFT models locally and seeking to ensure that these offer maximum benefits for the young people engaging with these services.
- STYJS continues to identify opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities and repair any harm brought by their behaviours. Reparation activity has previously included working in charity shops, supporting the In/Out of the Cold annual homelessness project as well supporting work to improve community spaces. During 2024-2025 STYJS will be further developing our community reparation activity to create a project which can offer young people practical skills and interests, while also growing produce that can be donated to local community foodbanks.
- Developing a Restorative culture which encompasses all areas of the service and can influence how other services work with young people is an aspiration STYJS will continue to try to achieve. During 2023-2024 further steps were made to achieving this goal with training to support staff and managers and during 2024-2025 we will continue this staff development activity with training of all staff in the service and the development of a framework of procedures and practice guidance which can guide how we work.
- As child focussed service the voice of the child is an important part of the foundations upon which we are seeking to build the service. Previously we have engaged young people in the

redesign and rebranding of the YJS with a new vision and mission statement. During 2024-2025 we hope to build on the influence young people can have on service delivery and design with such activities as further developing our young person's survey, seeking young people's views on the services we deliver, listening to these and developing practice where this is possible.

## **SIGN OFF AND APPROVAL OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Brown', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Rob Brown  
Director of Education and Partnerships- Middlesbrough  
Chare of the South Tees Youth Justice Service Management Board



## APPENDIX 1: STYJS Executive Management Board Membership

Name	Organisation
Director of Education & Partnerships	Middlesbrough Council (Chair of the Board)
Head of Partnerships	Head of STYJS
Cleveland Police	Head of Prevention, Intervention & Offender Management
Asst. Director of Partnerships, Quality & Performance	Redcar & Cleveland Council (Vice Chair)
Councillor	Redcar & Cleveland Council
Youth Justice Board for England & Wales	Head of Innovation & Engagement (Northeast)
Councillor	Middlesbrough Council
Acting Legal Team Manager	His Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS)
Head of Commissioning & Strategy	Integrated Care Board (ICB)
Interim Public Health Principal	South Tees Public Health
Commissioning Officer	Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Head of Area (South Tees)	Probation Service
Head of Education and Alternative Provision	Middlesbrough Council

Meeting attendance	18/04/23	11/07/23	18/10/23	16/01/24
Prevention & Partnerships MBC	✓	Apols	Apols	Apols
STYJS (Head of Service)	✓	✓	✓	✓
YJB	✓	✓	✓	✓
R & C Children's Services	✓	✓	✓	✓
NPS			✓	
Police	Apols	✓	✓	✓
Commissioning - CCG		✓	✓	✓
Legal - Courts				
Public Health M'bro/R&C	✓	✓	✓	Apols
Councillor MBC	✓			✓
Councillor RC	Apols	✓	✓	
PCC	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education MBC	✓	Apols	✓	✓

## APPENDIX 2– STYJS Statutory Functions

### Statutory functions include:

- Statutory Responsibility for Court Orders (Community and Custody) as they relate to young people, including all Requirements and Licences
- Compliance with National Standards for Youth Justice 2013 (accountable to Ministers)
- Enforcement of Court Orders and Licences
- Provision of Out of Court Disposals (Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions)
- Prevention of offending and re-offending by young people
- Provision of Court staffing (Youth, Crown, Remand Courts, including Saturdays and Bank holidays)
- Provision of Bail supervision functions
- Provision of Appropriate Adults for Police interviews
- Provision of Pre-Sentence Reports
- Provision of community volunteers for Referral Order panels
- Recruit, train, manage, supervise and deploy volunteers to carry out statutory functions
- Provision of Referral Order Panel reports
- Provision of YJMIS data/management information to YJB/MoJ regarding youth justice cases
- Delivery of Court ordered reparation to community and victims
- Provision of a service to victims of youth crime
- Comply with arrangements for multi-agency public protection (MAPP)
- Duty to cooperate with MAPP, LSCB, VEMT, CSPs etc.
- Duty to cooperate regarding safeguarding and public protection incidents in the community (YJB)
- Statutory duty to provide and support a Management Board for the YJS
- Management and development of the Junior Attendance Centre
- Statutory duty to produce and deliver an annual Youth Justice Plan
- Management of children Remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation (RYDA)
- Statutory duty to cooperate with Children's Services to improve wellbeing of children
- Management of sex offenders (AIM) – young people under 18 years of age
- Provision of Parenting Orders imposed in the Youth Court (criminal matters)
- Provision of ASB escalation supervision (Criminal Behaviour Orders and Injunctions to prevent nuisance and annoyance)

### Additional functions include:

- Provision of integrated Out of Court delivery including Restorative Interventions, Community Resolution and Outcome 22
- Manage safeguarding and risk management inherent in all the above tasks
- Provision of prevention and diversion activities with young people and families, including Turnaround



APPENDIX 4 South Tees Youth Offending Service: Service Development Plan

**South Tees Youth Justice Service: Service Development Plan 2024-2025**

<b>Priority 1: Prevention and Diversion- To further develop opportunities for prevention and early intervention with young people and their families.</b>			
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Review/Update on Actions/RAG Rating</b>
Undertake a scoping and consultation process with staff and stakeholders to identify a preferred model for prevention service delivery after April 2025.	Head of Service Partnerships Manager Operations Manager	September 2024	
Consult with partners in Police and voluntary sector to identify what provision they currently offer.	Head of Service Partnerships Manager Operations Manager	September 2024	
Prepare a report to the YJS Management Board outlining the options for prevention service delivery after April 2025.	Head of Service Partnerships Manager	October 2024	
Undertake discussions with the OPCC to identify opportunities to extend the funding for the Custody Navigators, Making Good and OOCDD programmes.	Head of Service Partnerships Manager	March 2025	
Further develop group-based programmes including working in schools, Huff Tees, Lady Bugs. School holiday programmes and the Pre Court programme.	Asst Operations Manager	Ongoing	
Undertake and audit of prevention activity to identify the impact/success of this area of work.	Partnerships Manager Operations Manager	December 2024	
<b>Priority 2: Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation- To further develop practice to ensure that STYJS can respond appropriately and effectively to the needs of young people involved in or at risk of serious violence and/or exploitation.</b>			
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Review/Update on Actions/RAG Rating</b>
With partner agencies undertake a scoping exercise to understand the seriousness and extent of serious violence and how this impacts on young people.	Head of Service Partnerships Manager Operations Managers	December 2024	
Further develop opportunities for staff training and development in this area of work, including specialist training.	All Managers	Ongoing	
Develop the operational links with the SHiFT programme and areas for joined up working.	Operations Managers	Ongoing	
Identify proven in practice interventions and programmes which can support the work of the YJS.	All Managers	Ongoing	

Deliver programmes of intervention to engage and divert young people at risk of serious violence and exploitation	Asst Operations Managers	Ongoing	
<b>Priority 3: Preparation for Inspection – To ensure that STYJS are fully prepared for the challenge of a potential HMIP Inspection during 2024-25.</b>			
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Review/Update on Actions/RAG Rating</b>
Undertake a benchmarking exercise against the current Inspection Standards to identify the base line for STYJS	Partnerships Manager	October 2024	
Undertake a full case file audit of STYJS cases using the Inspection CARAG tool	All Managers	September 2024	
Develop a programme of case file audits which also reflects thematic inspections to establish the position of STYJS in relation to themes in criminal justice	All Managers	July 2024	
Benchmark STYJS against Youth Justice Inspection Reports and Thematic Inspection Reports to ensure STYJS preparedness for Inspection	Partnerships Manager Asst Operations Manager	Ongoing Action	
Deliver a development with session with Management Board Members to raise their awareness of the inspection process	Head of Service	October 2024	
<b>Priority 4: Education, Training and Employment- To ensure that all young people supervised by STYJS have access to opportunities for Education, Training and Employment.</b>			
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Review/Update on Actions/RAG Rating</b>
Employ a new Education, Training and Employment Specialist to lead in this area of work.	Partnerships Manager	July 2024	Interviews were held in May 2024 and awaiting clearance to appoint a new worker into post
Review practice in this area to identify gaps in provision and opportunities for new areas of work.	ETE Specialist	September 2024	
With partners, including Police, schools and Education Support Services undertake a review of offending by young people to identify levels of offending during school times.	ETE Specialist	December 2024	
YJS ETE Specialist to build maintain and enhance links to Education Support Services across both local authority areas.	ETE Specialist	Ongoing	
<b>Priority 5: Resettlement- To ensure that young people are effectively supported upon resettlement to the community.</b>			
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Review/Update on Actions/RAG Rating</b>
Prepare a new Remand Strategy to guide practice in this area.	Partnerships Manager Operations Managers	October 2024	

Undertake a review of RYDA cases from 2023-2024 to identify any learning and practice development areas to report this to the YJS Management Board	Partnerships Manager	October 2024	
Examine opportunities to extend the use of the Release on Temporary Licence scheme to support the resettlement of young people.	Operations Manager	December 2024	
Support and work with parents/families of young people to assist them during custody and resettlement processes.	All Staff	Ongoing	
Work with the Probation Service to understand the potential implications for practice of developments in the Probation Service relation to Transition and Resettlement of 18 year olds.	All Managers	December 2024	
Introduce Resettlement Panels as a multi-agency forum to support planning for the resettlement of young people.	Operations Managers	September 2024	
<b>Priority 6: Restorative Practice- To establish a Restorative Culture in STYJS which supports effective work with the young people and communities we serve.</b>			
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Who will do it</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Review/Update on Actions/RAG Rating</b>
Roll out Restorative Practice Training to all staff in the YJS.	Restorative Justice Specialist	September 2024	
Prepare and re-submit application for Restorative Justice Organisation to the Restorative Justice Council.	Restorative Justice Specialist	September 2024	
Review Restorative Practice Guidance.	Restorative Justice Specialist	October 2024	
Undertake a scoping exercise of current Restorative practice and processes to identify gaps in practice and areas for development.	Partnerships Manager Restorative Justice Specialist	November 2024	
Prepare reports to the YJS Management Board on Restorative Justice activity, including a focus on work with victims, reparation, and forms of mediation.	Restorative Justice Specialist	Ongoing	
Identify opportunities to provide reflective support and supervision to staff working with victims of crime.	Partnerships Manager	September 2024	

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## APPENDIX 5: Common Youth Justice Terms

<b>ACE</b>	Adverse Childhood Experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long-lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
<b>AIM 2 and 3</b>	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
<b>ASB</b>	Anti-social behaviour
<b>AssetPlus</b>	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and adolescent mental health services
<b>CCE</b>	Child Criminal Exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
<b>Children</b>	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
<b>Child First</b>	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
<b>Child looked-after</b>	Child Looked After, where a child is looked after by the local authority
<b>CME</b>	Child Missing Education
<b>Constructive resettlement</b>	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
<b>Contextual safeguarding</b>	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety
<b>Community resolution</b>	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
<b>CURV</b>	Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence- a joined-up, preventative approach to tackling serious violence, with the Commissioner's office taking a leading role in bringing together local

	organisations such as the police, YJS, local authorities, public health teams and local hospital trusts.
<b>Custody Navigator</b>	A new role in the YJS designed to act as a key support to young people in the Police Custody area, to engage young people to divert them away from offending
<b>EHCP</b>	Education and Health Care Plan, a plan outlining the education, health, and social care needs of a child with additional needs
<b>ETE</b>	Education, Training or Employment
<b>EHE</b>	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
<b>EOTAS</b>	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
<b>FTE</b>	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
<b>HMIP</b>	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
<b>HSB</b>	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
<b>Immediate Justice-Making Good</b>	Part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, to engage young people involved in anti-social behaviour and crime into swift and visible interventions to challenge behaviours and reduce harm
<b>ISS</b>	Intensive Supervision and Surveillance-a high intensity programme used as part of the Youth Rehabilitation Order as an alternative to custody
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi agency public protection arrangements
<b>MFH</b>	Missing from Home
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
<b>OOCD</b>	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court



<b>Outcome 22/21</b>	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
<b>Over-represented children</b>	Number of children and young people appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
<b>RHI</b>	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
<b>ROTL</b>	Release on Temporary Licence
<b>SLCN</b>	Speech, Language and Communication needs
<b>STC</b>	Secure Training Centre
<b>SCH</b>	Secure Children's Home
<b>Turnaround</b>	This is an early intervention, diversion and prevention programme designed to divert young people away from involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour
<b>VEMT</b>	Relates to young people who may be Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing or Trafficked
<b>Young adult</b>	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
<b>YJS</b>	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
<b>Youth Justice KPIS</b>	This refers to the key performance indicators for Youth Justice with an additional 10 introduced from April 2023
<b>YOI</b>	Young Offender Institution

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## Navigation menu

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Youth Justice Board  
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

## Applies to England and Wales

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## 1. Context and legal framework

Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJSs) [\[footnote 1\]](#). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how YJSs in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out.

The plan should address the functions assigned to a YJS, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending<sup>[footnote 2]</sup>.

Whilst the Act refers to an annual plan, we recognise that planning over a longer period may be more effective. Local partnerships may, if they choose, produce a plan over multiple years; in this case an annual update will be required, covering progress against priorities, a summary of performance, any changes in demographics and legislation, and any additional reporting requirements.

Whilst these statutory requirements state the minimum information required within the youth justice plan, this guidance sets out further considerations for partnerships on both the content and structure of your youth justice plan; and asks for reflection on how the service takes a strength-based approach towards delivering a Child First justice system.

The YJB recommends that partnerships engage their YJB leads in reviewing the content of plans and seek timely feedback before formal submission.

Youth justice plans should be submitted using the headings set out in the '[Youth Justice Plan Structure](#)' section below. The data and information contained within the plan is used by the YJB as an intelligence source to provide support to the sector through our oversight function. Analysis of the information identifies good performance and can provide focus on regional and national themes. The aggregated data on priorities, risks and practice is used to provide advice to ministers and inform the YJB's strategic influence across government.

We recognise that local areas will have their own governance arrangements in place. The policy context will be different depending on whether your YJS is in England or in Wales (for example in relation to education, health or social care). Your plan should reflect the relevant legislation and policy for your country. We encourage the practice for plans to be developed in consultation with children and their families, staff and volunteers, statutory and non-statutory partnership organisations and board members.

The plan must be submitted to the YJB by 30 June each year to ensure timely payment of your Youth Justice Grant, you can submit prior to this date if you wish. Please e-mail your plan to [CBU@yjb.gov.uk](mailto:CBU@yjb.gov.uk), copying in your YJB lead.

Youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and

Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. This regulation does not apply to Wales.

If you have not been able to achieve full sign off by the 30 June, your plan can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date. The 'sign off' by the Chair is an indication that the wider management board have approved the submitted plan and all sections outlined in the [Youth Justice Plan Structure](#) have been covered.

There is a requirement for YJSs to publish their youth justice plan<sup>[footnote 3](#)</sup>.

At the end of this document is a [summary outline of grant requirements against terms and conditions](#) to support services understanding of minimum compliances.

## 2. Child First

You will be aware that the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) vision is of a Child First youth justice system.

The evidence supports this as the best approach to achieve better child outcomes. [A guide to Child First](#).

The content of plans should reflect your activity in working to achieve the above vision.

## 3. How to produce your plan

Your [youth justice management board](#) should govern and own the process of producing the local youth justice plan; it is their opportunity to collectively shape the direction of the delivery of youth justice so that it best meets the needs of the locality, children, families, victims and communities.

Opportunities for wider participation, significantly where children and their families can themselves shape and influence the delivery of your service, are also strongly encouraged.

## 4. Youth justice planning process – what might it include?

The management board (led by the Chair) should take the lead for planning and should include the following:

### 4.1 Reflect and plan

- Look back and learn from the past to recognise achievements and consider plans based on what is known now as well as looking to the future.
- Consider current performance, including performance data against local and national indicators over the previous 12 months, information on serious incidents in the area and learning from these, self-assessment against the [standards for children in the youth justice system](#) and other existing improvement plans.
- Identify and understand the needs of children in the justice system and the areas for prioritisation to support good outcomes.
- Consider the key risks, issues and challenges.
- Involve input from [children](#), their families and carers, enabling the voice of the child and user feedback and participation.
- Consult with staff and volunteers, particularly regarding improvements to service delivery and identifying learning and development needs of the workforce to support performance improvement and better outcomes.

### 4.2 Engage wider strategic partnerships

- Consider the regional and national context in which the partnership is operating. For example, 'what is the strategy and vision of key stakeholders within which the youth justice plan will 'sit'?'
- Take on board relevant wider strategic plans, (including perhaps your Police and Crime Plan, local authority plans (Children and Young People Plan for example), Violence Reduction Unit/Community Safety Partnership/Local Criminal Justice Board/Public Health Plans).
- Share with wider strategic partners who have not been involved in the development of the plan for feedback and amendments.

The youth justice plan should set out the direction and strategy of youth justice services (YJSs), describing how in particular, quality services will be provided to ensure positive outcomes for children and improvements in performance.

It is important to understand the needs and diversity of the local children's population, to devise and deliver appropriate individual and personalised services.

### **4.3 Audience, design and length**

Your youth justice plan should be available and accessible to local leaders and the local community, to understand and be aware of services delivered to children in the justice system in your area. Please visit the [Youth Justice Resource Hub](#) for examples of accessible plans and plans designed for children to read.

The length of the plan is very much determined locally. The YJB provides a template for the structure, but the level of detail should be determined by the local partnership, according to local need.

## **5. Youth justice plan structure**

To aid youth justice partnerships in the production of the youth justice plan, commentary against the structure has been provided below.

Please use this structure as your template, ensuring each section is covered in your plan.

### **Introduction, vision and strategy**

A foreword or statement introducing the plan from the Chair, or a senior representative of the local authority, confirming that the plan has been developed and agreed with youth justice partners and offers evidence of governance of the plan.

You may wish to provide information about the local context of both the service and local delivery environment. This can include information about the known demographics of the local population or any issues and

concerns that impact on children in maximising their potential such as ethnicity, poverty and social deprivation, and children who have experienced care.

### **Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements**

This section should provide an overview of how the partnership is meeting statutory requirements for the oversight of youth justice services (YJS).

An account of the local governance arrangements for YJSs should be included, outlining how the youth justice management board links in with other partnership and local governance arrangements with relevant oversight responsibilities and shared aims.

A description of the partnership arrangements, at both an operational and strategic level, that contribute to support for children in the justice system should be outlined. As a multi-agency partnership, YJSs must contain specialists, or access to specialist provision for children being supervised, this includes the police, health, education, social work and probation as a minimum. A description of operational partnerships should include confirmation that this is the case. This should also include details of the relevant partnership provision, in staffing, financial contribution and how those arrangements work in practice, in addition to describing the workforce available to deliver statutory youth justice work. This section should include information on:

- Where the service is located within the local authority, or otherwise, and the rationale.
- The seniority of the YJS Head of Service role, including any other lead responsibilities.
- The full staffing structure showing details of the staff roles in the YJS and the reporting arrangements for the Head of Service should be included as an appendix within the plan. A separate table should also be included as an appendix recording the ethnicity, sex and known disability of staff.

Please include in this section a description of the partnership arrangements you have locally with the voluntary and community sector.



## **5.1 Update on the previous year:**

### **Progress on priorities in previous plan**

This section should include a commentary on performance on the key activities identified in the previous plan. Information should be provided on what activities and objectives were achieved in the preceding year. Progress should be reported on those actions that are still outstanding, or partially achieved. Any barriers to the successful completion of activities should be identified, and if still appropriate, what actions are planned to mitigate or overcome any barriers to achievement.

### **Performance over the previous year**

This section should contain a summary of performance against national indicators describing what current performance looks like, what has contributed to good or poor performance, and what the partnership is aiming for in the future. You should refer to performance against the national Key Performance Indicators, and any recent inspection outcomes.

Local performance targets are encouraged, and you may wish to include local data to measure these targets.

### **Risks and issues**

Here we are defining a risk as a potential or emerging factor which may impede the delivery of positive outcomes for children in your area. An issue is something which has already occurred or is currently happening which is affecting outcomes.

This section should include:

- an outline of current risks and issues to local youth justice services (YJSs)
- what actions are being taken to address existing issues
- what proposed action may be needed to address potential risks should they emerge.

## 5.2 Plan for the forthcoming year:

### Child First

The YJB is committed to ensuring that we understand and promote across the youth justice system what the evidence tells us works best with children. Our focus on the principle of [Child First](#) is routed in this commitment. This section should be used to demonstrate how the partnership plans to implement the four tenets of the Child First principles into practical service delivery:

- Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
- Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their prosocial identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
- Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
- Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

In this section please include information on how the partnership works collaboratively with the child and how their [voice is heard](#). This section should include:

- what has been done with that information or feedback
- any tangible examples of how feedback from children has been used to make changes in service delivery
- information about the process undertaken to gather the feedback, and how that is analysed for service development.

You may wish to include individual quotes from children and their families and carers.

However, the principle of Child First is not limited to this section and the plan should also demonstrate how this ethos is woven throughout other elements of service delivery. You may wish to use case examples, or individual quotes from children and their families and carers.

## **Resources and services**

Your youth justice plan will need to provide assurance that the youth justice core grant will be used appropriately (as described in the Terms and Condition of Grant).

In this section you are required to include details of:

- how the youth justice core grant will be used
- partnership resources that contribute to the aims and expected outcomes of the plan, adding Table B5: Budget Costs and Contributions as an appendix if available (please refer to the YJB Data Recording Requirements for Youth Justice Services in England and Wales).

A description of effective and efficient use of resources should be linked to performance and outcome measures set out in the plan. e.g.

we use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver these services and we believe they produce the following benefits and outcomes. Our performance will be improved next year by...

## **Board development**

The YJB expects local management boards to take responsibility for all aspects of youth justice service governance; to lead strategically across relevant partners and to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children. In 2021 the YJB provided updated guidance on [youth justice service governance and leadership](#) to support this. Your youth justice plan should set out what are the plans for partnership improvements and board development.

## **Workforce Development**

Please provide information on what activity will take place for workforce in the next year. This should include an analysis of the workforce development needs of the staff in the service and the plans to deliver training and development. You may wish to reference training or development delivered in the past year and how this has impacted on service delivery.

Identify ways in which the workforce is supported, providing specific examples for promotion of the resilience and wellbeing for staff such as clinical supervision, peer to peer mentoring, etc.

### **Evidence-based practice and innovation**

Please give us examples of interesting local practice or innovation. This can include practice that has been developed in response to the specific needs of a group of children, responses to support prevention and diversion, build strengths, engage children in services, or meet specific needs.

### **Evaluation**

In this section examples of practice should be included that meet the definition of evidence-based practice. If there has been any evaluation, either in-house, or externally validated, this should also be included.

### **Priorities for the coming year**

It is important during the preparation of your youth justice plan that you consider and capture detail around the following:

### **Standards for children**

Your youth justice plan should include information on:

- the findings from your most recent [standards](#) for children in justice self assessments
- actions completed to address gaps found in internal audits
- planned activity for the coming year.

### **Service development**

Please summarise your plan for ongoing improvement and development of your service. You should include progress against key findings from any relevant local inspection action plans, HM Inspectorate of Probation thematics, serious incident review or learning exercises that have taken place in the last 12 months; and how the [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Strategic Plan](#) will influence your local plan.

Note: the 2024 to 2027 plan will be published in the coming week.

### **5.3 National priority areas**

We are keen to understand how your youth justice plan addresses the following priorities. If these have already been covered in previous sections, it is not necessary to repeat information here.

#### **Children from groups which are over-represented**

Children from a range of backgrounds are over-represented in the youth justice system. Your youth justice plan should offer commentary on and analysis of data or intelligence you have about children who may be over-represented in the youth justice system in your area.

This may include Black and Mixed heritage children, children known to social care services, children excluded from school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. There should be an action plan in place, and tackling over-representation should be a concern across the partnership, therefore this should not be limited to the activities of the youth justice service (YJS) and can include wider activities led by partners.

If there is no data to indicate any groups of children are over-represented, this should be acknowledged.

Whilst there are fewer girls in the youth justice system, they do have a specific set of needs, and services should be adapted to meet the needs of the girls supervised by the service. If there are specific services or programmes that have been developed for girls, this should be included in this section.

#### **Policing**

Policing plays an important role in the delivery of outcomes for children in the justice system. It is important to understand how policing in your area is supporting and contributing to national practice. Please outline the strengths of your partnership and examples of positive practice and any challenges and risks.

#### **Prevention** [\[footnote 4\]](#)

Many partnerships are delivering early and/or targeted prevention work with children (together with their families/carers) who may be identified as vulnerable to influence or exploitation, in order to safeguard children and promote positive outcomes to stop them entering the justice system. Please give us an outline of how these services are delivered in your area, data on delivery and any practice examples.

## **Diversion** [\[footnote 4\]](#)

Diversionary work is distinct from preventative intervention. Many partnerships deliver diversionary work with children (together with their families/carers) who have committed an offence(s) to support them to avoid a criminal record and escalation into the justice system. Please tell us about your strategy and processes for diversion, how children are identified for diversion, how the service is delivered, by whom, how success is evaluated and what scrutiny is in place with any practice examples and any supporting data.

In both prevention and diversion, it is recognised that some of this work may be delivered outside of the YJS; this activity should be included in these sections.

## **Education**

Please tell us how the partnership is working to ensure all children known to the service are having their education needs met. This should include information on the education staffing provision in the service, and how this links with other partnership arrangements, such as voluntary sector organisations, academy trusts and the local authority and links to education representation on the board.

Please provide information on any children who are not receiving their education entitlement, are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data should be analysed to identify any disproportionality, and care status of the child.

## **Restorative approaches and victims**

Restorative approaches empower victims and support children to develop a 'pro-social' identity, and to help them to make a positive contribution to their community. Please provide information on the services delivered to victims and how you are delivering the rights to victims as required under the [Victims Code](#).

## **Serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding**

Services are invited to provide a local picture on serious violence and exploitation according to the [Home Office Serious Violence Duty](#) (December 2022). This should include any strategic links to wider partnership arrangements and learnings from past [serious incidents](#).

Please comment on partnership work to address child criminal exploitation, including the service's interaction with the National Referral Mechanism or

equivalent local arrangements. Any work being completed as a result of, or to prevent, radicalisation or extremist activity should be included in this section.

Whilst not applicable to all children who are subject to release under investigation (RUI) arrangements, a number of these investigations will relate to serious violence. This section should address what work is being completed across the partnership in relation to children subject to RUI.

### **Detention in police custody**

Please provide information on children who are detained in custody, including how the service have addressed any local challenges, compliance with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#) and any examples of good practice. Include information around appropriate adult arrangements in your area, such as who provides the service, any local processes and the support of the Emergency Duty Team.

### **Remands**

Children subject to 'Remands to Local Authority Accommodation' and children subject to remands to 'Youth Detention Accommodation' should be covered in this section, and if data is available this should be included. Information should be included on any strategic plans being delivered across the partnership to reduce the use of remands.

### **Use of custody and constructive resettlement**

The use of custody has decreased significantly over the past ten years and this is rightly a success in the youth justice system. When children do go to custody it can have a damaging effect on their lives, disrupting education and straining family relationships. Children in custody are likely to be amongst the most complex and vulnerable children in society. Therefore, even in services where custody rates are low, reference should be made to strategic planning, including work across the partnership for these children and any analysis completed on their needs.

Children leaving custody often face particular challenges in relation to suitable accommodation and this section can include what work the partnership has achieved in implementing the principles of constructive resettlement in practice, maximising where possible the use of temporary release and how they plan to implement the constructive resettlement approach in the future. Case examples can be included.

### **Working with families**

Please tell us about how you work with the whole family or support network of children involved in the justice system. Please include details of your service's interface with Supporting/Strengthening Families services. Please also tell us (where relevant) about services to families in the Welsh language.

## **6. Sign off, submission and approval**

Youth justice plans can be submitted to the YJB at any point, but we request that approved plans are submitted by 30 June at the latest.

Youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with 'Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. This regulation does not apply to Wales.

If you have not been able to achieve full sign off by the 30 June, your plan can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date. The 'sign off' by the Chair is an indication that the wider management board have approved the submitted plan and all sections outlined in the [Youth Justice Plan Structure](#) have been covered.

To submit your youth justice plan you should e-mail [CBU@yjb.gov.uk](mailto:CBU@yjb.gov.uk) and copy in your YJB lead.

The YJB lead covering your region/Wales are available to review and consult on locally approved plans. Should feedback from them be sought, we advise consultation on a draft version take place as early as possible and before formal submission.

While the YJB provides grant to local areas, it is neither a signatory to the plan nor directly responsible for its contents. Consequently, neither the YJB nor the Ministry of Justice logo should appear on the document.



## 6.1 Appendix 1: Staffing Structure

The full staffing structure showing details of the staff roles in the YJS and the reporting arrangements for the Head of Service should be included as an appendix within the plan.

A separate table should also be included as an appendix recording the ethnicity, sex and known disability of staff.

## 6.2 Appendix 2: Budget Costs and Contributions

Budget Costs and Contributions should be supplied as an appendix if available (please refer to the [YJB Data Recording Requirements for Youth Justice Services in England and Wales](#))

## 7. Summary outline of grant compliances

The below replicates Annex 3 within the youth justice core grant terms and conditions. Grant payment is made to the local authority as one lump sum when all the compliances set out below have been met. Payment will be made on condition that the following information will be provided by the timescale indicated. A failure to provide this information could result in the YJB on behalf of the Secretary of State for Justice requiring that the grant payment be returned.

If youth justice services (YJSs) are experiencing delay/difficulties with any of the below, contact with their relevant YJB lead is essential.

Date	Activity	Contact
31 May	Submission of the signed audit certificate for the previous year's Youth Justice Grant	Send to: <a href="mailto:YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk">YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk</a>

Date	Activity	Contact
30 June	Youth justice plan	Send to: <a href="mailto:CBU@yjb.gov.uk">CBU@yjb.gov.uk</a> and copied to your relevant YJB lead
30 June	Submission of a signed agreement of Conditions of Grant (e-signatures are now acceptable) – an email submission to the YJB must be copied to other signatories and state explicitly that the other signatories have agreed to the conditions	Send to: <a href="mailto:YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk">YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk</a>
31 July	Submission of the planned overall income and workforce data for the YJS through the youth justice application framework	Contact: <a href="mailto:InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk">InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk</a>
As per Data Recording	Submission of quarterly case management and AssetPlus data via Connectivity	Contact: <a href="mailto:InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk">InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk</a>

1. The statutory definition of a local youth justice service is contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In statute these are known as youth offending teams. However, as services have evolved, they have become known by different names. We use the term youth justice services to acknowledge the evolution of services in all their

guises and to move away from the stigmatising language of 'offending'. ↩

2. [Crime and Disorder Act 1998, \(Section 40\) \(3\)\(a\)\(b\)](#). ↩
3. [The requirement is set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 \(section 40\) \(4\)](#). ↩
4. [Final Report: Prevention and Diversion Project – Youth Justice Board for England and Wales \(February 2023\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](#) ↩ ↩<sup>2</sup>

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Environment and Community Services
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<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Executive Member for Community Safety
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
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<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
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<b>Title:</b>	Community Safety Plan
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<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Safe and resilient communities
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<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
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<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	
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<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>	
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	That Executive approves the proposed priorities and contents of the Community Safety Plan 2024-2026 at Appendix 1 to this report.
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<b>Executive summary</b>	
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The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places statutory obligations on Community Safety Partnerships to work together. This legislation also requires the Partnership to produce a three year plan detailing how it intends to tackle crime and disorder. This allows for the development of strategies to tackle short, medium and long-term priorities.

This report provides information on the agreed priorities contained within the 2024/26 Community Safety Plan, which has been developed via a series of meetings with Community Safety Partnership members.

## **1. Purpose**

1.1 This report summarises the Community Safety Plan for Middlesbrough 2024-26 and requests Executive note and agree its contents.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 That the Executive approves the proposed priorities and contents of the Community Safety Plan 2024-2026.

## **3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

3.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority's Community Safety Partnership to develop and produce a Community Safety Plan under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

3.2 The key objectives set out in the plan are based upon assessment of crime and disorder issues across the town and reflect the views of the community and our partners.

## **4. Background and relevant information**

4.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places statutory obligations on Local Authorities and the Police to work together with Health Authorities and other relevant agencies to prevent crime and disorder.

4.2 Section 97 of the Police Reform Act 2002 amended the above Act and included the Fire Service and Clinical Commissioning Groups (now Integrated Care Board) as responsible authorities. Further reforms now include Probation Services as a responsible authority as well as the Environment Agency and Registered Social Landlords as 'participatory bodies' within a Community Safety Partnership.

4.3 This legislation requires the Partnership to produce a three year plan detailing how it intends to tackle crime and disorder. This allows for the development of strategies to tackle short, medium and long-term priorities.

4.4 Middlesbrough's latest Community Safety Plan will run until the end of March 2026.

4.5 Earlier this year the Community Safety Partnership held a series of multi-agency meetings and identified the following overarching priorities;

### **Priority 1 Feel safe (perceptions)**

#### Objectives

- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (Inc. environmental crime)
- Improving community cohesion and resilience
- Delivering the prevent agenda

### **Priority 2 – Be Safe (reducing violence)**

Objectives

- Improve mental health
- Reduce exploitation
- Reduce substance misuse
- Reduce domestic violence
- Tackling serious violence

**Priority 3 – Stay Safe (Neighbourhoods)**

Objectives

- Working with communities (doing ‘with’ not ‘to’)
- Improving environmental cleanliness
- Addressing underlying community issues

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

5.1 No other alternatives have been considered as the plan is a statutory requirement.

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

Implementing the community safety plan will help to achieve the four over-arching Mayoral priorities;

- A successful and ambitious town
- A healthy place
- Safe and resilient communities
- Delivering best value

We will work with key partners within our neighbourhoods to ensure our residents “feel safe, be safe and stay safe”.

**7. Financial (including procurement and Social Value)**

The plan will be delivered within approved budgets and grant received. The Council is in receipt of several grants from external bodies that can contribute towards initiatives within the Community Safety Plan in 2024/2025:

Grant Provider	Description	£m
DLUHC	Levelling Up-Neighbourhood Safety	1.900
PCC	Safer Streets	0.332
PCC	Hotspot Policing	0.125
Total		2.357

The service will continue to work with sponsors and external stakeholders to explore further funding streams. Any new funding will enhance the delivery of the plan

**7.1 Legal**

In accordance with Section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the Council is identified as a Responsible Authority for the purposes of the Act and therefore have responsibility for the strategies and functions relevant to it in accordance with the Act.

**7.2 Risk**

There are no risks identified within the plan.

**7.3 Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion**

An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed in due course.

**7.4 Climate Change / Environmental**

N/A

**7.5 Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers**

N/A

**7.6 Data Protection**

All work will be compliant with GDPR requirements.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Detailed delivery plan to be developed.	Jane Hill	October 2024

**Appendices**

1	Community Safety Plan
2	
3	

**Background papers**

Body	Report title	Date

**Contact:** Jane Hill  
**Email:** Jane\_Hill@middlesbrough.gov.uk





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## Middlesbrough Community Safety Plan 2024-26

### Foreword by Geoff Field, Chair of Middlesbrough Community Safety Plan

I am very pleased to present Middlesbrough Council's Community Safety Plan 2024. The Local Authority has a statutory requirement under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act to develop and deliver a Partnership Plan which contains community safety priorities based on the current evidence base across the communities of Middlesbrough.

**Mission Statement** '*... working with partners in our Neighbourhoods to ensure our residents "feel safe, be safe and stay safe".*

Middlesbrough's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together the responsible authorities of Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue, Health and Probation to work in collaboration with other statutory and voluntary services and local people to reduce crime and make people feel safer by dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, deliver the Prevent duty (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015) and ensure specific obligations such as public engagement and delivery of an action plan are met.

The priorities and key objectives set out in this plan are based upon an assessment of crime and disorder issues across the Borough and reflect the views of the community on matters that are important to them to collectively implement and deliver initiatives that will help all areas of Middlesbrough become a safe place to live, work and visit.

#### **Priority 1 Feel safe (perceptions)**

##### **Objectives**

- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (Inc. environmental crime)
- Improving community cohesion and resilience
- Delivering the prevent agenda

#### **Priority 2 – Be Safe (reducing violence)**

##### **Objectives**

- Improve mental health
- Reduce exploitation
- Reduce substance misuse
- Reduce domestic violence
- Tackling serious violence

#### **Priority 3 – Stay Safe (Neighbourhoods)**

##### **Objectives**

- Working with communities (doing 'with' not 'to')
- Improving environmental cleanliness
- Addressing underlying community issues

## About Middlesbrough

Our people are warm, friendly and extremely proud of their town, its industrial heritage and location close to the natural beauty of surrounding countryside and stunning North-East coast. With a vibrant leisure and cultural scene, Middlesbrough likes to work hard and play hard. Middlesbrough is an evolving town, perfectly positioned in the heart of the Tees Valley. In addition to our population of 143,924 we attract over 700,000 regular visitors from the surrounding areas of Tees Valley, North Yorkshire and County Durham who shop, work and enjoy the leisure attractions Middlesbrough has to offer.

Significant changes in the population demographics of Middlesbrough since the 2001 Census highlight an increasingly diverse and ageing population in the town.

Middlesbrough has a total population of 143,924, 60,300 households and 20 electoral wards. Key census 2021 figures for Middlesbrough are:

- 50.7% of the population are female, 49.3% are male (England comparison - 51% female/49% male).
- 12.3% of the population were born outside of the UK (England comparison - 17.4%).
- 17.6% of the population are BAME (England comparison - 19%).
- 61.01% are 'working age' between 18 and 65 years.
- 15.73% are 'older people' aged over 66 years.
- 23.99% of people have at least 2 or more relevant deprivation factors (this can be employment, education, health, housing etc).
- 7.3% of the population have bad or very bad health (England comparison - 5.2%).
- 20.5% of the population are disabled under the Equality Act (England comparison - 17.3%).
- 57.7% of households are deprived in at least one dimension (England comparison - 51.6%).
- 3.4% of households are overcrowded (England comparison - 4.3%).
- 44.4% of households are in rented accommodation (England comparison - 37.7%).
- 4.1% of households have a second address in the UK (England comparison - 4.1%).

- 45.4% of people aged 16 years and over are economically inactive (England comparison - 39.1%).
- 15.3% of people aged 16 years and over have never worked or are long-term unemployed (England comparison - 8.5%).
- 10.1% of people aged 16 years and over are full-time students (England comparison - 7.7%).
- 33.7% of people aged 16 and over in employment work 30 hours or less (England comparison - 29.8%).
- 23.9% of people aged 16 and over have no qualifications (England comparison - 18.1%).
- 23.26% of Middlesbrough's resident population are Children and Young People aged below 18 years old.

### **Overview of crime and ASB levels across Middlesbrough**

Cleveland had the highest crime rate in all of England and Wales at the end of financial year 2022-23. Middlesbrough's total recorded crime was 26,450 with the highest rate of violent crime out of the four local authorities Cleveland Police covers.

Anti-social behaviour is more than 3 times the national average at 38 occurrences per 1000 head of population compared to the England and Wales's 16 per 1000. However, we saw a reduction of just under 23% from 2022 to 2023 whereas the national average only reduced by 12%.

#### **On average per day in Middlesbrough:**

- There are 11 incidents of Domestic Abuse.
- There are 10 incidents of Criminal Damage or Arson.

#### **On average per month:**

- There are 2204 criminal offences.

#### **In the previous financial year:**

- There were 12411 violent crimes against a person.
- 5680 total reports of theft and handling stolen goods.
- 1659 deliberate fire incidents recorded.
- 5201 environmental issues reported to the Local Authority (Littering/Rubbish/Waste).

### **How our plan fits into other local plans**

- Cleveland Police & Crime Plan (currently being revised)
- Arson Reduction Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Tees-wide Safeguarding Strategy

- Children and Young People's Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan

### **Middlesbrough Mayoral Priorities:**

Each of the CSP priorities directly link to one of the four over-arching Middlesbrough Mayoral priorities:

- **A successful and ambitious town** – Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.
- **A healthy place** – Helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives.
- **Safe and resilient communities** – creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.
- **Delivering best value** – Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.

### **Our approach**

Building on our partnership approach to working in Middlesbrough we will continue to be creative and develop new ways of working, employing the Active Intelligence Mapping (AIM) model, providing an opportunity to improve service delivery by strengthening a collaborative approach to addressing crime, environmental crime, fires and anti-social behaviour across the town and ensuring greater accountability to the public.

We will also introduce a new Neighbourhood model ensuring our communities are at the heart of what we do. Four co-located multi-agency teams will be developed to cover East, North, West and South of the town, focussing on improving our neighbourhoods.

### **Delivering the plan**

Delivery will be via an Action Plan developed through the Community Safety Partnership which will set out what each of the partner agencies will do to achieve the objectives identified under the 3 priorities.

A key action of the Partnership is to co-ordinate delivery, bring partners together and identify resources and skills in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The action plan will be built around a robust outcome-based performance management framework to review and monitor progress. The plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Finance
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Executive Member for Finance and Governance
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
<b>Title:</b>	CIPFA review of Financial Management Arrangements
<b>Report for:</b>	Noting and Information
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Delivering Best Value
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	report is for noting

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
That Executive receive and note the findings and recommendations of the CIPFA Financial Management report as summarised in paragraph 4.15 to 4.18 below and as set out in section 1.7 of the CIPFA report which is attached at Appendix 1. Further that Executive note the intention to develop an action plan in response to both the CIPFA recommendations, together with any further recommendations from the detailed financial review by Grant Thornton will be brought back to Executive for consideration in due course.

<b>Executive summary</b>
Strong financial management is essential to the organisation's ability to deliver Best Value. It ensures that public money is used well and provides leaders and managers with the information that they need to make robust, evidence-based decisions, manage performance and resources effectively, whilst delivering the organisations objectives.
The Council is currently subject to a Best Value Notice issued by the Secretary of State for Local Government that commenced in in January 2023 and was extended in January 2024 for a period of 6 months. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local

Government (MHCLG)<sup>1</sup> is to undertake a review of the Council's further progress in securing the delivery of Best Value in its operations in July 2024 and will report subsequently.

The possible outcomes of this review range from allowing the Council to exit formal Government intervention, through to an escalation of intervention measures if it is considered that insufficient progress in delivering the required improvement has been made. MHCLG officials have confirmed that they will consider the CIPFA FM report as independent evidence to inform their Best Value assessment of the Council's progress in relation to delivering its financial recovery and achieving financial sustainability.

MHCLG has also recently commissioned and will pay directly for Grant Thornton LLP(GT) to undertake an independent assurance review of the Council's financial position and plans for financial recovery as part of their due diligence in progressing the Council's application for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) in 2024/25. The review commenced on 2 July and will run for a period of approximately 8 weeks and will make recommendations to the Council and will inform the Secretary of State's decision with respect to EFS. The CIPFA FM report and recommendations will also inform this work such that no duplication of resource will occur between the reviews as a result.

The Council is actively addressing a range of culture and governance improvements as well as pursuing its financial recovery to achieve financial sustainability and resilience over the medium term through its Culture and Governance Improvement Plan (CGIP) and its s24 recommendation action plan produced in response to 11 statutory recommendations made by the External Auditor in August 2023.

The Council has engaged the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake an independent review of Financial Management arrangements in order to benchmark its current position, assess the progress of our improvement journey to date and to support the development of the next stage of work to secure and embed financial recovery and resilience in the long term.

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the review of the Council's Financial Management arrangements. The review uses a diagnostic tool to assess the organisation's overall financial management arrangements against best practice and to make recommendations for further improvement to achieve independently recognised good practice and strengthen the Council's arrangements for responding to the complex challenges facing local authorities.

The assessment scores the Council as 2 stars (maximum score 5 stars) and concludes that financial management is 'reasonable'. The Council has basic financial management capability and has predominantly a stewardship approach i.e. delivering accountability and financial control. The review concludes that the successful implementation of the Recover, Reset, Delivery Transformation Portfolio is critical to evidencing the required culture change and to securing improvement and maturity in financial management arrangements, both in terms of delivering the 2024/25 MTFP planned savings and

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) was renamed on 8 July 2024



identifying a pipeline of new initiatives to address the budget gap of at least £8m in the MTFP to 2026/27.

The report acknowledges the change and improvements that are already in progress within the CGIP and concludes that it is reasonable to expect Middlesbrough Council to be capable of achieving a 4 star rating within 18 months, given its direction of travel, the successful delivery of plans that are already in place and by addressing the additional recommendations set out in its report.

The Council should be encouraged by the overall conclusion as it recognises the progress made to date and confirms that measures in the current CGIP will deliver further progress. However, we should be mindful that there is a significant amount of work to do to embed lasting improvements in financial management practices that underpin its financial recovery and ability to sustain its financial position. In particular, the development of capability and capacity amongst both officers and members to achieve strong, organisation wide financial management arrangements that are enable the delivery of the Council's ambitions is mission critical.

The development of further plans to address the recommended actions, may require a combination of short term and long-term investment in training, development, professional finance capacity, recruitment and underlying systems and processes that will enable the delivery of improvement in the Council's overall arrangements. The required investment will be assessed for incorporation into the Recover, Reset, Deliver Transformation Portfolio and/or the CGIP over the summer and brought back to the Executive for consideration and approval.

## **Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Executive to consider the independent assessment and recommendations of the Council's financial management arrangements undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

## **2. Recommendations**

That the Executive:

- 2.1 **Receive and note** the findings of the CIPFA Financial Management report as summarised in paragraph 4.15 to 4.18 below and the CIPFA recommendations as set out in section 1.7 of the CIPFA report which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Note the intention to develop an action plan in response to both the CIPFA recommendations, together with any further recommendations from the detailed financial review by Grant Thornton will be brought back to Executive for consideration in due course.

## **3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

- 3.1 To enable the Council to secure effective management of its finances in accordance with recognised professional standards of good practice.

## **4. Background and relevant information**

- 4.1 Strong financial management is essential to the organisation's ability to deliver Best Value. It ensures that public money is used well and provides leaders and managers with the information that they need to make robust, evidence-based decisions, manage performance and resources effectively, whilst delivering the organisations objectives.
- 4.2 The Council is currently subject to a Best Value Notice issued by the Secretary of State for Local Government that commenced in in January 2023 in relation to its inability to secure best value in its operations and decision making. The Notice was extended for 6 months in January 2024 and is due to be reviewed by MHCLG following a review of the Council's progress in July 2024 which will report to the Secretary of State subsequently.
- 4.3 The possible outcomes of the Best Value review range from allowing the Council to exit formal Government intervention, through to an escalation of intervention measures if it is considered that insufficient progress in delivering the required improvement has been made. MHCLG officials have confirmed that they will consider the CIPFA FM report as evidence to inform their Best Value assessment of the Council's progress in relation to delivering its financial recovery and achieving financial sustainability.
- 4.4 The Council is also subject to a further independent review by Grant Thornton LLP (GT) who have recently been commissioned by MHCLG to assess the Council's financial position and arrangements for recovery as part of their due diligence in progressing the Council's application for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) in

2024/25. The review commenced on 2 July for a period of approximately 8 weeks and will make recommendations for improvement and report back to the Secretary of State to enable a firm decision on EFS to be made and published in due course.

- 4.5 The Council is actively addressing a range of culture and governance improvements as well as pursuing its financial recovery to achieve financial sustainability and resilience over the medium term through its CGIP and its s24 recommendation action plan in response to 11 statutory recommendations made by the External Auditor in August 2023.
- 4.6 CIPFA is a UK based international accountancy membership and standard setting body for the public sector. It is the only body globally dedicated to public financial management across local government, central government, health and policy together with international presence. CIPFA has conducted Financial Management reviews in over 400 public sector organisations including more than 240 local authorities.
- 4.7 The Director of Finance has commissioned CIPFA to undertake an independent review of the Council's financial management arrangements using the CIPFA FM model of good practice in order to assess the Council's progress and make recommendations on next steps to take in recovering its financial position and establishing financial resilience for the medium to long term. The review will provide evidence to inform MHCLG's assessment in relation to the current Best Value review and the EFS application.
- 4.8 The CIPFA review uses a diagnostic tool to assess the organisation's overall financial management arrangements against best practice and to make recommendations for further improvement in order to achieve independently recognised good practice and strengthen the Council's arrangements for responding to the complex challenges facing local authorities.
- 4.9 The review has included:
- A review of key reports and other official Council documentation
  - Interviews with 44 interviewees including Leadership Management Team, Heads of Service, Budget Holders, Finance Staff, the Elected Mayor, Members of the Executive, Leaders of all political groups, Chair of Scrutiny, Chair of Audit Committee, External and Internal Audit.
  - An online survey of 100 respondents from across the organisation was conducted. 71 respondents completed the survey.
- 4.10 The CIPFA FM model has assessed the Council's current arrangements in terms of three financial management styles:
- Delivering accountability
  - Supporting performance
  - Enabling transformation.
- 4.11 In evaluating the financial management arrangements, the review has assessed the whole organisation against four management dimensions:

- Leadership
- People
- Process
- Stakeholders.

4.12 The assessment scores the Council as 2 stars (maximum score 5 stars) and concludes that financial management is ‘reasonable’. The Council has basic financial management capability and has predominantly a traditional stewardship approach to financial management i.e. delivering accountability. Table 1 below summarises the assessment via a scoring matrix.

**Table 1**

**FM Model key findings chart for Middlesbrough Council on 15 May 2024**

	Management dimensions			
Financial management styles	Leadership (A)	People (B)	Process (C)	Stakeholders (D)
Delivering Accountability (1)	**	*	***	**
Supporting performance (2)	**	**	**	*
Enabling transformation (3)	**	*	**	**
<b>Overall</b>	**			

4.13 The report acknowledges the change and improvements that are currently in progress and concludes that it is reasonable to expect Middlesbrough Council to achieve a 4 star rating within 18 months, given its direction of travel, plans that are already in place and by addressing the additional recommendations set out in the report. The further improvements required represent a significant challenge to the organisation in terms of developing and maintaining the financial management capability and capacity of Service Directorate officers, Finance officers and elected members.

4.14 The review concludes that the successful implementation of the Recover, Reset, Delivery Transformation Portfolio is critical to demonstrating the required culture change and securing improvement in financial management arrangements. This is in terms of delivering existing plans and the identification of a pipeline of new initiatives that will improve services and deliver further cost savings or income generation to balance the 2025/26 budget and MTFP.

4.15 The full report is attached for consideration by the Executive at Appendix 1. Section 1.7 within Appendix 1 sets out the issues, acknowledges actions currently being taken and further recommended actions together with a priority assessment by CIPFA. The key issues are summarised below by management dimension.

### **Leadership**

#### **• Transformation**

- There is a strong reliance on contractors and interims to drive the changes required across the organisation and a sense remains amongst operational staff that they are not necessarily involved in the change programme and that it may not apply to them.
- There is a need to ensure that permanent staff are engaged in transformational work and this is enabled by creating them the time and resources to engage using interim cover to maintain business as usual activity.
- The communications strategy for the transformation programme requires further review and development to ensure that all staff are on board and engaged in delivering the required change.
- A more strategic approach to medium and long term financial management to be developed informed by a transformation lens rather than cost cutting lens by services and finance.

### **People**

#### **• Finance**

- The Finance Team lacks resilience. Staff resources within Finance are stretched too thin driving a short-term focus on maintaining operational financial control and insufficient focus on strategic financial issues.
- As a result there is an over dependence on a small number of senior finance staff and limited capacity and opportunity to provide staff development opportunities.
- Finance Business Partnering staff need to develop their skills to enable more constructive and robust challenge of the service.
- In addition, they and the wider Finance team need to further develop their skills in trend analysis and financial forecasting.
- Finance needs to develop and deliver comprehensive training to support new service leads/ budget managers to engage with Middlesbrough's approach to financial management.
- A transition from incremental budgeting to adopting activity based costing and then zero based budgeting is required in partnership between finance and the service.

#### **• Service**

- Service leads/ budget holders are very reliant upon finance business partners to undertake budget management activities on their behalf, particularly in adult and children's social care. Service managers/budget holders need to take more ownership of their budgets.
- Service leads/ budget holders need to develop their financial management skills and ability to use financial systems and available financial management tools.

- A transition from incremental budgeting to adopting activity based costing and then zero based budgeting is required in partnership between finance and the service.

## **Process**

### **• Financial systems**

- There is a lack of IT integration between the main financial system and payroll and social care systems, that creates manual work and intervention and undermines efficient and effective budget management, control and reporting. Whilst this is subject to a current review, improvements needs to be introduced as soon as possible.
- Operational staff reflected that they have difficulty using the Council's main financial system, Business World and so training and support on an ongoing basis will be required from the Finance Team, together with provision of more intuitive tools that are currently being rolled out eg use of Power BI.

## **Stakeholders**

### **• Strengthening Scrutiny**

- There remains a tendency for member discussion to become fractious and there is a need for a more collaborative and constructive approach to be developed in order to strengthen scrutiny. The agreement to establish a cross party working group on financial sustainability and appointment of opposition members as vice chairs to Audit Committee and some other committees are positive steps.
- There should be more engagement with elected members in relation to sharing, understanding and challenging the strategic risk register.

- 4.16 A number of actions are already in progress within the CGIP and CIPFA has acknowledged that these need to be delivered to plan in order to deliver the financial management improvement objectives.
- 4.17 Additional recommendations are made by CIPFA in a number of areas to support the Council in further strengthening its financial management arrangements that would be capable of achieving a 3 to 4 star rating over a further period of 18 months. These are detailed in full at section 1.7 of the CIPFA report at Appendix 1 and are summarised in Table 2.
- 4.18 It is proposed that an action plan is developed to respond to the CIPFA recommendations together with any further recommendations made by the GT review. This will include consideration of the resource and financial implications of implementation of the action plan, for example in addressing capacity, training and development requirements and it will be brought back to Executive for further consideration.

<b>Table 2 Summary of required actions</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Required action(s)</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<b>Resilience of the finance department</b>	<p>We recognise that some initial work is already underway within Middlesbrough to address these issues. This should include the exploration of the following options for building capacity and greater resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a career path for all finance staff that will enable individuals to build experience</li> <li>• Building a recruitment programme for trainee accountants or other specialists</li> </ul> <p>If market conditions preclude recruitment, Middlesbrough should explore greater collaboration with other authorities to share staff with in-depth expertise of specific finance areas.</p>	<b>M</b>
<b>Coaching and Training for service staff and finance staff</b>	Instigate a budget training programme for new service managers	<b>H</b>
	Encourage finance staff to undertake finance business partner training	<b>H</b>
<b>Medium and long-term financial planning</b>	We understand that the development of demand and cost modelling is part of Middlesbrough's Corporate Governance Improvement Plan. It is important that activity-based costing is rolled out as soon as possible and the impact evaluated so that ongoing refinements can be made.	<b>H</b>
	Explore the utilisation of a rolling programme of zero-based budgeting	<b>M</b>
<b>ASC and CSC budget management and ownership</b>	Explore the feasibility of activity based costing and then a zero-based budgeting exercise in each directorate to encourage service manager ownership of budgets	<b>M</b>
<b>Finance system integration and usability</b>	Middlesbrough is already commissioning a review of the integration of data between systems, and arrangements are in place for the roll-out of Power BI dashboards to encourage wider engagement in financial management. It is important that these changes are introduced as soon as possible, with accompanying training so that their impact can be evaluated.	<b>M</b>
<b>Capacity and capability of Council to change and transform</b>	Explore the feasibility of providing interim cover to enable key individuals the time and resources to engage in the transformational work without disrupting business as usual.	<b>H</b>
	Review and develop a communications strategy for the transformation programme.	<b>H</b>
<b>Strengthening scrutiny</b>	In November 2023, the Council approved a Member Development Strategy that includes the specification of values and training on a range of softer skills as well as what represents effective corporate governance. It is also starting to build cross-party working groups. The appointment of Opposition Members as vice chairs on the scrutiny panels is encouraging. The Council should evaluate the impact of these changes.	<b>L</b>
	The authority should regularly share the strategic risk register with Members on the cross party working groups for review and challenge	<b>M</b>
<b>Assets and Liabilities</b>	We understand that Middlesbrough is planning to develop a quarterly report on debt collection and on payment performance for 2024-25. This is an important step in enabling greater scrutiny.	<b>L</b>

## **Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**

5.1 The Executive could decide to reject the findings and recommendations of the CIPFA FM review. This is not recommended as it would be counterproductive to the achievement of the Council's financial recovery and would likely to be assessed unfavourably by MHCLG and the External Auditor.

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

### **6.1 Financial (including procurement and Social Value)**

Implementation of the recommendations set out in this report are fundamental to strengthening the Council's financial management arrangements and securing its financial recovery and sustainability over the medium to long term as well as enabling the Council to demonstrate that is delivering of best value in the use of public money.

Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report, the implementation of the action plan for a number of recommended actions may require additional one-off financial investment through the Transformation Portfolio or ongoing revenue investment and/or capital investment in the medium to long term which will be addressed in the 2025/26 budget and MTFP development process.

The total cost of the review is £35,200 which has been met within approved budgets. The contract was directly awarded under an exemption in accordance with Contract Procedure rules as detailed in the [delegated decision report](#) of 25 March 2024. CIPFA exclusively delivers Financial Management review using its FM Model which is not available to other commercial entities.

### **6.2 Legal**

The proposed recommendations are consistent with and will promote the achievement of the Council's general legal duty to achieve Best Value.

### **6.3 Risk**

The proposed response will ensure the Council is proactively managing the following risk within the Strategic Risk Register by ensuring the Council accepts the findings of the CIPFA review and takes further steps to develop an appropriate response:

- SRR09 - If the Council's **Corporate Governance arrangements are not fit for purpose and appropriate action is not taken to rectify this at pace**, this could result, censure from the Council's auditors within a public interest report that would damage the Council's reputation and/or in government formal intervention including removal of powers from officers and members and direction of council spend.

### **6.4 Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion**

*Not applicable.*

### **6.5 Climate Change / Environmental**



*Not applicable.*

## **6.6 Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers**

*Not applicable.*

## **6.7 Data Protection**

Not applicable.

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

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Develop and action plan to address CIPFA recommendations in relation to Leadership, People, Place and Stakeholders	Chief Executive/ Director of Finance/ Monitoring Officer	16 October 2024

### **Appendices**

1	CIPFA - Review of financial management using the CIPFA Financial Management Model
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### **Background papers**

<b>Reporting body</b>	<b>Report title</b>	<b>Date</b>
CAAC	Lessons Learnt: Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council	5 Aug 2021
CAAC	Boho X: Draft findings from internal audit and proposed management response	6 Apr 2022
CAAC	Audit Results Report 2020/21	22 Jul 2022
CAAC	Statement of Accounts 2020/21	22 Jul 2022
CAAC	Lessons learned: Best Value and external assurance within other councils.	22 Jul 2022
CAAC	Commencing a corporate governance improvement journey	22 Jul 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Journey: CIPFA findings and next steps	19 Oct 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and progress update	30 Nov 2022
CAAC	External Audit: Value for Money Governance Update	5 Dec 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and progress update	18 Jan 2023
CAAC	Statement of Accounts 2020/2021	28 Apr 2023
CAAC	Auditor's Annual Report – Year Ended 31 March 2021	29 Jun 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Next Steps	5 Jul 2023
Council	Section 24 Statutory EY recommendations	18 Sep 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan	18 Sep 2023
CAAC	Lessons Learnt: Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council	5 Aug 2021
Audit Committee	Section 24 Report – Delivery and oversight arrangements	5 Oct 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	25 Oct 2023
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	29 Nov 2023
Audit committee	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	14 December 2023
Executive	2024-25 Budget and MTFP – Application for Exceptional Financial Support	17 January 2024
Audit Committee	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	1 February 2024

Audit Committee	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Section 24 Action Plan progress report	14 March 2024
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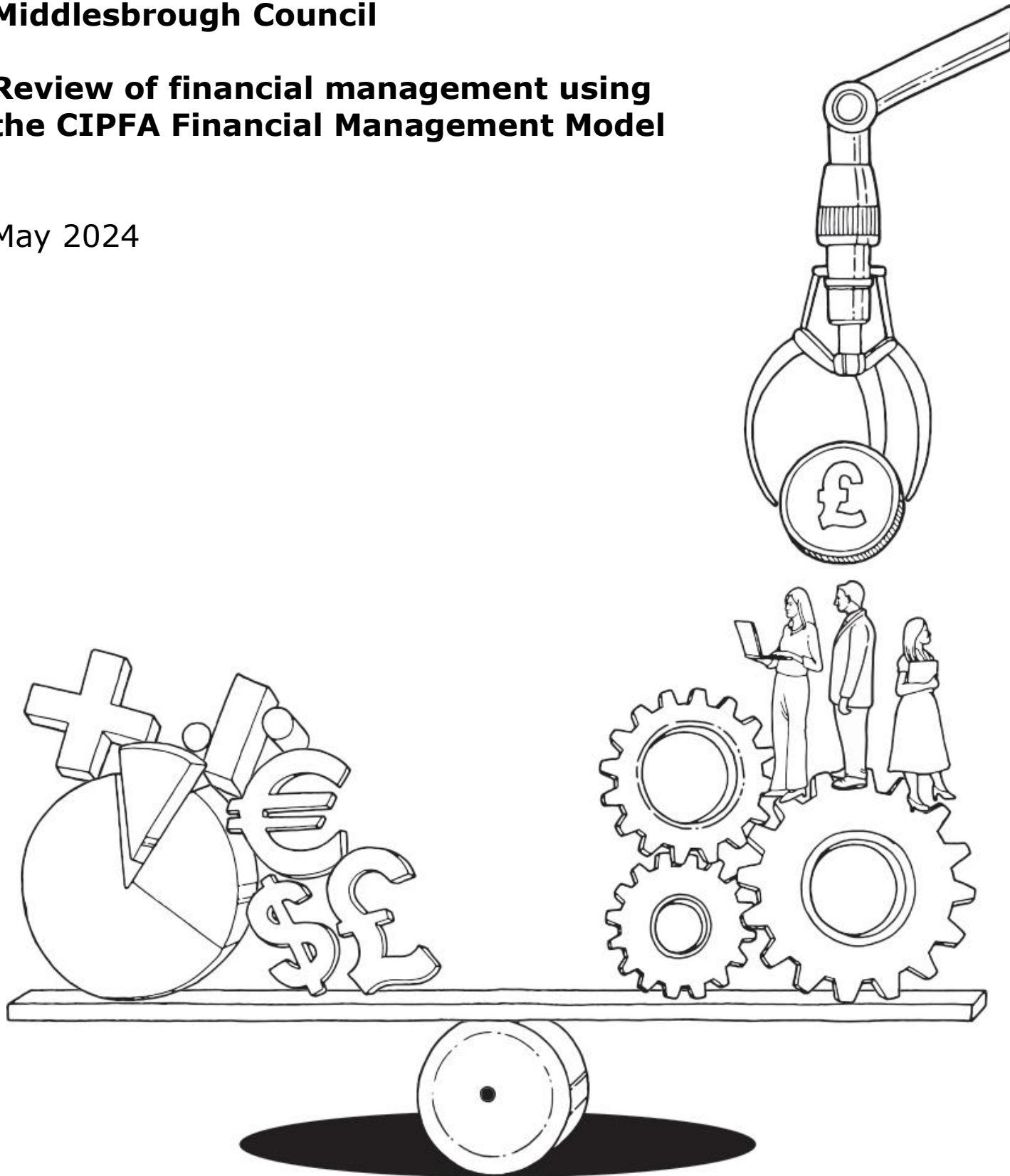
\*CAAC – Corporate Affairs & Audit Committee (Audit Committee from September 2023)

**Contact:** Debbie Middleton – Director of Finance  
**Email:** [Debbie\\_middleton@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Debbie_middleton@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

# Middlesbrough Council

## Review of financial management using the CIPFA Financial Management Model

May 2024



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APPENDIX 2	Review methodology
APPENDIX 3	Star rating key criteria and characteristics

## **1. Executive summary**

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Middlesbrough Council commissioned CIPFA to undertake a review of its financial management practices using the CIPFA Financial Management Model (herein referred to as the FM Model) as a framework for the review. This report sets out the findings of our work.

### **1.1 The CIPFA Financial Management (FM) Model**

The CIPFA FM Model is recognised by HM Treasury (UK) as setting out the fundamentals of best practice financial management within a public sector organisation. It has been chosen by HM Government (HMG UK) Finance Leadership Group (FLG) as the framework to be used for financial management self-assessments. The FM Model uses a scoring system to provide an objective measure of financial management performance including the identification of strengths and areas for improvement. Importantly, the review measures the whole organisation's attitude to financial management not just the performance of the finance team. The assessment is based on a mix of evidence obtained through survey, interview and document review.

The CIPFA FM Model is based on a set of statements of best practice. Each of these statements is supported by a series of questions which both explain the scope of the statement and help evaluate the extent to which the statement applies to the organisation. Survey groups are asked to respond to different statements, depending on their role, with the survey being tailored to each survey group.

While we have commented in this report on some aspects of the Council's financial resilience (as relevant to the issues identified) we have not undertaken a resilience review in addition to the FM Model. This review is not a substitute for an appropriately detailed audit of high-risk areas.

### **1.2 Best practice matrix**

The matrix overleaf aggregates assessments for individual statements of best practice in the FM Model and summarises CIPFA's assessment of the Council's financial management arrangements. Using the matrix, the key findings of the review can be summarised across the three financial management styles and four management dimensions. Details on relevant financial management styles and dimensions can be found in Section 3.3 below.

The scores given in the matrix have been moderated using the responses given by survey participants, our findings from the interviews, our document review, and our knowledge of the Council. As such, they are based on the totality of the moderated evidence available to us.

## FM Model key findings chart for Middlesbrough Council on 15 May 2024

Financial management styles	Management dimensions			
	Leadership (A)	People (B)	Process (C)	Stakeholders (D)
Delivering Accountability (1)	**	*	***	**
Supporting performance (2)	**	**	**	*
Enabling transformation (3)	**	*	**	**
<b>Overall</b>	**			

No matter how well an organisation performs, there is always room for improvement. The rest of this report, particularly the areas highlighted for development, needs to be read in this context.

### 1.3 Strengths and areas for further development

As indicated in the matrix above, financial management in Middlesbrough Council is 'reasonable' with an overall two star rating. The Council has basic financial management capability and it has a predominantly 'stewardship' approach to financial management. It is important to acknowledge that the previous concerns raised by external audit and the DLUHC Best Value notice have inevitably meant that we have had to reduce the scores. Changes are being implemented to address these issues, but it is too early to demonstrate fully the improvements being made. Much will depend on the successful implementation of the transformation programme. Not only will this help to secure financial stability, but it will demonstrate that the culture has changed and that governance arrangements are more robust. More detail on the star rating key criteria and characteristics is set out in Appendix 3 of this report.

In respect of the changes already underway, we think it is reasonable for Middlesbrough to achieve a four star rating within 18 months. To illustrate this, it is helpful to consider the criteria for such a score:

To score 4 in the FM Model, an organisation must have in place a strong financial management capability which enables it to deliver effective outcomes in challenging times, provides stability through to the medium term and is agile in adapting to unforeseen events, continually identifies opportunities to improve its performance and contributes to organisational transformational change. Most of the organisation's investment programmes will be delivered to time and cost. The organisation will also have strong insight into cost drivers with highly evident commercial capabilities with strategic and operational planning.

We have set out a proposed Action Plan in section 1.7 of this report, which will help the Council to achieve a 4\* rating and put the Council in a stronger position to face future challenges and implement transformational change. This is quite a step up from where the Council currently resides, but many of the changes are already underway. CIPFA would be happy to re-run the FM Model in 18 months to provide assurance as to whether the criteria have been met.

### **1.3.1 Strengths**

In our view, the Council demonstrates many of the key characteristics of a successful Finance function, and we have seen examples of best practice in Middlesbrough's approach.

We identified the following key strengths in our review:

1. Despite the past concerns around the culture and governance arrangements at the Council raised by external audit and the need to request a capitalisation directive under the exceptional finance support framework, there has been a positive change in the leadership of Middlesbrough over the last 12 months. The Corporate Plan prioritises the need for improvements in governance and financial stability and there are a range of initiatives being actively pursued. Members expressed their confidence in what they termed the 'war time' qualities of the interim Chief Executive and Director of Finance to deliver such change.
2. There is growing financial awareness across the Council and an acceptance that there is a need to change and transform to be financially sustainable. Members and Officers expressed a willingness to engage in the transformation being developed, and the recently introduced governance arrangements will help to ensure this engagement is co-ordinated and focused. The introduction of Mayor's focus groups to encourage staff innovation and initiative is a positive step, although it is important that this is managed carefully to avoid undermining the authority of, or any blurring of, the impartiality of senior Officers.
3. In the meantime, the interim Director of Finance is building a stronger platform for budget setting and financial management. She has an influential voice at the Leadership Management Team (LMT) and Executive level, and has been very clear to Members and colleagues on the challenges facing the authority and the necessity of change. The revenue and capital budgets are more closely based upon service plans and projections, and the change to monthly monitoring of outturn should enable variances to be identified and resolved more expediently.
4. There are signs that this drive is leading to cultural change within the Council. Members recognise the need for financial stability and a large number of budget holders have commented that they recognise the need to take ownership of their budgets. Managers were very supportive of the commitment and dedication shown by the finance business partners; and the finance business partners we interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of their directorates.

### **1.3.2 Development areas**

Whilst we have already acknowledged that previous concerns raised by external audit and the DLUHC Best Value notice have inevitably meant that we have had to reduce the scores, there are still a number of areas where financial management could be strengthened:

## Leadership

1. The capacity within the Council to build a more robust approach to financial management is not yet proven. The two deputy S151 officers tend to get drawn into day-to-day operational issues and this restricts their opportunity to influence and support the Council at a strategic level. The finance team and service need to find more capacity to focus on working closely together on financial modelling further into the future based on informed demand and financial assumptions and service improvement plans. Whilst financial stability is dependent on the transformational change being implemented, several participants commented that they thought they had limited opportunity to be involved due to existing workloads, and questioned its likely impact based on their perception of past practices in the Council. The survey scores were also lower in this area.
2. The engagement between finance and service managers needs to be strengthened to ensure there is a consistent mode of supporting and challenging business as usual activities, such as forecast outturn and planned mitigations. The relationship between finance and the service varies between directorates. Some directorates, such as parts of the Environment and Commercial Services Directorate and the Regeneration Directorate demonstrated reasonable ownership of their budgets, and interviewees from Adult Social Care confirmed that they were also looking to adopt such an approach. By comparison, ownership and accountability needs to be embedded much further in the Children's Services directorate, although it is important to recognise the operational challenges in this area.
3. Transformation is critical to the longer-term financial stability of the Council. The transformation governance arrangements appear robust, but it is very dependent on the engagement and direction of Members and the authority's leadership team. There has been staff turnover recently in some key Officer posts, such as Children's services, and the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and the Finance Transformation Lead are all interims. Stability and continuity will be critical to maintain the focus and impact of the change programme. Whilst the Executive has confirmed an awareness that this needs to be managed carefully and that the recruitment and retention of key staff is identified as a strategic risk, we consider that there should be a greater focus on mitigating the risk that the transformation programme might be disrupted when the interim contracts expire. It should be incumbent on the authority to engage the Members more closely on the monitoring and management of such risks.

## People

4. The existing Finance team within Middlesbrough Council represents the minimum needed to maintain adequate financial control and its longer-term sustainability is at risk. There are 17.3 full time equivalent staff in the financial planning and support section, and 22.1 in the finance and investment section but these include only 7 CCAB qualified accountants to support the Director of Finance. Key posts, such as finance business partners, do not necessarily need a professional qualification, but it is a crucial requirement for anyone seeking to become a Head of Service or s151 Officer in future. In the longer-term, therefore, there should be sufficient accountants



to deal with technical demands within the Council and to maintain stability and resilience if senior staff were to leave.

5. Budget holders are too reliant on finance business partners to collate and analyse financial data on spreadsheets to flag any issues arising. Consequently, the work focus of the finance business partners appears to be too much on operational rather than strategic issues. The emphasis of the meetings tends to be on monitoring outturn against budget and explaining any deviations. This is important, but it is largely focused on what has already happened rather than identifying and tackling issues before they arise. Changing this working environment will be a challenge – the responses to the survey confirm that both parties appear comfortable with the existing arrangements.
6. There is little opportunity for career development within the existing structure of the finance team. The limited capacity within the team has restricted opportunities for job rotation. Consequently, it is difficult for staff to build a broader experience across finance, and it cultivates a more parochial culture that risks creating a divide between these two sections within the team.

### **Processes**

7. It is a mixed picture in terms of whether managers are fully involved in setting their budgets or whether the process is completed by finance on their behalf. This is largely because of a lack of reliable underlying performance data that can be used to establish trends in demand. Forecasting has been universally identified as an area that requires improvement or an area that budget managers state they are not involved in.
8. There has been significant feedback regarding the lack of integration between finance, payroll and social care systems. This leads to information having to be double-keyed into multiple systems and the usage of spreadsheets for the manipulation of data from multiple systems to create reports.
9. Budget holders do not find the Agresso Business World finance system intuitively straightforward to monitor their outturn against budget. We understand that the Council is looking to introduce Power BI dashboards to facilitate this process, starting with a training session for the leadership management team before the end of May and wider roll-out across managers in June 2024.
10. Whilst there is an understandable focus on the revenue budget to drive financial stability, asset management is also a critical area. It is worth noting that several of the other supporting strategy documents are currently under review e.g. the asset management strategy, plus the capital programme has been identified on several occasions as not being given the attention it requires to be more proactive and forward looking.

### **Stakeholders**

11. CIPFA has commented previously on the relationship between Members and Officers and the need to strengthen corporate governance arrangements. Much is being done in this area, although it is still too early to provide sufficient evidence to enable us to confirm that these issues are now resolved. Several interviewees commented on the tendency for the discussion in Committee meetings to become fractious. Whilst much

of this can be attributed to differences of political opinion, it does hinder collaborative working and effective scrutiny. For example, in our experience audit committees and scrutiny committees benefit from being chaired by Members from opposition parties to provide added assurance. Middlesbrough has not been able to adopt such an approach in the past, although the recent appointment of opposition Members as vice-chairs is a very positive step on this journey.

#### **1.4 Direction of travel**

Middlesbrough is in the midst of major change. External audit and the subsequent DLUHC Best Value notice flagged some serious concerns over the culture, corporate governance and financial stability of the Council. Inevitably our assessment of financial management must consider these factors and it has reduced the scores we have attributed accordingly.

We are optimistic of where the Council might be in 18 months, however, and consider that it could achieve a 4-star rating by then. Members and Senior Officers in the Council are driving positive change. Much of the focus to date has been on creating the financial headroom for the transformational change programme and addressing the governance issues. These are still being implemented, but the direction is encouraging.

There are signs that financial management is starting to improve. Service managers have commented that working with finance on budget setting improved for 2024-25, and they are now more involved in the budget setting processes. The monthly and quarterly budget challenge sessions involve the Director of Finance, the appropriate Members and budget holders. These sessions have provided much needed grip and transparency to financial decision making. There is acceptance that there is a need to change and transform to be financially sustainable. In May 2024, the Executive are considering plans to establish a Financial Sustainability Working Group with cross party representation.

There is further improvement required in terms of the resilience of the finance department, longer term financial planning, budget ownership, finance systems, resolving the outstanding audit issues and the management of the capital programme. Commissioning this review is an important and proactive step forward, however, and demonstrates that Middlesbrough is keen to identify and remedy these issues.

#### **1.5 Overall conclusions**

Several Members ascribe the Council as having a 'war time' approach to leadership by senior Officers at present and welcome this as a necessary step to implementing the changes required to build financial stability and to address the concerns over corporate governance. It certainly reflects the determination of senior Officers and the drive to address the issues raised by external audit and DLUHC.

The transition to what Members describe as 'peace time' leadership is not straightforward. The positive direction of travel that we have observed will take time to become embedded so that there is a long-term change in the culture and behaviours within the Council. The Council has not historically had a good track record of cross organisational transformation and it is crucial that there is sufficient staff engagement so that changes will be accepted and embraced.

Central to the behavioural changes required will be a reset in the relationship between service managers and the finance team. Managers need to own their budgets more and the finance team need to be more strategic in identifying potential risks to financial stability and identifying opportunities to drive improvements. The finance team is currently too focused on day-to-day operational issues and lacks the capacity to build the expertise it will need in future. Similarly, budget holders need to be more involved in budget setting and monitoring but currently lack some of the tools needed to do so. We have outlined in our action plan below the changes needed to facilitate such a change.

### **1.6 Concluding comments**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the interviewees and survey participants who contributed to the review. This includes our particular thanks to Claire Jones and Rebecca Duce, as well as the finance leadership team, for their support with organising the interviews, survey participation and document provision.

## 1.7 Action plan

Actions arising from the review of financial management using the CIPFA FM Model.

Theme	Issue	Required action(s)	Priority
<b>Resilience of the finance department</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The existing Finance team within Middlesbrough Council are stretched thin and have to prioritise those tasks needed to maintain adequate short-term financial control.</li> <li>There is insufficient capacity for staff to build experience through job rotation which risks entrenched attitudes and inhibits staff development.</li> <li>The function is becoming too dependent on a small number of senior staff.</li> </ul>	<p>We recognise that some initial work is already underway within Middlesbrough to address these issues. This should include the exploration of the following options for building capacity and greater resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a career path for all finance staff that will enable individuals to build experience</li> <li>Building a recruitment programme for trainee accountants or other specialists</li> </ul> <p>If market conditions preclude recruitment, Middlesbrough should explore greater collaboration with other authorities to share staff with in-depth expertise of specific finance areas.</p>	<b>M</b>
<b>Coaching and training for service staff and finance staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service leads who are new into post would benefit from proactive support from finance to help them get up to speed.</li> <li>Support the finance staff to develop their capability to provide constructive and robust challenge to the service.</li> </ul>	Instigate a budget training programme for new service managers	<b>H</b>
		Encourage finance staff to undertake finance business partner training	<b>H</b>
<b>Medium and long-term financial planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen medium and long-term financial management informed by a 'transformation' (not cost cutting) lens with improved trend analysis and forecasting.</li> <li>Finance team to develop their trend analysis and forecasting skills.</li> </ul>	<p>We understand that the development of demand and cost modelling is part of Middlesbrough's Corporate Governance Improvement Plan. It is important that activity-based costing is rolled out as soon as possible and the impact evaluated so that ongoing refinements can be made.</p>	<b>H</b>
		Explore the utilisation of a rolling programme of zero-based budgeting	<b>M</b>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Required action(s)</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<b>ASC and CSC budget management and ownership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget holders are very reliant on the finance business partners.</li> <li>It has been suggested that Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care budget setting and management (for non-salaries spend) is predominantly completed by Finance.</li> </ul>	Explore the feasibility of activity based costing and then a zero-based budgeting exercise in each directorate to encourage service manager ownership of budgets	<b>M</b>
<b>Finance system integration and usability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of integration between finance, payroll and social care systems.</li> <li>System users have raised concerns regarding the usability of Business World.</li> </ul>	Middlesbrough is already commissioning a review of the integration of data between systems, and arrangements are in place for the roll-out of Power BI dashboards to encourage wider engagement in financial management. It is important that these changes are introduced as soon as possible, with accompanying training so that their impact can be evaluated.	<b>M</b>
<b>Capacity and Capability of Council to change and transform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a strong reliance on contractors and interims within Middlesbrough to drive the changes required.</li> <li>There is a perception amongst operational staff that they are not necessarily involved in the change programme and that it may not apply to them.</li> </ul>	Explore the feasibility of providing interim cover to enable key individuals the time and resources to engage in the transformational work without disrupting business as usual.	<b>H</b>
		Review and develop a communications strategy for the transformation programme.	<b>H</b>
<b>Strengthening scrutiny</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several Members commented on the tendency for the discussion in meetings to become fractious. Debate is important, but in our view a more collaborative and constructive approach would strengthen scrutiny.</li> <li>The Executive Committee is taking forward a proposal to establish a cross party working group on financial sustainability</li> <li>The establishment of such a working group is an opportunity to strengthen the Member oversight of the strategic risk register</li> </ul>	In November 2023, the Council approved a Member Development Strategy that includes the specification of values and training on a range of softer skills as well as what represents effective corporate governance. It is also starting to build cross-party working groups. The appointment of Opposition Members as vice chairs on the scrutiny panels is encouraging. The Council should evaluate the impact of these changes.	<b>L</b>
		The authority should regularly share the strategic risk register with Members on the cross party working groups for review and challenge	<b>M</b>

<b>Assets and Liabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is limited Member involvement in monitoring changes in the Council's balance sheet. Changes in the utilisation of assets, or movements in creditors and debtors, for example, should be routinely monitored</li> </ul>	<p>We understand that Middlesbrough is planning to develop a quarterly report on debt collection and on payment performance for 2024-25. This is an important step in enabling greater scrutiny.</p>	<b>L</b>
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## **2. Introduction**

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In May 2024, Middlesbrough Council completed the CIPFA FM Model to provide the basis for a review of financial management arrangements within the organisation.

The CIPFA FM Model sets out the fundamentals of best practice financial management within a public sector organisation and uses a scoring system to provide an objective measure of financial management performance including the identification of strengths and areas for improvement. A more detailed explanation of the CIPFA FM Model is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### **2.1 Understanding the organisation**

Middlesbrough is a town in the Tees Valley with a population of around 150,000. The area has relatively high levels of deprivation. The extent of deprivation, as measured in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019)<sup>1</sup> ranks Middlesbrough as 6<sup>th</sup> in comparison to other authorities in England. This is also reflected in other statistics. According to ONS<sup>2</sup>, it had a higher rate of economic inactivity (29.2% of those aged 16-64) than the median (21%) for other local authorities in Great Britain and a lower median weekly pay. Literacy levels are also below average, whilst the proportion of the population overweight or smokers is higher.

Middlesbrough Council has been a County Borough since 1889. Consequently, its responsibilities as a unitary authority include waste collection, housing and council tax collection, as well as education, social care and transport. The Council is one of five authorities that comprise the Tees Valley Combined Authority, chaired by the Mayor of the Tees Valley.

The high levels of deprivation create a pressure on the services required from the Council. Social care costs represent a high proportion of the Council's annual revenue budget and changes in case load materially impact on its Council Tax requirement. Added to this challenge, the Council has a relatively low proportion Band D or above properties and a high rate of Council tax exemption (4.4% compared to a national average of 2.9% in 2023)<sup>3</sup>.

The Council's underlying financial position prior to 2023-24 was weak; usable reserves had been regularly depleted to bridge the gap between expenditure and income each year. As a consequence, Middlesbrough's reserves were already significantly lower than the median for neighbouring North East authorities and other unitaries. This pattern continued in the first quarter of 2023-24; Middlesbrough forecast an overspend of £11.563m on its net budget of £126.354m with usable reserves of £14.829m.

Following the appointment of the interim s151 officer, a range of intervention measures, including a move to monthly monitoring and the imposition of restrictions on non-essential expenditure, were issued in July 2023. By the end of quarter 2 in 2023-24, there was a projected overspend of £8.556m (a reduction of £3.007m from quarter 1). Whilst progress was being made, Middlesbrough concluded that the growing pressure on services was likely to continue in 2024-25 (a projected gap of £6.279m) and subsequent years, requiring the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

<sup>2</sup> <https://explore-local-statistics.beta.ons.gov.uk/areas/E06000002-middlesbrough>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-taxbase-2023-in-england>

Council to stop some services, improve efficiency and identify ways of delivering differently in future. There were insufficient capital receipts available to fund such change.

In December 2023, Middlesbrough applied for a Capitalisation Directive under the Exceptional Financial Support framework. In February 2024, DLUHC approved, in principle, the authority for Middlesbrough to utilise £13.4m of its capital resources as follows:

- **£5.3** to cover the projected budget gap in 2024-25, including contingencies for any fluctuation.
- **£4.6m** to cover the timing difference between the requirement to spend on transformation and redundancies versus the expected realisation of capital receipts.
- **£3.5m** for the possible non-delivery of some of the £14m planned savings.

In practice, latest estimates of outturn for 2023-24 indicate that the measures put in place to control spending have helped to reduce the overspend on net expenditure. We understand that the net spend for 2023-24 was £129.948m, compared to the budget of £126.354m. This represents an overspend of £3.594m, compared to a forecast overspend of £8.556m at the end of quarter 2, and a forecast overspend of £5.544m at the end of quarter 3.

This reduction in the overspend in 2023-24 is encouraging – adult social care, for example, managed to deliver a small underspend of £0.026m against its revised budget of £51.6m, whereas it was forecasting an overspend of £1.358m at quarter 3. However, it is important to note that some of the underlying pressures remain. Children’s social care and SEND transport overspent by £2.766m and £1.081 respectively (compared to forecast overspends of £2.884m and £1.443m at quarter 3).

The progress made in 2023-24 would suggest that there is a tighter control on expenditure than previously. This may be due, in part, to the spending restrictions implemented by Finance, but it also suggests that directorates are more focused on keeping within budget. In May 2024, the Executive are also considering plans to establish a Financial Sustainability Working Group with cross party representation.

The Council was issued with a Best Value Notice by DLUHC in January 2023 in response to serious concerns over governance arrangements. The 2019 election had brought significant change in the composition and leadership of the Council and a consequent drive to change the organisational culture from one focussed on process and performance management to a much more entrepreneurial style of administration. Member and Officer relations became strained, and in July 2022 external audit qualified its opinion on value for money and concluded that:

*“... the culture and governance arrangements at the Authority have not been operating as expected, and that this is undermining the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework.”*

Middlesbrough delayed the finalisation of the 2020-21 annual governance statement until it could be amended to reflect the improvements required and, in October 2022, the Council agreed to establish an Improvement Board, with an independent chair to oversee actions and to update the Council regularly on progress. The Improvement Plan was approved by the Board when it met in November 2022.



Since then, there have been significant changes in the leadership of the Council. The interim Chief Executive and the leadership team are overseeing a transformation programme and other changes to improve financial resilience. Council elections have led to changes in the Executive, with a new Mayor and portfolio holders.

It is against this background that we have undertaken this review. Our assessment acknowledges the progress being made in response to the challenges faced. But as the planned improvements are still largely work in progress at this stage, this inevitably means that the scores will remain relatively low until stronger evidence of change becomes available.

### 3. Key findings

This section outlines findings from the assessment and supports the action plan included in the Executive Summary. It is anticipated that the Council may address and prioritise some of the issues raised within existing plans for the continuing development of financial management within the organisation.

#### 3.1 Applying the CIPFA Financial Management (FM) Model

In applying the CIPFA FM Model evidence was gathered from three main sources:

- document review
- 1:1 interview
- online survey

Information from these different sources has been brought together to give an assessment for each of the best practice statements relevant to the Council. Further details of the methodology used are shown in **Appendix 2**. Within this section of the report, direct quotes from interviews and the survey are included but are not attributed to the individuals concerned.

#### 3.2 Summary of CIPFA Financial Model Scores

The matrix below summarises CIPFA’s evaluation of the Council’s financial management arrangements against the best practice in CIPFA’s FM Model, with each area being awarded 1-5 stars (where 1 star indicates that the authority is ‘weak’ or ‘inadequate’ in its performance against the underlying statements of best practice and 5 stars represents a ‘very strong’ or ‘world-class’ performance. The matrix is based upon CIPFA’s scores for each statement, summarised across the three financial management styles and four management dimensions as shown below. It is based on CIPFA’s assessment of the evidence generated through the document review, 1:1 interviews and online survey.

#### 3.3 Best practice matrix

##### FM Model key findings chart for Middlesbrough Council on 15 May 2024

	Management dimensions			
Financial management styles	Leadership (A)	People (B)	Process (C)	Stakeholders (D)
Delivering Accountability (1)	**	*	***	**
Supporting performance (2)	**	**	**	*
Enabling transformation (3)	**	*	**	**
<b>Overall</b>	<b>**</b>			

The high-level matrix measures Financial Management Styles with Management Dimensions. The styles of financial management are intended to be progressive, with a general expectation that organisations are likely to firstly establish the building blocks of control and adherence to regulations through the 'Delivering Accountability'. This leads on to financial management contributing towards 'Supporting Performance' by assisting decision-making and supporting the delivery of organisational objectives. 'Enabling Transformation' would then be likely to represent the next stage, with financial management supporting the change agenda, innovation and re-engineering of systems and processes, where appropriate.

The Model is also organised by four management dimensions of Leadership, People, Processes and Stakeholders. These cover both "hard edged" attributes that can be costed/measured, as well as "softer" features such as communications, motivation, behaviour and cultural change.

### **3.4 Overview – Styles of financial management**

The Council scored reasonably well on some aspects of the Delivering Accountability style of financial management. The senior finance team have demonstrated a strong grasp of what is needed to build financial stability and have thereby raised levels of financial awareness across the Council. Budget holders may find the Agresso Business World system difficult to use, but the system and associated processes are able to produce reasonably reliable data – both for management data and for the financial statements. The lower scores reflect the heavy reliance within finance on a relatively small number of senior staff, with consequent risks to long-term sustainability, external audit's qualified opinion on value for money for 2020-21, and the ongoing hiatus in completing the audits of subsequent financial statements. The hiatus in audit work reflects the nation-wide backlog in audit and whilst Middlesbrough has raised the issue with LGA and DHLUC, it is outside the authority's direct control to resolve.

The scores on the 'supporting performance' row are marginally lower than those for 'delivering accountability' as budget ownership remains patchy. It is important to acknowledge, however, that we interviewed several directors and operational managers who demonstrated strong ownership of their budgets and responsibilities, and the finance business partners demonstrated a good understanding of the directorates that they support. Budget holders in parts of the Environment and Commercial Services Directorate and the Regeneration Directorate demonstrated reasonable ownership of their budgets, and interviewees from Adult Social Care confirmed that they were also looking to strengthen their approach. By comparison, ownership and accountability needs to be embedded much further in the Children's Services directorate, although it is important to recognise the operational challenges in this area.

One key issue that we picked up was that the ownership of budgets tended to weaken further down the hierarchy of delegated authority. This is not a reflection of those we interviewed but the apparent challenges they raised that their responsibilities often overlapped with colleagues and so others might make decisions that could impact on their budget.

Respondents noted that the financial system was not regularly used by budget holders and that there was an onus on finance business partners to undertake much of the analysis themselves using spreadsheets. Consequently, much of their time is taken up with

operational rather than strategic issues – a tendency to focus on accountability for past variances rather than potential risks that might arise.

Children’s services was regularly identified as a challenging area. We recognise that is partly a reflection of the sector-wide issues that affect most authorities and the previous turnover in senior staff creating uncertainties. More effective scrutiny is very dependent on building a more robust and timely data pack to enable trends in spend to be identified earlier and more accurately. We are aware that the Council is looking to strengthen this area – partly by building stronger data links between systems and the introduction of Power BI to provide more user-friendly data to directors and operational managers.

Turning to the ‘enabling transformation’ row, the scores may appear quite low given the work currently underway. There is a transformation programme being implemented in response to the financial pressures facing the Council, and there are clear governance arrangements in place to oversee progress. The relatively low scores reflect two factors:

- The transformation programme is still at an early stage. Plans are still being developed and the governance arrangements were only put in place in March 2024. What is being proposed appears reasonable, but there is insufficient evidence at this stage for us to be confident that it will deliver the changes expected.
- Furthermore, respondents have raised concerns about the capacity of staff in the Council to accept and implement the changes planned. Several participants observed that there is a growing tendency for the Council to rely on external parties to implement changes and that they do not yet feel they are part of what is being planned. Changing this culture will be critical to successful implementation.

There is strong leadership in place – both Members and Senior Officers - to drive through the changes required to build financial resilience and we are encouraged by the steps that have been taken to date. It is critical, however, that managers and other staff are encouraged to embrace the opportunity to be involved.

### **3.5 Overview – Management dimensions**

Turning to the columns that show management dimensions, the relatively low scores on ‘leadership’ reflect the recent turnover in Members and Senior Officers in the Council and that time is needed before the impacts of these changes becomes apparent.

It is noticeable that both the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance are interims and that their contracts are due to expire in March 2025. Both individuals are dynamic in driving change – indeed a number of participants commented to us that this is a time for ‘War-time’ leaders and that once things have settled the Council might appoint ‘Peace-time’ leaders. We are aware that there are plans in place to identify and promote/recruit suitable candidates to take on these roles when the time comes. Nevertheless, in our view it is likely that the transformational changes will still be being implemented come March 2025, and thus continuity will be critical.

The low scores on the ‘people’ column largely reflects the limited opportunities within the finance function to enable staff development. The limited capacity means that there is little or no staff rotation to build experience, and perhaps as a consequence, several participants commented that there is a divide between those working on the management accounting

and financial planning side and those on the accounts processing/technical side. There are few trainees and limited opportunities for individuals to build experience and gain promotion.

Much of this reflects the previous paring back of the finance function to deliver efficiency savings, and the difficulty in attracting recruits to work in Middlesbrough. Senior staff in finance are aware of the issue, and that it means the finance function is very dependent on their availability. Resolving the issue is not straightforward – we have explored whether it is feasible to develop a 'shared finance service' with neighbouring authorities to spread the risk and start to build a more experienced team, but we recognise that this is dependent on wider co-operation.

The 'people' column also applies to the management skills of non-finance staff. It was encouraging to see that budget management responsibilities are built into the job descriptions for staff and that senior officers understand the need for the Council to build financial resilience. Given the positive scores in the survey, it could be argued that this score should be higher. Our concern, however, is that this reflects a comfort with existing working practices when we have already identified that these need to change. Creating a more commercially aware and financially responsible culture will take time.

The scores under the 'processes' column reflect that existing practices are well established and typically operate well. There have been improvements in the budget setting and monitoring arrangements. Estimates for 2024-25 appear more robust than previously, and the move to monthly monitoring will help to ensure that any variances are identified and addressed more timeously. The overall scores are lowered by the following factors:

- The lack of integration between finance, payroll and social care systems. Requiring manual workarounds
- The need for a more data driven approach to forecasting income and expenditure
- A greater emphasis on comparing performance and unit costs with other similar bodies to identify areas for improvement
- The outstanding uncertainties over compliance with accounting standards due to the hiatus in external audit work.

Finally, the relatively low scores for 'stakeholders' is partly due to the hiatus in external audit work, but also that it will take time to address fully the governance issues previously flagged by external audit and the CIPFA review in 2022<sup>4</sup>. Progress is clearly being made – Members and Officers noted that relations are much more constructive than previously, and there is clear progress with the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan.

There is, however, still room for improvement. Several Members commented on the tendency for the discussion in meetings to become fractious. Debate is important, but in our view a more collaborative and constructive approach would strengthen scrutiny. In our experience audit committees and scrutiny panels benefit more from being chaired by representatives from opposition parties to provide added assurance. Middlesbrough has not been able to adopt such an approach to date. In November 2023, however, the Council approved a Member Development Strategy that includes the specification of values and training on a range of softer skills as well as what represents effective corporate governance.

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<sup>4</sup> Middlesbrough Council: Culture and Governance Report, September 2022

### 3.6 Statement scoring and assessments

In this section of the report, we show scores for individual statements and summarise the evidence upon which the assessment is based.

### 3.7 Leadership – Delivering Accountability

For the Delivering Accountability style there are three statements that consider the elements of an effective framework of financial management.

<b>Delivering Accountability</b>	<b>L1</b>	Financial capability is regarded as integral to supporting the delivery of the organisation’s objectives. The CFO is an active member of the board, is at the heart of corporate strategy/business decision making and leads a highly visible, influential and supportive finance team.	<b>3</b>
	<b>L2</b>	The organisation has an effective framework of financial accountability that is clearly understood and applied throughout, from the board through executive and non-executive directors to front line service managers.	<b>2</b>
	<b>L3</b>	Within an annual budget setting process the organisation’s leadership sets income requirements including tax and allocates resources to different activities in order to achieve its objectives. The organisation monitors the organisation’s financial and activity performance in delivering planned outcomes.	<b>3</b>

There has been a positive change to the leadership of the finance capability over the last 12 months. The S151 officer has a voice and the necessary influence at the Leadership Management Team (LMT) and is respected by Members. The two deputy S151 officers are long serving well respected employees of the Council, however, historically they have been drawn in to delivering day-to-day transactional support and have not always had the capacity to influence and support the Council at a strategic level.

The relationship between finance and the service in terms of providing support and challenge varies between directorates. Some directorates demonstrated reasonable ownership of their budgets, and interviewees from Adult Social care confirmed that they were also looking to adopt such an approach. By comparison, ownership and accountability needs to be embedded much further in the children’s services directorate.

Turning to statement L2, the Council has refreshed its financial regulations and procedures and there is a clear framework for financial accountability as detailed within the Constitution, Scheme of Delegation and Financial Limits Annex. Participants raised concerns that the financial system limits the level of approval on purchases to £500 for some senior budget holders. It is clear, however, that Officers and political leadership across the Council are setting the tone that finance is very important and that helping improve the financial position of the Council is everyone’s responsibility. The levels of financial delegation should be regularly reviewed, but in our view the tight controls reflect the determination of Middlesbrough to change attitudes and behaviours to financial management.

Nevertheless, the lower score reflects that these cultural changes will take time. The box below illustrates the nature of the challenge as well as the strengths as reflected in the comments raised by survey participants:

	<b>Comments from Finance</b>	<b>Comments from Budget Holders</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<i>"I am fortunate in that I have the Director support and backing if I need to challenge a Budget Manager. However, I do believe that this may not be the case across all Directorates."</i>	<i>"I get a team budget with all information in."</i>
<b>Concerns</b>	<p><i>"..... finance input has been too late to influence processes and decisions."</i></p> <p><i>"As far as I am aware, there is no official document that sets this out. .... I am now finding I am expected by my director to take some of the <u>accountability</u> from the Budget Manager so on the whole, I do not feel now there is clear definition for anyone."</i></p>	<p><i>"I have never been challenged by the finance team."</i></p> <p><i>"I am unsure how much finance knowledge project managers have and how integrated finance is from a finance function perspective."</i></p>

On statement L3, the Council has strengthened its approach to budget setting and monitoring. The process for determining the 2024-25 budget was rigorous, although there are underlying difficulties in collating rigorous data on volumes, growth and other performance indicators to underpin the forecasts The Council has moved from quarterly to monthly monitoring. The monthly and quarterly budget challenge sessions involve the S151, the appropriate Members and budget holders. These sessions will produce a much stronger grip and transparency to financial decision-making.

### 3.8 Leadership – Supporting Performance

For the Supporting Performance style there are two statements which consider financial planning, financial management strategy and the way financial management expertise is used in strategic decision-making.

<b>Supporting Performance</b>	<b>L4</b>	The organisation has a developed financial strategy to underpin medium and longer term financial health. The organisation integrates its business and financial planning so that it aligns resources to meet current and future outcome focussed business objectives and priorities.	<b>3.5</b>
	<b>L5</b>	The organisation develops and uses financial/leadership expertise in its strategic decision-making and its performance management based on an appraisal of the financial environment and cost drivers.	<b>2</b>

On statement L4, the Council Plan (2024-27) and MTFP were presented by the Chief Executive and S151 Officer respectively and subsequently approved at the Budget Council meeting on the 8th March 2024. The two documents are aligned – the Council Plan includes ‘Delivering Best Value’ as one of the Mayor’s four key priorities and this outlines the importance of restoring financial sustainability and robust governance. We have reduced the scores to some extent, however, as the medium term strategy is very dependent on the development of a new target operating model to demonstrate that its business plans align with the financial forecasts; and we have mentioned previously that the forecasts themselves would be more robust if underpinned by better quality performance data.

On statement L5, the financial grip on the short term has improved, but the longer term financial health of the Council is dependent on the finance team and services working closely together on financial modelling further in to the future based on informed demand and financial assumptions and service improvement plans. There is some evidence of finance providing expertise to inform financial decision making, however, this is not across all directorates. The time and capacity committed to understanding the cost drivers, projecting growth and inflation and utilising this information to develop financial models to project unmitigated expenditure profiles is limited. In addition, there is little evidence of strategic financial conversations between the FBP and the service to explore options to mitigate the growing expenditure and quantify the financial implications.

The selection of quotes in the box below from the finance team and service managers illustrate the patchiness of the existing approach:

	<b>Comments from Finance</b>	<b>Comments from Budget Holders</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<p><i>"We try our best to accommodate all requests for finance input and to develop finance skills for non-finance staff wherever we can."</i></p> <p><i>"I am given full support of the Director to provide input and influence decision making. He instils in his staff that I must be consulted in all major decision-making processes. I am given an agenda slot at his weekly DMT and am always given the opportunity to express my opinions. In addition, Finance is required to sign off any reports and business cases."</i></p>	<p><i>"... if I have a question about staffing budget then my FBP is able to answer and support."</i></p>
<b>Concerns</b>	<p><i>"Some FBPs have more challenges in the service involving them in everything than others."</i></p> <p><i>"I know sometimes FBPs have been excluded (not by their choice or actions) from such discussions."</i></p>	<p><i>"Mine is 'more of the same' based on previous financial years, which I wouldn't call robust analysis. It may be different in other areas."</i></p>



### 3.9 Leadership – Enabling Transformation

For the Enabling Transformation style there is one statement covering the integration of financial management approach and resources driving the change agenda.

<b>Enabling Transformation</b>	<b>L6</b>	The organisation’s leadership integrates financial management into its strategies to meet future business needs. Its financial management approach supports the change agenda and a culture of customer focus, innovation, improvement and development.	<b>2</b>
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The Council has started to discuss opportunities for transformation as opposed to a previous financial language of “salami slicing” to balance the budget. The language of transformation and the processes for generating, capturing and implementing new ideas and ways of working still appear to be in development, however, the Council is moving in the right direction:

*“As an organisation we have had some big successes in terms of changes and associated benefits, however there are some areas where change has been difficult.”*

*“Current Council culture is changing absolutely everything in every area re Council's priorities, financial pressures/demands, monitoring, ... extremely difficult to keep up to date with all the changes in all areas but am aware of own accountabilities and potential negative consequences if changes not followed.”*

The Council has commissioned external consultants to work alongside staff to support the development of transformation plans and the Council is currently reviewing their business case process to ensure it is fit for purpose for the transformation agenda. It is unclear to CIPFA, however, whether there is sufficient transformation capacity within the Council to engage with the consultants to implement the programmes of activity to deliver the transformation. Feedback from interviewees and survey participants included:

*“We always seem to be changing but fact that we have experienced such financial difficulties suggests that not always successful.”*

*“We have changed in previous years but not clear in the outcomes and benefits or if it's been fully carried out.”*

### 3.10 People – Delivering Accountability

<b>Delivering Accountability</b>	<b>P1</b>	The organisation identifies its financial competency needs and puts arrangements in place to meet them.	<b>1.5</b>
	<b>P2</b>	The organisation has access to sufficient financial skills to meet its business needs.	<b>2</b>

For the Delivering Accountability style these two statements cover the financial competencies required by the organisation and the skills that match these needs.

The survey responses would suggest that there is sufficient financial expertise available within the authority to operate effectively. This does reflect the commitment of staff to

deal with issues and to seek to address the financial challenges faced by the Council. We would question, however, whether this perception is an objective assessment of performance or whether it instead reflects a level of comfort with existing ways of working rather than what might be needed in future.

The existing Finance team within Middlesbrough Council represents the minimum needed to maintain adequate financial control. There are 17.3 full time equivalent staff in the financial planning and support section, and 22.1 in the finance and investment section. There are also 5.75 vacancies across the two teams. We understand that the number of posts has reduced over the years to reflect the need to reduce overhead costs.

The relatively small size of the Finance team has created a number of challenges:

- **There are only a small number of qualified accountants.** There are only 7 CCAB qualified accountants to support the Director of Finance. This is putting undue on the Heads of Service to deal with any technical issues. As a consequence, the onus is very much on the Director of Finance to deal with any strategic issues.
- **There is no capacity available to absorb peaks in workload.** Interviewees noted that the unfilled vacancies are putting pressure on some of the individuals in finance to work very long hours. Whilst this is reasonable in exceptional circumstances, if it occurs too frequently it increases the risk that officers might look for opportunities elsewhere – thereby creating further vacancies.
- **There is insufficient capacity to enable staff rotation or opportunities for career development.** Interviewees confirmed that there is little opportunity for individuals to move posts and there is no clear competency framework in place. This not only stifles career development, but it is creating a divide within finance between the two service functions. The staff survey would suggest that finance staff and budget holders are comfortable with the lack of rotation, but the risk is that existing practices – whether good or bad – become normalised and it builds a culture of resistance to change or challenge.

There is a lack of longer-term resilience in the Finance function. The reliance on a relatively small number of qualified staff means that if any were to leave, the Finance function would become very dependent on short term contractors to bridge the gap. When the contract for the interim Director of Finance comes to an end in March 2025, for example, it may be difficult to promote from within because of the limited capacity to backfill such posts.

We understand that it can be difficult to recruit qualified staff, but it is important that the Council starts to build more depth to ensure continuity. This might involve the introduction of a trainee scheme to build a cadre of new trainees, the recruitment of other specialists, or, if market conditions preclude recruitment, the exploration of greater collaboration with other authorities to share staff with in-depth expertise of specific finance areas.

### 3.11 People – Supporting Performance

<b>Supporting Performance</b>	<b>P3</b>	The organisation manages its finance function to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.	<b>2.5</b>
	<b>P4</b>	Finance staff provide business partner support by interpreting and explaining performance as well as advising and supporting on key business decisions.	<b>2</b>

	<b>P5</b>	Managers understand they are responsible for delivering services cost effectively and are held accountable for doing so. Financial literacy is diffused throughout the organisation so that decision takers understand and manage the financial implications of their decisions.	<b>2</b>
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The three Supporting Performance related statements cover the assessment of the effectiveness of the finance function, finance support on key decisions, the enforcement of accountability and the degree of diffused financial management.

As outlined previously, the relatively small size of the finance team and the positive feedback from survey respondents would suggest that the function is efficient and effective. There are no key performance indicators or other performance measures, however, to substantiate these measures.

Nevertheless, as part of our work, we interviewed the finance business partners and were impressed with their understanding and knowledge of the directorates that they support. Operational managers and Directors confirmed that the business partners attend key meetings and that financial issues are routinely discussed. As one survey respondent confirmed:

*"The business partners are very useful. They offer challenge and support in equal measure."*

Our assessment scores are lower than might otherwise be expected given the survey responses, however, as much of the focus appears to be on operational rather than strategic issues. Whilst budget holders have been trained in financial management, they do not routinely access the Business World accounting system and, as a consequence, are very reliant on the finance business partners to collate and analyse the data on spreadsheets to flag any issues arising. As a consequence, we understand that the emphasis of the meetings tends to be on monitoring outturn against budget and explaining any deviations. This is important, but it is largely focused on what has already happened rather than identifying and tackling issues before they arise.

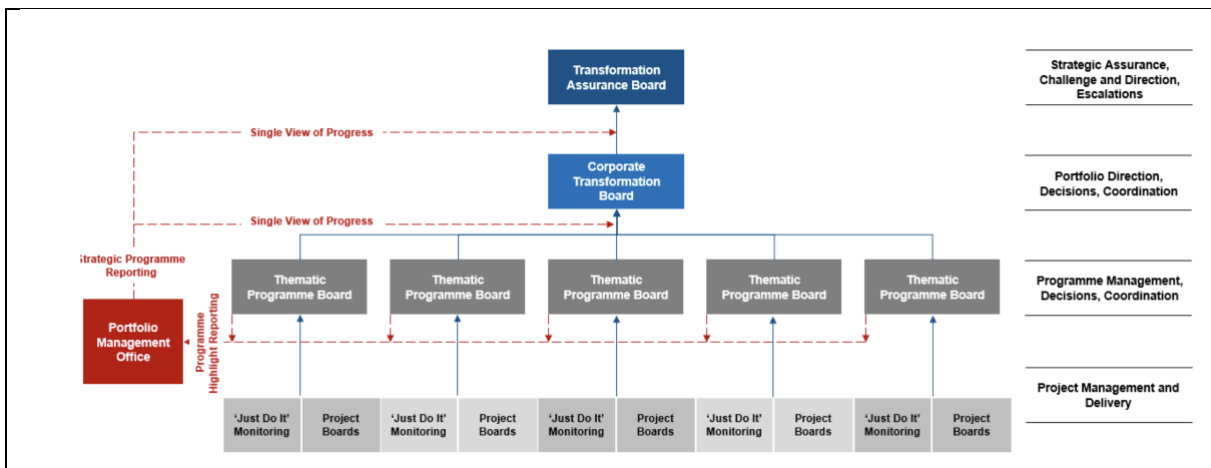
Furthermore, budget ownership and financial awareness remains patchy across the authority. There were a number of interviewees who demonstrated strong financial awareness and a commitment to taking their responsibilities seriously. Middlesbrough have also specified financial responsibilities in their job descriptions. This level of ownership has been less strong, however, in the children's directorate and in the lower tiers of management. Several participants highlighted the particular challenge in engaging managers within the children's service – the issue appears to be partly a cultural perception that finance is a secondary issue, the high levels of staff turnover in this directorate, and the challenges in getting reliable, granular performance data. Elsewhere, ownership tends to dissipate further down the hierarchy due to the difficulties in aligning budgets with service manager responsibilities. Several interviewees highlighted examples where their responsibilities overlapped with colleagues and thus decisions taken by them affected their budgets as well.

### 3.12 People – Enabling Transformation

<b>Enabling Transformation</b>	<b>P6</b>	The organisation develops and sustains its financial management capacity to help shape and support its transformational programme.	<b>1.5</b>
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The need to strengthen financial resilience is clearly driving change. Middlesbrough was awarded a capitalisation direction in February 2024 to bridge the budget gap, the possible shortfall in savings and the timelag in securing capital receipts. This was essentially driven by the financial challenges facing the authority and the need to address the ongoing and significant demand pressures in adult and children’s services. The interim Director of Finance has been very clear to Members and colleagues on the challenges facing the authority and the necessity of change.

The interim Director of Finance is part of the Corporate Transformation Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, overseeing progress, and is supported by an interim Finance Transformation Lead. As the figure below shows, this is a Board of senior officers that reports to the Transformation Assurance Board chaired by the Mayor and oversees the different initiatives being pursued.



Source: Report to the Executive, 13 March 2024

The governance arrangements appear robust and will ensure that Finance is a key part of the transformation programme. It is early days, however, and the transformation programme is still in its infancy. Furthermore, as both the Director of Finance and the Finance Transformation Lead are interims, it will be critical to maintain focus and continuity throughout the change programme. As a consequence, we have been somewhat prudent in our score for this element – we would expect the score to increase as transformational plans are firmed up and continuity becomes more assured.

### 3.13 Processes – Delivering Accountability

For the Delivering Accountability style of financial management the score combines nine individual statements. This is typically one of the highest scoring areas of the FM Model across public sector bodies.

As there are so many statements here, they are most easily considered in a series of thematic groups dealing with different aspects of financial management. Each group is introduced by a series of scores.

The first four Delivering Accountability statements deal with foundational requirements across annual budget setting, transactional finance, treasury management arrangements, as well as integrity and performance of financial systems.

<b>Delivering Accountability</b>	<b>PR1</b>	Budgets are accrual-based and robustly calculated	<b>2.5</b>
	<b>PR2</b>	The organisation operates financial information systems that enable the consistent production of comprehensive, accrual based, accurate and up to date data that fully meets users' needs.	<b>2</b>
	<b>PR3</b>	The organisation operates and maintains accurate, timely and efficient transactional financial services (e.g., creditor payments, income collection, payroll, and pensions' administration).	<b>3</b>
	<b>PR4</b>	The organisation's treasury management is risk based. It manages its investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, balancing risk and financial performance.	<b>4</b>

On statement PR1, budget setting is delivered in accordance with the Council's corporate objectives and MTFP. The revenue and capital budgets are mostly based upon service plans and projections and finance business partners confirmed that their monthly monitoring does take into account accruals, although these are part of the work arounds that have to be prepared. However, it is a mixed picture in terms of whether managers are fully involved in setting their budgets or whether the process is completed by finance on their behalf. Some service managers have commented that working with finance on budget setting improved for 2024-25, and they are now more involved in the budget setting processes.

It has been noted via interviews that the basis for financial projections is very simplistic in certain areas, often based on forecasting demand from a single point in time rather than looking at trend analysis and not incorporating any analysis of unit cost changes for different types of provision into the financial projections. As one service manager commented:

*"Finance are included as part of the budget process, but there have been areas this year where more in depth discussion around the calculation/setting of cost reductions and income targets would have been beneficial."*

There was an acknowledgement that with more capacity and training this was an area where finance staff would like to invest more of their time.

On statement PR2, we understand that there is a lack of integration between finance, payroll and social care systems:

*"It would be useful for both Finance and non-Finance staff if the Payroll system could be integrated, as currently we have to refer to a manual spreadsheet to ascertain the detail behind salary costs posted to the general ledger."*

*"In some areas data is downloaded from the system into a spreadsheet to be manually developed."*

*"Forecasting is currently provided at a high level (cost centre level), but this is a recent addition and needs to be developed further. Trends are not explicitly available via the finance system - manual intervention would be required to establish this."*

This leads to information having to be double-keyed into multiple systems and the usage of spreadsheets for the manipulation of data from multiple systems to create reports. These issues suggest that it will be difficult for service and finance staff to easily access a single version of the truth in terms of an up-to-date financial position.

A system workflow issue raised repeatedly with CIPFA during this process was regarding the Business World system sending purchase requests to multiple people for authorisation i.e. service managers can see and potentially approve purchases which they know are not for them to approve. We understand that the Council has reviewed these budget delegations as part of the intended roll-out of the Power BI reporting planned for late May 2024. A second issue raised repeatedly was regarding the approver's apparent inability to access information in Business World regarding the purchasing request to be able to confidently approve the request. Finance consider that this is due to a lack of information being input by the relevant officer requesting the order and plan to address the issue through training.

Users have fed back that the Business World system is not very user friendly or intuitive unless you have had significant training and use the system regularly. Some budget managers are keen and willing to engage with financial systems, many are not and there is still a heavy reliance on Financial Planning & Support finance staff to provide management information. There are a variety of standard reports and enquiries available for use in Business World. There is a tool within Business World (Excelerator) which enables bespoke reports to be run, however, only a handful of staff are trained to use this, and it is very complex.

The development and roll out of a Finance dashboard using Power BI in late May 2024 is a positive step that should enable and encourage more managers to engage in the management of their own budgets.

Turning to statement PR3 on the effectiveness of transactional financial services, interviewees confirmed that existing processes and practices were reasonable. We understand that this aspect of the Agresso Business World system works effectively, and that: bank reconciliations are routinely completed; and that holding & control accounts, debtor analysis and creditor balances are regularly reviewed each month.

Internal Audit have also confirmed that transactional services are operating effectively. Their audit of payroll, for example, confirmed 'substantial assurance' and their review of creditors concluded that there was 'reasonable assurance'. They also provided substantial assurance on the collection of Council tax and non-domestic rates.

There are, however, areas for improvement. Internal Audit gave limited assurance on the use of procurement cards – largely because VAT was not routinely identified and re-claimed and because there were instances of a lack of adequate separation of duties. We understand that Middlesbrough has since introduced a management dashboard for each director to track the review and authorisation of card purchases and whether the VAT has been identified. External audit had also previously questioned whether bad debts were effectively scrutinised. Middlesbrough has addressed this issue by revising its methodology

for bad debts, although without confirmation from the audit function that they are content with the change made it is not possible to score higher than three on this aspect.

Statement PR4 refers to Middlesbrough’s Treasury Management arrangements. Treasury Management refers to the maintenance of sufficient – but not excess cash resources available to meet expenditure commitments, while managing the risks associated investments.

Middlesbrough’s external debt is £259.5m, but as a proportion of core spending power it is relatively low compared to other unitary councils, and well within the operational boundary of £352 million.

Interviews confirmed that the Council’s approach to investments is prudent. As it states in the Treasury Strategy (February 2024), the policy is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield. As a consequence, all investments are short term and are in government, local authorities or approved UK banks and cashflows are monitored daily. Middlesbrough is advised by Arlingclose on its investments with counterparties.

Quarterly updates are provided to the Executive on progress – the information is set out clearly at the end of the budget monitoring updates. Interviewees explained that it can be difficult to get Members engaged on the issue, but this is not unique to Middlesbrough. We understand that Member training has previously been run.

Statements PR5 and PR6 cover critical budget performance monitoring and associated responsive agility, as well as how the balance sheet contributes to the effective management of the organisation’s assets and liabilities.

<b>Delivering Accountability</b>	<b>PR5</b>	The organisation actively manages budgets, with effective budget monitoring arrangements that ensure ‘no surprises’ and trigger responsive action.	<b>3</b>
	<b>PR6</b>	The organisation maintains processes to ensure that information about key assets and liabilities in its balance sheet is a sound and current platform for management action.	<b>4</b>

On Statement PR5, the Council has strengthened its budget monitoring and moved from quarterly to monthly reviews. The monthly and quarterly budget challenge sessions involve the S151, the appropriate Members and budget holders. These sessions should provide a step up in the grip and transparency needed for effective financial decision making.

As part of budget monitoring, budget managers should be reviewing their budgets monthly and providing outturn forecasts. There is a heavy reliance still from some areas on Finance staff to do this work and rather than managers leading on outturn forecasts, it tends to be Finance leading and then seeking comment from budget managers. For example, participants commented that:

*“Some managers have a very poor grasp of finance and budget management.”*

*“This has been kept at arm’s length to the present time”.*

*"The introduction of the Monthly and Quarterly Budget Challenge sessions was designed to hold relevant directorates to account for their variances. However, in my opinion, this has not yet had a significant impact on the Directorates with the most significant and historically ongoing variances - namely Children's and Adults Social Care."*

However, this is not the case across the board - some budget managers have taken an active role and interest in their budgets and are keen to be as self-sufficient as they can be. It also appears that certain Directorates are less likely to be actively engaged in monitoring budgets than others. For example:

*"This process has changed in that monitoring was done monthly with quarterly reporting whereas now there is a more robust monthly monitoring and reporting process in place with enhanced functionality within the financial system."*

*"The monthly monitoring process driven by Finance ensures that managers are forced to do this."*

On statement PR6, interviewees confirmed that Middlesbrough maintains an up-to-date asset register within the finance system. Additions and disposals are updated annually, and there is a rolling programme of valuations to ensure fair values are properly reflected in the records. External audit has previously stated that there were no misstatements, although they did flag some difficulties in getting reliable data on commercially let premises. The asset register shared with CIPFA confirmed that assets are suitably categorised by type – such as distinguishing heritage assets and surplus assets,

We understand that the Finance team does produce an 'exclerator report' from the Agresso Business World system each month that flags movements in current assets and liabilities, but this is not shared more widely. The annual nature of additions and disposals means that there is no periodic reports to show the mid-year position on the balance sheet.

<b>Delivering Accountability</b>	<b>PR7</b>	Management understands and addresses its risk management and internal control governance responsibilities.	<b>3.5</b>
	<b>PR8</b>	Management is supported by effective assurance arrangements, including internal audit, and audit and risk committee(s).	<b>4</b>
	<b>PR9</b>	The organisation's financial accounting and reporting are accrual based and comply with international standards and meet relevant professional and regulatory standards.	<b>1</b>

The first two statements here address key aspects of critical internal risk management and internal control arrangements together with more independent organisational scrutiny processes. The final statement assesses the effectiveness of financial reporting, including compliance with relevant professional and regulatory standards.

Middlesbrough has a clearly articulated risk strategy that sets out its risk appetite, how risks should align with performance management, and the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Executive, Senior Officers, Internal Audit and all staff. The risk register includes the key strategic risks we would have expected to see, such as the challenge in setting a balanced budget, demand pressures on social care, and the importance of effective



corporate governance and the challenges in recruiting sufficient, suitable staff, although the risk register should be more regularly reviewed and scrutinised by Members.

Internal controls have also been strengthened in response to the comments raised by Internal and External audit. CIPFA was previously commissioned as external advisors to support the Council's work to refresh and revise the constitution, finance procedure rules and the contract procedure rules. The revised arrangements were considered by the former Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee in August 2023 and approved by full Council in September 2023.

We have scored this aspect at 3.5, on the basis that many of these revisions are relatively recent and so there is limited evidence available yet to confirm widespread compliance.

Turning to statement PR8, assurance arrangements have been strengthened. The Council has removed the executive responsibilities previously assigned to the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee; now renamed the Audit Committee. Whilst our preference is to have an independent chair of such a Committee, there was a widespread consensus amongst interviewees that the new Chair is capable and very well qualified for the role.

The Audit Committee has clear terms of reference that encompass the core functions we would expect. These include the audit function, risk management, internal controls and corporate governance. Internal Audit, contracted out to Veritau, meets the requisite quality standards and has the resources available to deliver its risk-based plan.

There is something of a hiatus, at present, with external audit as the newly appointed auditors are awaiting completion of the past audits from their predecessors in order to undertake the 2023-24 audit. The delay is largely a national issue around capacity in the audit sector, however, and thus outside the direct control of Middlesbrough. Whilst this issue meant that we marked down statement PR9 due to the outstanding queries on previous audits, and statement S2 because of the lack of audit evidence to demonstrate improvements in value for money, we have not reduced the scores for this statement as we are satisfied with the arrangements put in place by the Council.

On Statement PR9, external audit raised a large number of queries on the draft 2021-22 financial statements. Whilst we understand that many of these issues were subsequently resolved, the audit work came to a halt in March 2023 due to national considerations around the audit sector and have not since recommenced. As a consequence, there is an outstanding query with the auditors from the Council around changes in the application of IAS 37 on the provisions for bad debts in the Collection Fund. This does not appear to be related to any concern around the methodology, but instead reflects the hiatus in bringing the audit work to a definitive conclusion due to a reset in the national allocation of resources. We understand that the Finance team have already engaged with the new auditors in relation to the adoption of the revised methodology with no issues arising to date. Given the outstanding confirmation that the Council's financial statements comply with International Accounting Standards, however, we have had to mark down this score accordingly.

Turning to the next group of statements, the first Supporting Performance statement addresses the critical area of medium-term financial planning and how financial strategy is underpinned by key funding assumptions, strategic service planning and analysis. The

second statement tests the effectiveness of forecasting and the influence of such processes upon decision making.

<b>Supporting Performance</b>	<b>PR10</b>	The organisation’s medium-term financial planning process underpins fiscal discipline, is focussed upon the achievement of strategic priorities and delivers a dynamic and effective business plan.	<b>3</b>
	<b>PR11</b>	Forecasting processes and reporting are well developed and supported by accountable operational management. Forecasting is insightful and leads to optimal decision making.	<b>1</b>

On statement PR10, the MTFP aligns with Council priorities and covers the requisite years (2024-25 to 2026-27). Council approval of the 2024-25 budget and proposed Council Tax was secured at the Council meeting on 8 March 2024. However, as stated at the meeting:

*"The Council’s financial position is critical, given that it is unable to set a robust and balanced revenue budget for 2024/25 and due to its critically low level of revenue reserves, without recourse to Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) approved by Government."*

It is worth noting that several of the other supporting strategy documents are currently under review e.g. the asset management strategy, plus the capital programme has been identified on several occasions as not being given the attention it requires to be more proactive and forward looking.

It is still early days in terms of delivering transformation within the Council, therefore, it is unlikely that the MTFP has become a 'dynamic' plan that can be readily revised without substantial changes. However, it has been identified by the Council that there is a need for transformation and the Council has taken the necessary prudent steps to secure EFS to provide enough time for the transformational improvements to become embedded.

On statement PR11, forecasting processes and reporting has not been identified by anyone in either finance or the service as a strength, in fact it has been universally identified as an area that requires improvement or an area that budget managers state they are not involved in. The introduction of Power BI dashboards should help facilitate conversations between finance and the service to look at historic trends and future demand projections to inform the financial modelling required to inform longer term budget setting.

The overriding view is that budgets are heavily based on the previous year’s spending and not based on likely future demand levels – either unmitigated forecasts or mitigated to account for interventions planned within the service delivery and improvement plans. A rolling programme of zero-based budgeting exercises may be required as the transformational changes unfold.

### 3.14 Processes – supporting performance

The Supporting Performance statement covers the extent to which arrangements to secure value for money are embedded within the organisation.

<b>Supporting Performance</b>	<b>PR12</b>	The organisation systematically pursues opportunities to reduce costs and improve value for money in its operations.	<b>2</b>
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The Council has not routinely analysed the relative cost and performance of services and tested them against internal and external benchmarks and performance indicators to identify efficiency gains and spending reductions. There has been ad hoc benchmarking and comparison work completed, however, most examples provided were conducted by the service and not in conjunction with Finance. As a selection of participants commented:

*"Many issues are instigated for investigation, but momentum generally fizzles out and the status quo remains."*

*"I believe some services do possibly benchmark themselves against others, but as a general rule we do not do this corporately."*

*"Does happen but wouldn't say regularly for end to end reviews due to capacity."*

There are alternative delivery methods in place e.g. Public Health with Redcar & Cleveland Council, and the Tees Valley wide new Waste plant strategy. However, the organisation does not routinely undertake end to end business process reviews and implement findings.

### 3.15 Processes – enabling transformation

The Enabling Transformation statements test the extent to which financial processes contributes to improved outcomes through transformational change.

<b>Enabling Transformation</b>	<b>PR14</b>	The organisation continually re-engineers its financial processes to ensure delivery of agreed outcomes is optimised.	<b>2</b>
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Historically, we could not find much evidence that the Council regularly reviewed end-to-end processes to ensure value for money is achieved across the whole organisation rather than in departmental silos.

The interim S151 officer and interim Chief Executive are pushing the transformation agenda. The Chief Executive has commissioned Inner Circle Consulting Ltd to support the Council to kick-start the Transformation programme and the Council is currently in procurement for a longer-term partner. In addition, specific finance skills have been recruited to support cross-cutting efficiency review work and focused support for transformation within Children's Services. However, there is concern that because this work is reliant on external consultancy support and interim finance staff that it may not be sustained when this additional support finishes.

The current Council wide Transformation programme requires full business cases to support requests for funding, previously a business case has been required if support was required through the Council's Invest to Save Change Programme. CIPFA understand that the current business case process is under review to determine if it is fit for purpose for the Transformation agenda.

**3.16 Stakeholders management dimension**

The CIPFA FM Model combines several stakeholder elements here, including the views of external stakeholders, on value for money, financial integrity, compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations and the ability to influence decisions on resource allocation.

<b>All</b>	<b>S1</b>	The organisation provides external stakeholders with evidence of the integrity of its financial conduct and performance and demonstrates fiscal discipline including compliance with statutory/legal/regulatory obligations.	<b>2</b>
	<b>S2</b>	The organisation demonstrates that it achieves value for money in the use of its resources.	<b>1</b>
	<b>S3</b>	The organisation is responsive to its operating environment, seeking and responding to customer and stakeholder service and spending priorities that impact on its financial management.	<b>3</b>

The first statement (S1) examines the degree to which external stakeholders receive assurance on financial integrity from a number of sources including processes and publications. Financial impacts and factors that influence stakeholder confidence are key to this dimension. The second statement (S2) seeks to test the assurance provided to external stakeholders on the delivery of value for money. The final statement (S3) explores stakeholder engagement and the degree to which this relationship influences financial strategy and organisational priorities.

Middlesbrough is on a major journey since the report by external audit in July 2022 to the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee concluded that:

*"... the culture and governance arrangements at the Authority have not been operating as expected, and that this is undermining the effectiveness of the Council's governance framework."*

In response, the senior statutory officers in the Council set out a Corporate Governance Improvement Plan but the authority was issued with a Best Value Notice by DLUHC in January 2023 in response to the serious concerns over governance arrangements. Progress subsequently proved to be slow, however, and in August 2023 external audit concluded that whilst there were signs of improvement in the cultural and governance weaknesses, sufficient progress had not yet been made. The external auditors issued 11 statutory recommendations.

Since then, significant changes are being implemented and are scrutinised by an Independent Improvement Advisory Board that has been invited into the Council on a voluntary basis. In February 2024, a progress report to the Audit Committee noted that 40% of the actions in response to the earlier Corporate Governance Improvement Plan had been delivered, and 38% of the actions in response to the statutory recommendations.

Changes have included the implementation of a Member development strategy, training for officers on corporate values and budget management.

Whilst changes are being made, it is still very much work in progress. At the time of our review Middlesbrough is still subject to scrutiny by DLUHC against its Best Value Notice, and external audit have not yet provided any confirmation that they are satisfied with the progress made. We understand that DLUHC are due to undertake a review in June / July 2024, and that external audit is due to report at the end of May with a value for money commentary. External audit is not expected, however, to undertake an assurance review of the Council's progress or conclude on the progress made with its 11 statutory recommendations. In the circumstances, therefore, we have marked statement s1 as a 'two', but the direction of change is encouraging, and we would expect this to rise in the near future.

To achieve a much higher rating, we would expect a more collaborative working relationship between Members. Several interviewees commented on the tendency for the discussion in meetings to become fractious. Whilst much of this can be attributed to differences of political opinion, it does hinder effective scrutiny. For example, in our experience audit committees and scrutiny committees benefit from being chaired by opposition or independent Members to provide added assurance. Middlesbrough has not been able to adopt such an approach in the past.

Turning to statement S2, the issues raised previously by external audit on the 2020-21 financial statements and the subsequent hiatus in the audit work for the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial statements means that Middlesbrough is not able to demonstrate to stakeholders that it delivers value for money. Without such assurance we have had to mark the authority down accordingly, but we recognise that resolving this delay in the external audit is outside the direct control of Middlesbrough Council.

Turning to statement S3; there is a stronger focus on supporting Members in responding to customer queries and more generally on customer engagement than previously. At the time of our review there were concerns around the communications around the changing of arrangements for the collection of green bins and some Members raised concerns that the consultation process could be improved. Nevertheless, in our view this should not override the progress made. There was consensus that the changes in senior officers had led to better relations with Members and that the organisation was seeking to be more customer focused:

- The Council has appointed the Head of Resident and Business Support to take on the responsibility for transformational change in customer relations whilst backfilling elements of her existing role. The officer has a cross-directorate remit to explore different delivery models that help to join up different functions within the Council.
- Several Members referred to the 'one stop shop' initiatives by the Council
- Whilst there were 37 complaints investigated by the Ombudsman in 2022-23, compared to an average of 32 for the previous three years, only 5 were upheld in 2023-24, representing just 14% of the 37.

## Appendix 1 - CIPFA FM Model - Summary

The CIPFA FM Model was originally released in July 2004 and describes a model for best practice in financial management within the public sector. This is the fourth iteration of the FM Model. Version 4 has been specifically developed to incorporate the very latest best practice initiatives as well as the emerging financial management issues associated with the current financial environment. The Model recognises that using money well leads to more and better front-line services and that effective financial management in the public sector now requires financial responsibilities to be more widely diffused throughout the whole of the organisation.

Budget holders/managers therefore need to be financially literate and finance professionals need to contribute through challenge, interpretation and advice. Good financial management is no longer just about accounting for expenditure and demonstrating probity, but finance must be placed in the wider organisational context, in terms of how it supports the delivery of the organisation's strategic objectives.

The CIPFA FM Model is structured around three styles of financial management:

- **Delivering Accountability** – an emphasis on control, probity, meeting regulatory requirements and accountability.
- **Supporting Performance** – responsive to customers, efficient and effective, and with a commitment to improving performance.
- **Enabling Transformation** – strategic and customer-led, future orientated, proactive in managing change and risk, outcome focused and receptive to new ideas.

The styles are intended to be progressive and it is expected that all three styles will be present in an organisation exhibiting best practice financial management characteristics. For example, accountability alone is not sufficient to enable an organisation to drive performance and to develop its transformational capacity and, conversely, performance or transformation programmes that are not founded in a robust approach to controlling and accounting for resources are unlikely to succeed.

The CIPFA FM Model is also organised by four management dimensions. These cover both hard edged attributes that can be costed or measured, as well as softer features such as communications, motivation, behaviour and cultural change. These are:

- **Leadership** – focuses upon strategic direction and business management, and the impact on financial management of the vision and involvement of the organisation's Board members and senior managers.
- **People** – includes both the competencies and the engagement of staff. This aspect generally faces inward to the organisation.
- **Processes** – examines the organisation's ability to design, manage, control and improve its financial processes to support its policy and strategy.
- **Stakeholders** – deals with the relationships between the organisation and those with an interest in its financial health, whether Treasury, inspectors, auditors, taxpayers, suppliers, customers or partners. It also deals with customer relationships within the organisation, between finance services and its internal users.

A matrix approach is therefore used in the Model, combining the three styles of financial management and four management dimensions. The organisation's current financial

management position is assessed through comparing its arrangements against 30 statements of best practice, with a set of supporting questions sitting behind each statement. The table below shows how the 30 statements fit into the Best Practice Matrix.

**Table 1 – Management styles/dimensions matrix**

Financial Management Styles	Management Dimensions			
	Leadership	People	Processes	Stakeholders
Delivering Accountability	L1 – L3	P1 - P2	PR1 – PR9	S1
Supporting Performance	L4 – L5	P3 – P5	PR10 - PR13	S2
Enabling Transformation	L6	P6	PR14 - PR15	S3

Each statement is scored from 0-4 with half point increments, to establish an overall picture of strengths and weaknesses in terms of financial management, as shown in the following table.

**Table 2 – How far does the best practice statement apply?**

Score	How far does the best practice statement apply?
0 / 0.5 / 1	Hardly
1.5 / 2	Somewhat
2.5 / 3	Mostly
3.5 / 4	Strongly

The methodology used to undertake the review of financial management is described in **Appendix 2**.

## Appendix 2 – Review methodology

### Introduction

The aim of the review is to form a view on the extent to which the statements of best practice in financial management apply to the organisation and the approach aims to gather evidence for this in the most economical way.

The high-level stages involved in the review are set out in further detail below.

### Application of best practice statements

Assessment methodology requires contributors to the electronic survey to approach the scoring for their relevant best practice statements and supporting questions by allocating scores from 0-4 to each of the statements.

The approach includes the categorisation of five survey groups as follows:

**Table 1 – Survey groups**

Group	Survey group	Description
SG1	Strategic finance	This group would comprise senior finance staff at the core of the corporate strategic finance function and include deputy/assistant CFOs, chief accountants, senior corporate financial performance specialists, long term finance and funding specialists, special project investment specialists, technical financial reporting specialists, etc.
SG2	Operational finance	This group is generally made up from the corporate core finance function but can include finance specialists from devolved arrangements with operational departments/functions. Members would typically include group accountants, budget monitoring teams, departmental business partners and corporate transactional finance staff.
SG3	Service directors	This group is aimed at service directors/heads of service – the objective is to capture evidence on strategic financial capability from an operational non-Finance perspective at the most senior operational level. Such contributors would typically be members of the organisational corporate management team/senior management team.
SG4	Operational managers	Typically, but not exclusively, budget Holders. This group would include any operational manager that is empowered to make decisions consuming organisational resources that have financial implications. Such decisions are typically taken supported by management information or decision support advice provided by finance colleagues.
SG5	Board, Stakeholders and external contributors	The senior stakeholders group comprises the chief finance officer, Chief Executive/Permanent Secretary, board non-executives, Audit Committee chairs and members, other external stakeholders or partner organisations, external audit representation and external supervisory representation – e.g., external auditor.

For the survey, participants were drawn from SG1&2, SG3 and SG4. A selection of the most relevant statements and questions for each of the survey groups were determined and tailored accordingly. This “culling” process produces the most relevant application of



the best practice statements designed to extract the optimal information from each specialised survey group. Benefits include relevancy and the minimisation of time exposure for participants and allowed a categorisation of evidence capture between:

- Document review/evidence.
- Interviews.
- Electronic survey.

### **Document review/evidence**

An integral aspect of the review was the assessment of a number of key documents for the Council (including material specifically made available as part of this assessment process, as well as publicly available material). This served two main purposes; to enable the assessor to familiarise him/herself with the structure, processes and culture of the Council, and to confirm factual information relating to the best practice statements and supporting questions e.g., whether or not a specific policy was in existence.

### **Interviews**

Interviews with 44 contributors were used to supplement the document review as well as substantiating the evidence generated from the survey.

Interviewees were largely from within the Council (with a sample of staff with financial management responsibilities, including Corporate Directors and Budget Managers), both officers and members.

**Table 2 – List of interviewees**

Debbie Middleton	Director of Finance
Clive Heaphy	Chief Executive
Richard Horniman	Director of Regeneration
Charlotte Benjamin	Monitoring Officer
Joe Tynan	Director of Children's Services
Dawn Alaszewski	Director of Children's Care
Erik Scollay	Director of Adult Social Care
Mark Adams	Director of Public Health
Rob Brown	Director of Education
Gail Earl	Head of Prevention
Andrew Mace	Head of Environment Services
Suzanne Hodge	Head of Prevention, Provider and Support Services
Caroline Cannon	Head of SEN and Vulnerable Learners
Claire Kemp	Head of Community Learning
Andrew Humble	Head of Financial Planning
Justin Weston	Head of Finance and Investment
Gemma Cooper	Head of Strategy, Business & Customer
Ann-Marie Johnstone	Head of Governance, Policy and Information
Nicola Finnegan	Head of HR
Max Thomas/Phil Jeffrey	Internal Audit
David Jamison	Head of Property & Commercial Services
Stephen Reid/Mark Rutter	E&Y
Paul Shout	FBP - Regeneration / lead on capital programme
Alison Lythgoe	FBP - Adults Social Care
Janette Savage	Head of Resident & Business Support
Louise Grabham	Head of Strategic Commissioning
Jonathan Bowden	Head of Inclusion - Health
Ruth Musicka	Head of Access & Safeguarding
Tufan De	Head of Safeguarding - Children
Tracy Jelfs	Head of Corporate Parenting
Marion Walker	Head of Stronger Communities
Craig Povey	FBP - Children's Services
Chris Cooke	Elected Mayor
Cllr Matthew Storey	Chair of OSB
Cllr Nicky Walker	Executive Member for Finance
Cllr David Coupe	Conservative Group Leader
Cllr Philippa Storey	Deputy Mayor & Group Leader - Labour

Cllr Michael Saunders	Group Leader MICA
Cllr Jill Ewan	Chair of Audit Committee
Cllr Dorothy Davison	Group Leader - Marton East Independent
Geoff Field	Director of Environment & Commercial Services
Cllr Theo Furness	Executive Member for Regeneration

### Electronic Survey

A powerful component of the CIPFA FM Model is the electronic survey. Across a range of staff with differing financial management roles the electronic survey is used to test best practice statements against the actual prevailing conditions and practice within the organisation. Such scope would include e.g., the robustness of budget setting, the integration of business and financial planning, financial management competencies, the extent to which finance supports strategic decision making etc.

Contributors complete the electronic survey and submit their results online over a prescribed period of time. In addition to scoring the statements, contributors were given the facility to record observations and evidence which provide valuable insight as well as substantiating their scoring.

The overall response rate for the electronic survey was 71 out of 100 participants. The minimum level acceptable as evidence is normally 50% for each survey group. Response rates for each of the survey groups are set out in the chart below:

**Table 3 – Survey groups**

Group	Survey Groups	Invited	Completed
SG1 and 2	Finance	8	7
SG3	Senior service leads	15	13
SG4	Service leads	77	51
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>71</b>

### Appendix 3 – Star rating key criteria and characteristics

Rating	Assessment
*****	The organisation has in place leading edge financial management capability that allows it to anticipate both challenges and key opportunities, driving transformational change in order to optimise its performance and deliver optimal outcomes. Financial strategy is robust and covers medium to longer term and the organisation is fully agile in adapting to unforeseen events without impacting key outcomes. Investment programme management including commercial capabilities are fully integrated with operational requirements and highly effective with significant returns being achieved on improved service delivery. Financial management capability meets global best practice standards.
****	The organisation has in place strong financial management capability which enables it to deliver effective outcomes in challenging times, provides stability through to the medium term, is agile in adapting to unforeseen events, continually identifies opportunities to improve its performance and contributes to organisational transformational change. Most investment programmes are delivered to time and cost. The organisation has strong insight into cost drivers and commercial capabilities are highly evident with strategic and operational planning.
***	The organisation has sound financial management capability and has arrangements in place that are adequate in supporting the organisation under stable conditions and enables it to incrementally develop but is not sufficient for challenging times or driving transformational change. There is a medium term financial strategy and competent investment programme management that ensures that most programmes are implemented although invariably not all projects will come within budget and timescales. Commercial capabilities exist but are only partially developed.
**	The organisation has basic financial management capability. Financial management arrangements are in place that allows the organisation to meet the minimum of practice standards and provides functional capability in the short term, a minimum level of support in the delivery organisational outcomes but does not support organisational transformational change. Financial management style is predominantly stewardship in nature rather than supporting effective decision support. Investment Programme management is rudimentary and there is a disconnect between operational and financial strategies.
*	The organisation has some financial management arrangement in place, but they are inadequate and provide only minimal financial management capability with reactive short term solutions. Basic accountability obligations are minimally covered, and financial management does not meaningfully support effective organisational outcomes of transformational change. Basic stewardship responsibilities are a challenge and financial management capability is not fully embedded within basic decision support.

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Regeneration – Richard Horniman
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Executive Member for Regeneration – Councillor Theo Furness
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Scrutiny Review – Planning Capacity
<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	A successful and ambitious town
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
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That the Executive:

- a. notes the report of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel into Planning Capacity, and the accompanying recommendations; and,
- b. approves the action plan prepared by the service in response to the recommendations.

<b>Executive summary</b>
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The Regeneration Scrutiny Panel considered the issue of capacity within the Council's Planning Service, which has been an issue of significant concern in recent months. As a result of their review, the Panel proposed a range of recommendations to address the identified issues. An action plan has been developed by the service in response to these recommendations and this has been included for consideration by Executive.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To inform Members of the review undertaken by the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel into capacity within the Council's Planning Service.
- 1.2 To set out the service's proposed actions to address the recommendations from the report. Executive approval to these actions is requested.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 That the Executive:**

- a. notes the report of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel into Planning Capacity, and the accompanying recommendations; and,
- b. approves the action plan prepared by the service in response to the recommendations subject to the availability of approved budget and funding.

## **3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

- 3.1 The review considered the current situation within the Planning Service and identified a number of actions that could improve capacity.
- 3.2 The Planning Service deliver a statutory function where performance is monitored closely by Government. Failure to deliver a satisfactory level of performance due to capacity issues would result in the Council receiving potential intervention from the Government to correct the situation.

## **4. Background and relevant information**

- 4.1 The Regeneration Scrutiny Panel undertook a review of capacity within the Planning Service in the latter part of 2023 and the early part of 2024. At the time of the review commencing, significant concerns were being raised by the service regarding ongoing capacity and the ability to recruit staff to fulfil what is a statutory function. As a result, the Panel agreed the following Terms of Reference:
- a. to understand the current position in terms of Middlesbrough Council's present planning capacity, building control and enforcement provision;
  - b. to examine any non-statutory functions currently provided by Middlesbrough Council's planning service;
  - c. to consider measures, including joint working with other local authorities, that could be put in place to mitigate any gaps in the current service;
  - d. to investigate what additional resources, if any, can be accessed from Central Government or other bodies to assist with improving planning capacity; and,
  - e. to consider any potential implications/impact/challenges of the Regeneration and Levelling Up Bill on planning services.
- 4.2 The review considered evidence from a number of sources, including the Royal Town Planning Institute and Planning Managers from a number of different Local Authorities.

4.3 The review identified a number of actions for increasing capacity, which were included within a final report that is included as Appendix I.

4.4 The report and accompanying recommendations was considered and approved by Overview and Scrutiny Board on April 10<sup>th</sup>.

4.5 The recommendations have subsequently been considered by the Planning Service and an action plan developed to take them forward where appropriate. This action plan has been included as Appendix II.

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

5.1 The Planning Service is a statutory function of the Council, and the process by which it must be delivered is set out in detail. Any flexibility in how the service is delivered was considered as part of the review.

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

### **6.1 *Financial (including procurement and Social Value)***

6.2 Actions 1 to 3 and 7 to 9 have been identified as being able to be delivered through the existing approved Planning budget. Action 4 requires external funding to be secured to enable implementation. Action 5, requires ongoing budget growth and therefore would need to be incorporated into the 2025/26 budget process in order to consider priority for and affordability against available resources as part of the budget to be approved by Council in February 2025. The financial implications of Action 6 cannot be determined at this time, so would require further consideration and approval in due course. Where external funding is required to deliver actions they have also been flagged as such. These proposals would not be taken forward unless the resources were secured, hence there is no additional request for Council revenue funding.

### **6.3 *Legal***

6.4 None of the proposals recommended for delivery require any specific legal consideration.

### **6.5 *Risk***

6.6 The proposed actions do not have any direct impact upon the Council's current risk profile.

### **6.7 *Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion***

6.8 The proposed actions do not have any direct impact upon the human rights of individuals, the public sector equity duty or community cohesion.

### **6.9 *Climate Change / Environmental***

6.10 The proposed actions do not have any direct impact upon climate change or environmental issues.

**6.11 *Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers***

6.12 The proposed actions do not have any direct impact upon children and young people cared for by the authority.

**6.13 *Data Protection***

The proposed actions do not impact upon the Council’s current data protection approach.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Implement the Service Action Plan	Head of Planning	28th February 2025

**Appendices**

1	Scrutiny Review of Planning Capacity – Final Report
2	Service Response Action Plan
3	PAS Review Recommendations

**Background papers**

Body	Report title	Date

**Contact:** Richard Horniman

**Email:** richard\_horniman@middlesbrough.gov.uk



# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Final Report of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel

### PLANNING CAPACITY

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

1. The aim of the review is to examine the current issues with regard to planning capacity and ensure that the Council continues to offer timely planning services to Middlesbrough residents.
2. The review aims to assist the Local Authority in achieving its strategic priority:

**Quality of Service** - we will ensure that we place communities at the heart of what we do, continue to deliver value for money and enhance the reputation of Middlesbrough.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

3. The terms of reference, for the scrutiny panel's review, are as follows:
  - A) To understand the current position in terms of Middlesbrough Council's present planning capacity, building control and enforcement provision.
  - B) To examine any non-statutory functions currently provided by Middlesbrough Council's planning service.
  - C) To consider measures, including joint working with other local authorities, that could be put in place to mitigate any gaps in the current service.
  - D) To investigate what additional resources, if any, can be accessed from Central Government or other bodies to assist with improving planning capacity.
  - E) To consider any potential implications/impact/challenges of the Regeneration and Levelling Up Bill on planning services.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

4. In line with the terms of reference, the Scrutiny Panel gathered evidence in relation to Middlesbrough Council's Planning Service. Planning is a statutory function of the Council. Planning and Development supports the economic growth of the town and the Council's aspirations to create the right developments in the right places with the appropriate infrastructure.
5. Relevant planning legislation includes:
  - The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
  - The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
  - The Planning Act 2008.
  - The Localism Act 2011.

Statutory Instruments:

- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (and subsequent Amendments).
- The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

It should be noted that the above list of relevant legislation is not exhaustive.

6. The Statutory functions of the Council's Planning Service include:

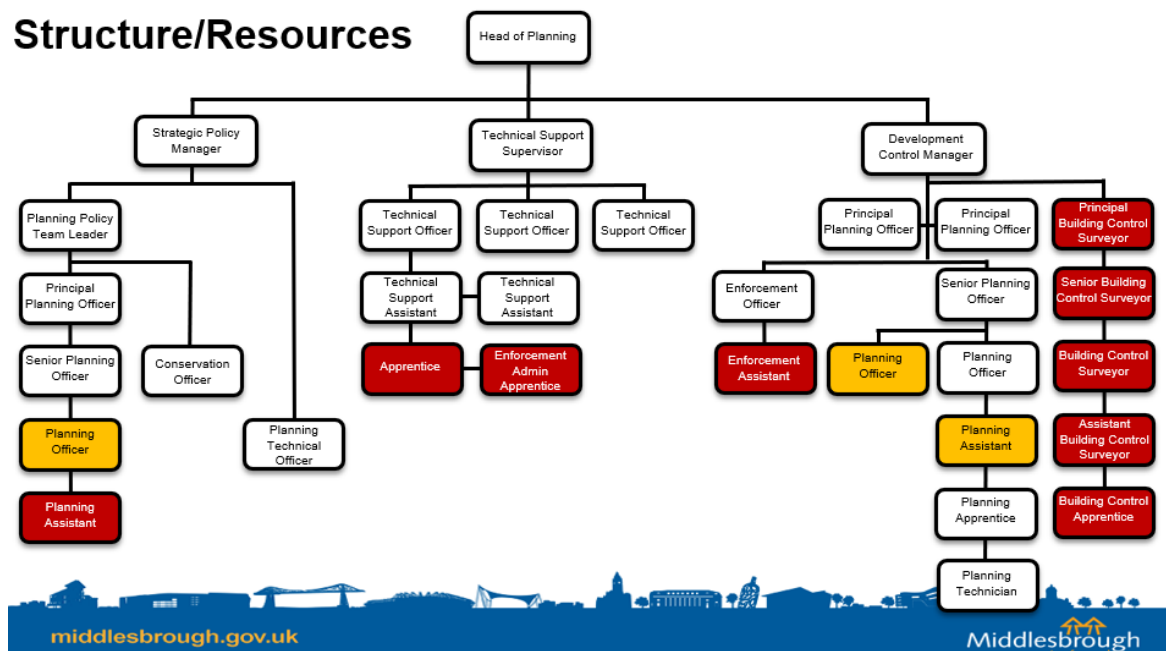
- Production of a Local Plan.
- Neighbourhood Planning.
- Conservation.
- Brownfield Register.
- Self-build Register.
- Planning Applications.
- Adverts.
- High Hedges.
- Habitat Regulations.
- Enforcement of Building Regulations.
- Dangerous Structures.
- Local Land Searches.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests.

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

**Term of Reference A – To understand the current position in terms of Middlesbrough Council's present planning capacity, building control and enforcement provision**

7. Middlesbrough Council's Planning Services are organised into two key areas: Strategic Policy (including Planning Policy, Conservation and Strategic Housing) and Development Control (including Building Control).

**Structure/Resources**



8. The organisation chart at paragraph 7 above was correct as at October 2023, at the time of the scrutiny investigation. There were nine vacancies in Planning Services, as shown in red. The three posts shown in yellow have since been recruited to, and the Development

Control Team will be fully staffed from 6 December 2023. Several of the vacant posts are career grades and a number of posts are part-time. When previous restructures have taken place, staff in post have been slotted in and permitted to change their hours. This has created pressures going forward since budgets have been cut back to allow those reduced hours contracts.

9. Some of the new posts that were created in November 2022 have taken a long time to recruit into. The Planning Apprentice took up their post in October 2023 but there has been no success in recruiting an Enforcement Assistant to date and the Apprentice to support that post remains as a vacancy.
10. Vacant posts are advertised on the Council's website, Jobs North East, in planning magazines and on building control websites. The Council has also approached universities to promote job vacancies.

### Performance

11. The national performance measures for determining planning applications within 13 weeks are shown in brackets below. If the performance measures are not met the Council could be at risk of being put in special measures by the Government.

#### **Speed of decision making (Oct 2021 – Sep 2023):**

Majors	59%	(60%)
Non-major	75%	(70%)

#### **Quality of decision making (Apr 2020 – Mar 2022):**

Majors	0%	(10%)
Non-major	1.1%	(10%)

12. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Designation is applied where a planning authority is not meeting performance targets. Middlesbrough is slightly below the threshold of 60% for the speed of decision making on major applications between October 2021 and September 2023 and therefore potentially at risk. Middlesbrough is below the threshold on major applications and has won every major appeal and only lost 1.1% of non-major appeals.
13. If a planning authority is Designated, it will lose its planning powers. Applicants will have the option of applying directly to the Planning Inspectorate who will receive the fee. However, the Planning Authority will still need to prepare a report and make a recommendation on the application. Being Designated will also harm the reputation of the Planning Authority. Only one Council in England is currently Designated. Ten Councils have been on the Government's "minded to designate" list recently and managed to avoid it, and seven are awaiting a decision. If a Planning Authority is not meeting the performance targets it will receive a letter from DLUHC, usually in early January asking the Authority to outline any "exceptional circumstances". The Planning Authority has two or three weeks to respond to DLUHC.
14. In January 2024, Middlesbrough Council received a letter from the DLUHC regarding Designation. DLUHC requested confirmation that the data on their assessment was correct and the Council had two weeks to respond.
15. The service area has undertaken a review of the data and ascertained that it is incorrect. On major applications, the data provided by Government details 52% determination rate. However, on Council data, the rate is 67%, which is above the 60% requirement. A

number of applications have been miscoded on the Service Area's relatively new IT system and some extensions of time, a key requirement, have not been actioned correctly. The errors relate to four applications and the government figures cover the period October 2021 to September 2023. The Council has provided evidence to confirm the 67% rate and processes and procedures will be put in place to ensure that errors are not repeated. Following submission of the data corrections, Middlesbrough Council received confirmation in March 2024 that the Authority is no longer at risk of designation for the period.

16. Issues that have affected Middlesbrough's performance include:

- Covid/lockdown.
- IT matters.
- Pre-application queries.
- Quality of applications.
- Capacity issues.
- Planning service.
- Consultees (highways, drainage, external).
- Skills.
- Recruitment.
- Nutrient neutrality.
- Emerging/changing legislation.
- Community involvement/engagement.
- Mayoral Development Corporation.

17. Since the Covid-19 Pandemic there has been a slight change in the mix of planning applications. More people are working from home and need extra space for home offices. There has been restrictions on site visits which made it more difficult to deliver within timescales.

18. The Council's move to increase hybrid working for staff following the Pandemic has also had an impact on the team. The planning service uses specialist equipment which is only accessible in the office and the Council's current arrangements for office-based working does not always enable team members to sit together. Working together in the same physical environment also provides for better integration and training of new recruits.

19. At the end of 2019 the service started to introduce a new IT system and unfortunately it had not been introduced as effectively as envisaged. A more effective and user-friendly website would also encourage more self-service and take up less officer time dealing with routine enquiries.

20. Large housing development applications take up an enormous amount of Officer time, whereas householder extensions can be turned around quite quickly. Due to the lack of capacity in the service, Principal Officers are dealing with smaller applications reducing the time they have to concentrate on large applications.

21. The planning service is reliant on others in its decision making and the Council currently has only one Officer available to provide advice on highways and drainage. That Officer has many other requirements on their time. Awaiting comments from internal as well as external consultees, often slows down applications. There is also a lack of skilled personnel at the Council in areas such as design, ecology and arboriculture and therefore external advice has to be sought.

22. Emerging legislation has introduced new requirements including nutrient neutrality, a performance management regime, infrastructure levy, and statutory requirements including having to have design codes across the town, all of which will take up additional officer time to develop and produce.
23. Community involvement and engagement is a critical element of planning services and there is a higher level of response to applications than previously, as well as a higher level of complaints. This is a national issue as the environment is becoming more important to people. Every comment submitted is read and logged and included in planning application reports submitted to the Planning and Development Committee.
24. The inception of the Mayoral Development Company (MDC) in 2023 created more work as Middlesbrough Council initially carried on dealing with planning applications on the MDC's behalf. Since 1 June 2023 however, planning applications within the Mayoral Development Area are determined by the MDC.
25. Currently the Council employs one Enforcement Officer and there are approximately 400 outstanding enforcement cases. The Council previously had four years from when the potential breach is notified to deal with the issues, and ten years for a change of use. However, in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the time limit has been amended in the case of a breach of planning control in England, to ten years beginning with the date on which the operations were substantially completed.

#### Planning Advisory Service (PAS) – Review of Development Management

26. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is part of the Local Government Association and runs projects funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Natural England. PAS support English Planning Authorities to provide effective and efficient planning services and help the implementation of changes in the planning system. PAS carries out reviews for Planning Authorities on a regular basis and contacted Middlesbrough Council after noting a dip in the speed of decision making, as noted at paragraph 11 above.
27. Using the PAS Development Management Toolkit a quick review of Development Management was undertaken which looked at the Council's key development management statistics such as the number of applications received, how quickly they were processed and validated and officer caseloads. Decision making processes, IT, administration, workload management and consultation were examined.
28. The review focussed on three key elements over one day to ascertain what the issues were, what Middlesbrough Council was doing well and not so well, and suggested areas that could be improved upon. PAS drew on best practice and issues experienced by other Councils to share, as well as experience of what worked well.
29. Planning and Development Committee, Political Leadership, Planning Enforcement and the Appeals Process were not included in this quick review and the Consultants only spoke with Officers.
30. Key positives with regard to Middlesbrough's service listed in the PAS review report include:
  - Good back office and software systems.
  - Some very good staff at all levels.
  - Staff who have specialist skills - telecommunications, trees etc.

- Manageable caseloads if staff in place and software is fully exploited.
- Good communication with corporate communications on Major developments.
- Making good decisions – Major decisions not being overturned at appeal.

31. Issues for improvement include:

- Lack of an up-to-date Local Plan.
- Planning seen as a barrier corporately.
- Lack of effective staff development programme – no staff appraisals.
- Staff vacancies.
- Staff not spending enough time physically working together.
- Slow and uncoordinated consultation responses and lack of specialists in key areas such as Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Software not used to its full potential.
- Lack of consistency in processes.
- Website not as informative as it could be.

32. In order to address the issues identified, the PAS report made short, medium and long term recommendations as follows:

**Short Term:**

- Officers should spend a day each week in the office and sit together.
- Strengthen management capacity and give Principal Officers more decision-making powers.
- Make best use of software for work management and monitoring performance – Agile Planning and Power BI.
- Carry out regular case reviews to speed up the process.
- Improve website to reduce time spent on queries and complaints - better signposting to the Planning Portal.
- Take a firmer approach to informal advice - direct people to the pre-application service.

**Medium Term:**

- Bring together existing process notes and guidance for case officers into a single Development Management Manual.
- Develop standard wording and templates for reports.
- Develop and agree a consultation protocol with both internal and external consultees, including agreed standing advice.
- Take a stronger line on validation and amendments – enforce one opportunity to amend.

**Longer term:**

- Promote the role of Planning corporately as place-making rather than a hurdle to overcome.
- Develop better relations with local agents and developers:
  - Establish an agent's forum.
  - Consider an accredited agents' scheme
- Develop the pre-application offer using the PAS guidance.

33. A report to progress the recommendations would be considered by the Council's Leadership and Management Team (LMT). An action plan showing the current implementation status of the PAS recommendations has been included in the submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) in response to the Designation letter received in January 2024.

**Term of Reference B - To examine any non-statutory functions currently provided by Middlesbrough's planning service**

34. Non-Statutory functions currently provided by the Council include:
- The Local List.
  - Housing Strategy.
  - Supplementary Planning Documents/Development briefs.
  - Pre-planning Application Advice.
  - Enforcement.
  - Article 4 Directions.
35. Middlesbrough's Local List<sup>1</sup> currently has 91 buildings and sites on it including structures, parks, gardens and open spaces identified as being of historical or special local architectural interest. The Local List does not include nationally important buildings, of which there are 126 on the statutory list in Middlesbrough. However, in a national context, Middlesbrough is a relatively young town and therefore some important buildings and sites do not meet the criteria to be listed. Through having a Local List these significant buildings and sites which are not protected statutorily, are recognised in the planning process and any changes are managed sympathetically and positively to sustain and enhance their significance.
36. In 2017 Middlesbrough Council published its Housing Strategy<sup>2</sup>. This is an important document that sets out the Council's housing priorities and how these will be achieved. The key objectives are to:
- Meet the housing needs and aspirations of a growing population.
  - Improve the life opportunities of residents in areas of poor quality housing and deprivation.
  - Address the pressures of an ageing population and support vulnerable people to live independent lives for as long as possible.
37. Supplementary Planning Documents support the planning process by setting out the design standards required by the Council. Design Statements provide guidance on any changes that need planning permission and aim to protect the characteristics of the local area. Whilst not statutory, they have proved useful when considering applications in such areas as Nunthorpe and Stainsby, as well as dismissing appeals.
38. Pre-planning application queries almost doubled between 2017 and 2021. Whilst this takes up officer time, it is an important task, otherwise the quality of the application might be poor and then timescales are more likely to be missed. Previously, pre-applications could be turned around within 8 weeks but with the increased numbers it is now more likely to be 10 to 13 weeks.
39. In April 2023 charges were introduced for some pre-application services. Depending on the scale of the proposed development there are five levels of pre-application advice which reflect the amount of time it takes to provide the advice. Free advice is provided on whether

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/media/bgpxu5f/conservation-local-list-2011.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/media/bnjlehm3/housing-strategy-2017-20.pdf>



planning permission is required (for householders), listed building consent, whether a tree is covered by a tree preservation order (TPO), whether a property or tree is in a conservation area, or area under an Article 4 direction.<sup>3</sup> Since the fees were introduced, fewer applicants are accessing the service.

40. The charges for pre-application advice are reviewed regularly and at the time this report was written are as follows:

Development type	Initial fee	Additional fees
Householder / other	Written advice - £100 Site visit if requested - £100 Meeting if requested - £100	£200 per additional meeting and/or written advice
Minor developments	Written advice - £500 Site visit if requested - £150 Meeting if requested - £150	£300 per additional meeting or written advice
Major developments	£1,800 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting involving all necessary officers</li> <li>• Site visit</li> <li>• Written advice</li> </ul>	£500 per additional meeting with written advice
Strategic developments	£2,500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting involving all necessary officers</li> <li>• Site visit</li> <li>• Written advice</li> </ul>	£500 per additional meeting or written advice

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41. The Council is taking a stronger stance on applicants who do not heed the advice given at the pre-application stage and is now more likely to refuse poor applications than continue to ask for amendments. It should be noted however that this stance has also led to more complaints about the planning service, which then have to be processed, adding to officers' workloads.
42. Enforcement cases have risen dramatically since the Covid-19 Pandemic as many householders started work without seeking permission. The quality of applications has deteriorated over the last five years.
43. The Council currently prioritises enforcement activities in relation to Article 4 and conservation in Linthorpe in order to protect Middlesbrough's heritage. Guidance is available on the Council's website in relation to conservation areas and officers use their professional judgement to check with the required standards have been met when alterations have been made. The sanction for non-compliance with planning regulations is

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/planning-and-development/pre-application-advice/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/planning-and-development/pre-application-advice/>

usually a fine. There is national recognition that enforcement needs to be strengthened public awareness raised on this issue.

44. An Article 4 direction removes various forms of permitted development right usually associated with a property. It is generally used to prevent development that would harm the character of the area.

**Term of Reference C – To consider measures, including joint working with other local authorities, that could be put in place to mitigate any gaps in the current service**

**Planning and Development – Council Website**

45. The recent review by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) had highlighted that the Planning and Development section of Middlesbrough Council's website is not as informative as it could be and highlights the following areas for improvement:
- Focus on reducing officer time spent on general enquiries and promoting the information available to applicants and the public.
  - Planning has a poor web presence, with many enquiries being handled by the technical team and other officers, which could easily be avoided with direction to an accessible website.
  - Updates needed to reduce time spent on queries and complaints. This includes highlighting the importance of the following sections:
    - The standard of applications required.
    - Local validation list.
    - Protocol for resubmitting invalid applications or amending validated applications.
    - Clearer sign-posting to the Planning Portal for advice.
    - Availability of the pre-application service.
46. The PAS identified some other local authorities' websites that they consider best practice examples. Officers have reviewed those websites and are currently working with the Digital Team to create an improved Middlesbrough website with greater use of images to help promote information.
47. If the information provided on the website can be developed to be much more user friendly, applicants will not need to take up officer time and can be confident that they have a suitable scheme to submit. The aim is to get the website information in a workable format so that applicants can submit forms online. It will also be mobile friendly since 85% of the Council's current website users use mobile devices to access it.
48. It is anticipated that the website development will take approximately six months to complete.

**Shared Services**

49. The Scrutiny Panel gathered evidence from two Local Authority Shared Services: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and South Hams and West Devon Councils.

### South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

50. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils became a shared service in approximately 2010, when all Councils' services and the majority of officers became shared, from the Chief Executive to Planning Administration.
51. Planning is one team serving two Councils, so each Council maintains its sovereignty, and the team reports to two planning Committees and separate Cabinet Members/Cabinets' Councils for policy.
52. The Planning Service reports performance, finance, etc per Council and hosts two separate websites.
53. A Joint Local Plan is currently out to consultation and there are other joint documents and strategies in place including a Design Guide and a Planning Enforcement Statement.
54. There are efficiencies in joint working such as reduced costs. Having a larger team makes it more resilient and able to support specialist staff from ecologists, landscape, urban design and transport planners.
55. Whilst there had been some challenges which included: securing a single computer system and Geographic Information System (GIS), officer culture, shared working (staff are still employed by one or other Councils), the importance of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and confidentiality in planning pre-applications, the shared service had proved successful and will continue.

### South Hams and West Devon Councils

56. The two Councils have worked together since 2006 and deliver a wide range of services, including planning, for residents and businesses across south west Devon in a shared service partnership.
57. South Hams and West Devon are separate Local Authorities with their own budgets but with a joint pool of staff and a single Chief Executive. West Devon is a relatively small authority with South Hams being much larger and there are some recharge rates between the two to ensure service provision is fair and equitable.
58. South Hams and West Devon each have their own Constitutions with Schemes of Delegation that mirror each other. Both Councils have different enforcement strategies but endeavour to take the same approach.
59. South Hams has a Development Management Committee for determining planning applications and West Devon has a Development Management and Licensing Committee. Serving the requirements of both planning committees, which generally meet around a week apart, is one of the notable difficulties of the shared planning service. The operational requirement of meeting deadlines for publication of agendas and co-ordinating reports is a difficult job. There are also different dynamics and inter relationships with Members at both authorities to manage.
60. Across the shared service approximately 75 members of staff are employed which includes officers for conservation, planning policy, business and enforcement. There is also an

Urban Fringe Team comprising another 7 members of staff. The Urban Fringe Delivery Team works with the planning services to support the delivery of large and complex sites within the Plymouth Urban Fringe.

61. In terms of finance, moving to a shared service with only one Chief Executive produced a huge amount of cost savings, albeit in the initial delivery of the shared service, staffing for planning services was reduced. However, over the past three years there has been more investment into planning services and new posts have been brought in.
62. In terms of providing development management it was highlighted that the shared service did not make any income from planning fees once all the costs of providing the service were factored in. However having the ability to move officers around and share the available resources is useful.
60. Following a review by the Planning and Advisory Service (PAS), capacity within the service has been increased with council specific posts for Head of Development and Head of Enforcement for each authority as well as an Assistant Director Planning.
62. Whilst each Council has its own Planning Policy Officers, there is a joint team for the Joint Local Plan. The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan covers the administrative areas of Plymouth City, South Hams District and West Devon Borough and forms part of the Development Plan for these areas. It was created by all three Councils and adopted by each one in 2019. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which provides guidance on the implementation of the Local Plan has also been adopted and shared by the three authorities as well as other documents such as the Climate Emergency Planning Statement.
63. Having shared service provision has also proved useful when bidding for project funding. On example is the £185,000 funding from the Planning Skills Delivery Fund, which was the second largest amount awarded across the country.

**Term of Reference D - To investigate what additional resources, if any, can be accessed from Central Government or other bodies to assist with improving planning capacity**

64. Middlesbrough Council applied for funding from the Government's Planning Skills Delivery Fund. This Fund provides support to local authorities to help clear backlogs of planning applications and address skills gaps. In December 2023 the Council was informed that its bid for funding had been successful as follows:  

Backlog funding:	£80,000 (100% of the amount applied for)
Skills funding:	£20,000 (25% of the amount applied for)
65. The backlog funding will be split £20K each on enforcement support, planning support, highways input and flooding input into the planning process. The skills funding will be used to develop new Design Codes as required by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
66. Pathways to Planning is a Government programme aimed at supporting aspiring graduates into the planning sector. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has provided £1.59 million to the Local Government Association to fund this new scheme. The intention is that graduates will work in Council planning teams for a minimum of three years whilst completing a fully funded postgraduate course at the same time.

67. The programme launched in September 2023 and the first cohort of graduates will start work in spring 2024. Pathways to Planning offers Councils:
- *marketing and recruitment of a diverse pool of candidates at no cost.*
  - *a bursary of £5,000 per graduate to help fund graduates' study on an RTPI-accredited Master's programme, or cover costs associated with a Level 7 apprenticeship.*
  - *a community of support for your graduate(s) and your team.*<sup>5</sup>
68. Middlesbrough Council has already recruited a Planning Degree Apprentice and the cost of the degree being undertaken is met through the Apprenticeship Levy. Whilst the Pathways to Planning route would pay for the degree course, Middlesbrough Council would still have to pay the apprentice's salary and therefore the current arrangement is more cost effective.
69. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is part of the Local Government Association and receives an annual grant from The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to enable it to provide support to councils. PAS is funded to help get local plans up-to-date, improve decision-making and also hosts events on topical issues.<sup>6</sup> As referenced at paragraph 26 of this report, PAS has recently undertaken a Review of Development Management at Middlesbrough Council.

**Term of Reference E - To consider any potential implications/impact/challenges of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on planning services**

70. In May 2022, the government published the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The Bill received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023 and contains provisions that allow the government to reform the planning system. "The Act:
- establishes a new category of national planning policies: National Development Management Policies (NDMPs). NDMPs will sit alongside local plans in decision-making on planning applications.
  - creates a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to produce a single local plan and update it every five years. Separate to the Act, the government said it would introduce reforms to require LPAs to produce local plans within a 30-month timeframe.
  - abolishes the 'duty to cooperate', which requires LPAs to cooperate with each other and with certain other bodies in preparing their local plan. A new 'flexible alignment policy' will replace the duty to cooperate.
  - introduces a statutory requirement for LPAs to prepare design codes, setting design requirements for developments in their local area."<sup>7</sup>

These provisions have not yet taken effect and will require regulations to be brought into force. At the time of writing this report, the government has not set out a timetable for this."

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/pathways-planning-council-info>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/our-work/about-us>

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons Library: Planning reforms in England: Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and further changes – Research Briefing – 5 December 2023 – By Felicia Rankl

71. The Regeneration Scrutiny Panel received a presentation from the Head of Policy Practice and Research at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). The presentation focussed on the following elements of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023:
- The Act brings in a requirement to prepare Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) which replace the existing Strategic Impact Assessments (SIAs) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and are more streamlined. Environmental Assessments are currently quite broad and can include issues such as social and economic impact. However the EORs are limited to environmental outcomes set by government ministers. This will be quite a change for planning applications and local plans.
  - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and much of the Section 106 payments system are replaced with a new national infrastructure levy. Where and how infrastructure spending is allocated will be determined by local infrastructure delivery strategies.
  - New Street Vote powers are introduced that allow residents on a street to bring forward proposals to extend or redevelop their properties in line with their design preferences. So long as development rules and other statutory requirements are met, a referendum of residents will be held to determine whether planning permission should be granted.
  - National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) are introduced which will, in future, have priority over Local Plans.
  - There are proposals for two tier Council areas in England to co-operate more in planning terms, which will be useful for the development of Local Plans.
  - On behalf of the UK planners, the RPTI proposed an amendment to the Bill to bring in legislation that would allow Planning Committees to be held virtually. The temporary measure introduced during the Covid-19 Pandemic was useful and enabled a greater variety of people to be involved in planning. Unfortunately the amendment has not been enacted.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

72. Fees for building control are set locally whereas the development control fees are set nationally. The fees for major planning applications increased by 35% from 5 December 2023 and for minor applications by 25%. The fees will rise annually in line with inflation from next April.
73. Planning applications within the Mayoral Development Area are determined by the MDC and since 5-10% of the Council's current planning applications come from within the MDC area, this will be a loss of approximately 30% of future fee income to Middlesbrough Council. As a result, there would be a bigger impact in terms of income but less impact in terms of staff resource.

## 74. **CONCLUSIONS**

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

- The Panel examined the findings of the quick review of Development Management carried out by the Planning Advisory Service in September 2023 and notes their recommendations to improve the speed of decision-making in line with government requirements.
- It is acknowledged that the review did not include Planning and Development Committee, Planning Enforcement or the Appeals Process and that performance of these areas can also potentially be improved.
- Middlesbrough Council currently has two Officers, based within the Environment Directorate, available to provide advice on highways and drainage and other planning powers. There is a lack of skilled personnel in areas such as design, ecology and arboriculture. Having to seek external advice can add delay to decision-making on planning applications.
- The increase in the number of enforcement cases is of great concern to the Panel. The two posts that support the Enforcement Officer have been vacant for a considerable length of time. The Panel also notes that due to the current high volume of work, the timescales listed in paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10 of the planning enforcement manual will not apply for the foreseeable future. With the limited available resources, the Council currently prioritises enforcement activities in relation to Article 4 and conservation in Linthorpe in order to protect Middlesbrough's heritage.
- The Panel is pleased to note the recent award of funding from the Government's Planning Skills Fund that will assist in addressing the backlog in enforcement support, planning support, highways and flooding input into the planning process and also used to develop new Design Codes as required by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- In relation to shared services it was apparent that there can be efficiencies not only with regard reduced costs but that having a larger team naturally provides more resilience and expertise.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

75. The Regeneration Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

- The Council should ensure that the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Service's Development Management Review are implemented in full to ensure that the Planning Service continues to be able to meet government performance targets in relation to decision-making.
- Implementation of the PAS recommendations in relation to the following should be prioritised and enhanced:
  - The Development Control Team should work together from the office in Fountains Court for a minimum of one day each week. Practical barriers to team working, for example, "block booking" space in the shared office should be addressed without delay.

- Continue to embed the Agile Planning system and recently acquired Power BI system into the DM process, make time to provide (and maintain) a practical guide to the system for case officers.
- Dedicated training is provided for staff to enable them to use the relevant specialist IT systems to their full potential.
- Consideration be given to inviting the Planning Advisory Service to undertake a full review of the Planning Service to include Planning and Development Committee, Planning Enforcement or the Appeals Process.
- Create a new Highways Officer post within the Planning Services Structure to provide a dedicated resource and as far as possible, eliminate delay in the planning application process.
- Investigate with the other Tees Valley Local Authorities whether there is potential to create a shared pool of statutory consultees who have expertise in the relevant disciplines such as highways, drainage, design, ecology and arboriculture.
- Explore with the Council's Human Resources Service whether, in addition to current recruitment practice, there are any further opportunities to more widely promote vacant posts, such as the enforcement posts, in the Planning Service.
- Give consideration to establishing a pooled enforcement team of specialist officers to work together to address all areas of enforcement that fall within the Council's remit. This could be particularly helpful where multiple issues of non-compliance related to the same individual or property.
- In conjunction with the Council's Digital Team review whether the information provided on the Council's website in relation to the town's conservation areas can be given a higher profile and/or made more user-friendly, to better inform residents who might be considering alterations to their properties and potentially reduce the numbers of enforcement cases.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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

Richard Blyth, Head of Policy Practice and Research, Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)  
 Paul Clarke, Head of Planning, Middlesbrough Council  
 Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils  
 Peter Ford, Planning Advisory Service  
 Andrew Glossop, Development Control Manager, Middlesbrough Council  
 Alistair Wagstaff, Assistant Director Planning, South Hams and West Devon Councils

## **ACRONYMS**

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

CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy  
 DLUHC - Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
 EIA - Environmental Impact Assessments



EOR - Environmental Outcomes Report  
GIS - Geographic Information System  
GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation  
LPA – Local Planning Authority  
MDC – Mayoral Development Corporation  
NDMPs - National Development Management Policies  
PAS – Planning Advisory Service  
RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute  
SIA - Strategic Impact Assessment  
TPO – Tree Preservation Order

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- House of Commons Library: Planning reforms in England: Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and further changes – Research Briefing – 5 December 2023 – By Felicia Rankl
- Middlesbrough Council - Development Management Review - Final report 27 September 2023 – Planning Advisory Service (PAS)
- Middlesbrough Council website – Pre Application Advice
- Middlesbrough Council - Middlesbrough Housing Strategy 2017-2020
- Middlesbrough Council - Middlesbrough Local List 2011
- Middlesbrough Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2024
- Pathways to Planning: information for Councils – Local Government Association website
- Planning Advisory Service – About Us – Local Government Association website
- Reports/presentations to, and minutes of, the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel held on 11 October, 1 November, 6 December 2023, 17 January 2024 and 14 February 2024

### **COUNCILLOR IAN BLADES CHAIR OF THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Regeneration Scrutiny Panel Membership:** Councillors I Blades (Chair), N Hussain (Vice Chair), J Ewan, S Hill, L Hurst, D Jackson, J Kabuye, I Morrish, J Ryles

**Contact Officer:**

Susan Lightwing  
Democratic Services  
Telephone: 01642 729712 (direct line)  
Email: susan\_lightwing@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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**REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL  
PLANNING CAPACITY**

SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	POST TITLE	BUDGET COST	TIMESCALE
<p>1. The Council should ensure that the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Service's Development Management Review are implemented in full to ensure that the Planning Service continues to be able to meet government performance targets in relation to decision-making.</p>	<p>An action plan setting out what has been done to date and how the Service intends to respond to the recommendations is attached.</p> <p>There will be some costs associated with the implementations of this recommendations.</p> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creation of team leader post in development control (£5,000 pa)</li> <li>• monitors for dedicated pod for the service (£unknown)</li> <li>• developer days/events (approx. £2000)</li> <li>• staff training programme (approx. £2000)</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>£11,000 (costs can be met from within existing service budget)</p>	<p>See attached plan</p>
<p>2. Implementation of the PAS recommendations in relation to the following should be prioritised and enhanced:</p> <p>- The Development Control Team should work together from the office in Fountains Court for a minimum of one day</p>	<p>See 1 above and 3 below</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>Covered above in 1.</p>	<p>See attached plan</p>

<p>each week. Practical barriers to team working, for example, “block booking” space in the shared office should be addressed without delay.</p> <p>- Continue to embed the Agile Planning system and recently acquired Power BI system into the DM process, make time to provide (and maintain) a practical guide to the system for case officers.</p>				
<p>3. Dedicated training is provided for staff to enable them to use the relevant specialist IT systems to their full potential.</p>	<p>The key areas where training is required include the development of the Power BI reporting functionality. The service will work with the corporate data team to develop and utilise this capability.</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>To be identified, but it is anticipated that can be met from within existing budgets</p>	<p>See attached plan</p>
<p>4. Consideration be given to inviting the Planning Advisory Service to undertake a full review of the Planning Service to include Planning and Development Committee, Planning Enforcement or the Appeals Process.</p>	<p>The initial review undertaken by PAS looked at only one aspect of the Service. A wider review of the Service would be welcomed and would enable it to respond to changes in the Planning environment more efficiently and effectively. Whilst the previous review was free, there will be a cost for a full peer review that could only be met through securing external funding.</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>£15,000 This can only progress if external funding can be secured</p>	<p>Subject to funding</p>
<p>5. Create a new Highways Officer post within the Planning Services Structure to provide a dedicated resource and as far as possible, eliminate delay in the planning</p>	<p>Although this would provide significant benefit, there is currently no funding available to enable this. If external funding did become available then this</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>£45,000</p>	<p>Will be subject to funding</p>

application process.	would be a priority action. A growth bid for internal resources will be considered, but is more likely to be pursued externally.			
6. Investigate with the other Tees Valley Local Authorities whether there is potential to create a shared pool of statutory consultees who have expertise in the relevant disciplines such as highways, drainage, design, ecology and arboriculture.	<p>Work is ongoing at a North East regional level to explore the options for sharing expert disciplines.</p> <p>This is likely to focus on those disciplines such as ecology, arboriculture, landscape, archaeology and design.</p>	Head of Planning	Cannot be costed at this stage	Will be driven by regional working
7. Explore with the Council's Human Resources Service whether, in addition to current recruitment practice, there are any further opportunities to more widely promote vacant posts, such as the enforcement posts, in the Planning Service.	<p>Avenues to recruit suitable staff have been explored. The Service in terms of Planning Officers is fully staffed at the moment. Going forward the best way to recruit will be via the graduate apprentice and/or via universities to attract staff at the lower points of the career ladder and enable staff to move up as vacancies occur, so that we grow and reward our own talent.</p> <p>The issue of recruiting to the enforcement posts is more complex given the nature of the post. Here the issue is more likely to be around looking at solutions on how we can deliver the enforcement function using available resources and/or roles and duties of existing posts.</p>	Head of Planning	Would be met within existing budgets	Will be driven by recruitment need
8. Give consideration to establishing a pooled enforcement team of specialist officers to work together to address all	The issue here is less a pool of specialist enforcement officers, each discipline will have its own legislative	N/A	Nil	N/A

<p>areas of enforcement that fall within the Council's remit. This could be particularly helpful where multiple issues of non-compliance related to the same individual or property.</p>	<p>requirements to deal with, but more one of better co-ordination centrally. Often enforcement activity regarding properties crosses a number of different disciplines, e.g. planning, environmental health, building control, environment, council tax, highways. If each is pursuing its own enforcement activity separately and uncoordinated this is inefficient use of resources. It is better to send out one letter to a property than five, or place one charge on a property rather than several. Some co-ordinated activity takes place but this tends to be on an ad hoc basis rather than the norm. This is to be considered as part of the 'Customer' strand of the Council's transformation programme.</p>			
<p>9. In conjunction with the Council's Digital Team review whether the information provided on the Council's website in relation to the town's conservation areas can be given a higher profile and/or made more user-friendly, to better inform residents who might be considering alterations to their properties and potentially reduce the numbers of enforcement cases.</p>	<p>This will form part of the wider review of the Planning web pages on the Council's web site.</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>See attached plan</p>

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**



<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Regeneration and Interim Director of Finance
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Executive Member for Regeneration and Executive Member for Finance
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	24 July 2024
<b>Title:</b>	The disposal of land at Hemlington Grange West
<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	A successful and ambitious town
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000
<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Non-urgent report, placed on Executive forward work programme.

**Proposed decision(s)**

To seek Executive approval to de-risk and dispose of the Hemlington Grange West site in accordance with the Council's Asset Disposal Process, and to inform Executive of the next steps to take the site to market.

**Executive summary**

Hemlington Grange West is a Council owned site of circa 20.05 acres (8.11 ha) and is currently identified in the Housing Local Plan (2014) as part of the Hemlington Grange mixed use allocation.

The site was originally envisaged as being a location for business use, but the outcome of an Employment Land Review has been determined that there is no demand in this location.

The site has subsequently been allocated in the Draft Local Plan 2024 for the development of approximately 170 dwellings and a new Local Centre.

This report seeks approval for the Council to progress the disposal and marketing of the land and to utilise funds within the capital programme to undertake de-risking of the site to ensure that the capital receipt is maximised.

The proposed residential development will bring a surplus, vacant and underutilised Council held asset into far more beneficial use, creating new communities and high-quality places. As well as improving Middlesbrough's overall housing offer, development of the land will also ensure that there is a sufficient supply of housing to meet need, preventing outward migration and supporting Middlesbrough's overall economic growth.

The disposal of the land is recommended in order to meet the Council's requirements to generate capital receipts, increase annually recurring revenue streams and, as the value of the site exceeds £250,000 it is a key decision.

This report will also recommend that delegated authority is granted for the Directors of Regeneration and Finance to approve the outcome of the Disposal of Public Open Space and Land Appropriation processes.

The implications of the recommendations of this report have been considered by the appropriate officers of the Council and are set out in the main body of this report.

The appropriate asset disposal business case is appended but contains exempt information such as the sites current valuation.



## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To seek Executive approval for the disposal of Hemlington Grange West, which is allocated in the Housing Local Plan (2014) and Draft Housing Local Plan (2024), in accordance with the Council's Asset Disposal Process, and to inform Executive of the next steps to take the site to market.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive approves:
- a) the de-risking, marketing and disposal of the Hemlington Grange West housing site; and,
  - b) provides Delegated Authority for the Director of Regeneration and the Director of Finance, following consultation with the respective Executive Members, to approve the Public Open Space (POS) and Land Appropriation process.

## **3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

- 3.1 The development of Hemlington Grange West will bring a surplus, vacant and underutilised Council held asset into far more beneficial use in the future, creating a new community and a high-quality place.
- 3.2 With interest in Middlesbrough's housing sites continuing to be strong, the disposal of the subject land is recommended in order to meet the Council's requirements to generate capital receipts and increase annually recurring streams from Council Tax.
- 3.3 Middlesbrough's housing offer needs to keep pace with the demands of the market. The release and development of this site will allow that to be achieved; stemming outward migration and making Middlesbrough a desirable place to live, with a quantity of residential properties that will address the requirements of a changing, growing, and evolving population.

## **4. Background and relevant information**

### General Overview

- 4.1 Hemlington Grange West is a Council owned site of circa 20.05 acres (8.11 ha) and is currently identified in the Housing Local Plan (2014) as part of the Hemlington Grange mixed use allocation. A site plan is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The site was originally envisaged as being a potential location for business use, but the outcome of an Employment Land Review has been determined that there is no demand in this location.
- 4.3 The site has subsequently been allocated in the Draft Local Plan 2024 for the development of approximately 170 dwellings and an appropriately scaled Local Centre.

The site will provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes, including bungalows, that complements and enhances the choice and quality of housing in the local area.

- 4.4 Vehicular access for the site will be taken from Hemlington Grange Way, whilst incorporating access to the adjacent Holme Farm allocation for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Footpaths will also be provided to link into the wider network.

#### Project Status

- 4.5 Hemlington Grange West has been formally established as a Level 1 project, identifying the strategic importance to the Council. The Council's Programme and Project Management Framework (PPMF), underpins the achievement of its strategic objectives.

#### Housing Need

- 4.6 Demand for new homes continues to strengthen and the town requires a significant supply of new housing developments over the next decade to allow the town to keep pace with local demand and national demographic trends. Middlesbrough's Draft Local Plan, which has been informed by a Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA), identifies a requirement for the delivery of 400 net additional dwellings per annum between 2022 and 2041.
- 4.7 The LHNA identifies that the largest need is for three-bedroom properties but recognises that many households will aspire to larger dwellings with a higher number of bedrooms than the minimum requirement, for a variety of reasons but increasingly to provide a study for home working and retain economically active households.
- 4.8 The disposal of the Hemlington Grange West site presents an opportunity to provide the housing that people want in a popular location to prevent population decline, which is a major barrier to Middlesbrough's economic growth.

#### Financial Need

- 4.9 The development of new housing is a key component of the Council being able to set a sustainable budget, as the capital receipts from housing sites, along with the subsequent Council Tax are key components of the MTFP.
- 4.10 The residential dwellings envisaged will primarily be a mix of Council Tax Band C & D. Assuming an average of Band C, this would generate £0.358m of council tax income per year upon completion.

#### Next Steps

- 4.11 With approval to dispose, the Council will continue with the approach of maximising capital receipts through the 'de-risking' of the site by:
- a) undertaking Public Open Space and Land Appropriation process;
  - b) adopting Development Guidance that will establish design and development expectations;

- c) undertaking community engagement / consultations through the planning process;
- d) undertaking site investigation works to determine ground conditions;
- e) apply for outline planning permission to establish the principle of development; and,
- f) market the site competitively.

4.12 By adopting the above approach, it will allow the site to be taken to the market via a competitive disposal process that maximises the capital receipt and ensures quality place making.

#### Budget

4.13 A budget of £0.250m has been identified from the approved Housing Growth capital allocation to fund the outline planning application and the site surveys required to “de-risk” the site and maximise the capital receipt.

4.14 The stated capital allocation also includes a budget of £0.050m to address any issues arising from the planning requirement to achieve Bio-Diversity Net Gain.

4.15 Although unlikely, should any significant additional capital investment be identified through the de-risking of the site which exceeds the existing approved budgets, further approval will be sought before proceeding with the land sale.

#### Potential Ongoing Costs

4.16 The scheme is likely to require Sustainable Urban Drainage system (SUDs) to attenuate the land to reduce risks from flood events. The responsibility for SUDs is currently placed with the developers, however, maintenance costs may pass to the Local Authority if they choose to adopt the land as open space.

4.17 Consultation is also underway on the Governments Flood and Water Management Act. Under Schedule 3 of the new proposals, local authorities will be required to adopt and maintain SUDs for new developments.

4.18 This cost will be fully understood once survey work has taken place to de-risk the site and when the Government either issues further guidance and/or legislates the proposals within the consultation on the Flood and Water Management Act.

4.19 Should the scheme be introduced ahead of any planning approval for Hemlington Grange West, site specific costs will be presented to Executive once a preferred bidder is identified and formal approval is sought to dispose of the site.

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

#### Don't sell the land

5.1 This would result in an inability to realise a planned capital receipt and in ability to grow the council tax income base. Failure to dispose of the land would be contrary to the current and draft Local Plans.

Sell the land prior to de-risking the site.

5.2 Previous market and disposal advice for other sites indicates that this approach does not demonstrate Best Value for the Council. The approach would realise a reduced capital receipt and there would be significant uncertainties around the timescales for delivery as the land does not have an outline planning approval.

Sell the land without outline planning permission.

5.3 It is known that developers will pay for the benefit of a de-risked site. Disposal without outline planning consent would increase the risk for developers, potentially leading to fewer than normal offers and at a reduced financial return.

Sell the land without undertaking Due Diligence or adopting Design Guidance.

5.4 The Council's proven financial approach to housing site disposals is based on maximising capital receipts by 'de-risking' sites. This involves undertaking site investigation works, producing design guidance and gaining outline planning approval to competitively marketing sites.

Enter a Joint Venture

5.5 As the Council is the sole owner of the site and has the capital budget to fund the due diligence and outline planning application, professional analysis concludes that collaboration with external partners on the disposal does not represent Best Value.

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

**7. Financial (including procurement and Social Value)**

7.1 The disposal of Hemlington Grange West will contribute towards the MTFP via the income achieved through growth in the Council Tax base. It will also generate a capital receipt that is required within the MTFP to support the future funding of the Council's Capital Programme and the Transformation Programme.

7.2 Council Tax income funds a significant proportion of the Council's revenue spending and the recent growth in housing numbers across the town results in permanent growth in the council tax base and increases this income stream which contributes towards the delivery of all Council services. It is anticipated that the development will be a mix of properties in Council Tax Bands C and D. Assuming an average Council Tax rating of Band C, the site is expected to generate additional Council Tax of £0.358m per year upon completion of the development. The table below depicts the anticipated build out rates of the units and the accumulated full year effect of additional Council Tax receipts.

	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/24	Total
Assumed Build Out Rates	15	30	30	30	30	30	5	170
Accumulative Full Year Effect Of Council Tax Receipts		-£0.032	-£0.095	-£0.158	-£0.222	-£0.285	-£0.348	-£0.358

- 7.3 Should DLUHC determine the continuation of New Homes Bonus Scheme in the medium term, the additional 170 dwellings will contribute towards the net addition to the housing stock that is required in order to qualify for the receipt of new homes grant.
- 7.4 Hemlington Grange West is held on the Council's Asset Register. The approved Asset Disposal Business Case (ADBC) is attached at Appendix 2, however, exempt valuation information referring to the expected current use value per acre (*Ref A: Value per Acre, Exempt from Publication Appendix 3*), the total current use value (*Ref B: Total Value, Exempt from Publication Appendix 3*), the total value of the proposed disposal (*Ref C: Total Value – Proposed Disposal, Exempt from Publication Appendix 3*) and the value per acre of the proposed disposal (*Ref D: Value per Acre – Proposed Disposal, Exempt from Publication Appendix 3*) have been redacted. The redacted figures are contained within the table in Exempt from Publication Appendix 3. This information has been identified as exempt to protect the commercial value of the site in any future competitive sale process.
- 7.5 Capital receipts secured from the sale of housing sites are used to fund the Council's Capital Programme and the critical investments within it. These investments include 'business as usual' activity, periodic purchases, and investments in economic growth initiatives. The MTFP includes planned capital receipts of £44.7m in order to fund planned capital investment in the capital programme and the Council's Recover, Reset Deliver Transformation Portfolio. This disposal contributes towards the achievement of the required funding.
- 7.6 Disposal and redevelopment of the site will support the objective of delivering economic growth and prosperity across the town.
- 7.7 It is recognised that development of the scale proposed for the site will result in impacts on local infrastructure, some of which is identified elsewhere in this report. In order to enable permission to be granted for any planning application it is important that financial mitigation is provided to address these impacts, this is usually provided through a S106 Agreement that accompanies any planning permission granted.
- 7.8 The Council as landowner and Local Planning Authority cannot be both signatories on such an agreement. It is essential therefore to enable the permission to be granted that the Council makes a formal commitment to delivery of the necessary infrastructure at the time that it is required.
- 7.9 A mechanism will need to be identified to enable this to happen. Without such a commitment in place planning permission will not be forthcoming. In this instance the required infrastructure will include:
- a) affordable housing (to be determined, depending on whether this is provided on-site);
  - b) off-site highways/transport improvements and mitigation;
  - c) education;
  - d) green infrastructure; and,
  - e) community facilities.

- 7.10 It is not possible at this stage to identify the exact nature of the infrastructure requirements as these will be determined via the planning application process and will only be identified through the proper assessment of the application including consultation with infrastructure providers and the community. This assessment will identify the cost (at current values) and timing for delivery of the infrastructure and the contribution required from development of the site.
- 7.11 On the 13th April 2021 Executive approved an amendment to the Asset Disposal Policy to 'facilitate local communities benefitting whereby a Council owned asset is disposed within their locality above market value'. If an asset achieves a price more than the projected market value 3% of the capital receipt will be made available for local community use for the ward in which the asset is located.
- 7.12 There will be costs incurred to de-risk the site and the subsequent site marketing. As detailed, investment in de-risking sites seeks to maximise the capital receipt gained. The additional cost to de-risk the site, as set out in this report, is estimated at £0.250m.
- 7.13 If sites are not de-risked by the Council prior to selling, there is a risk that developers will bid significantly less than value of the site as they will take a prudent approach in respect of assessing risk. Therefore, by de-risking the site, the Council, whilst having to fund costs up-front, should benefit in the longer term through increased capital receipts.
- 7.14 All procurement exercises will be undertaken in compliance with Middlesbrough Council's Financial and Contract Procedure rules.

## **8. Legal**

- 8.1 The Council will follow the relevant legal processes when disposing of sites, the nature of which will depend on the presence of any existing designations (such as allotments or public open space).
- 8.2 The process of disposing of sites requires significant input from Legal Services and Procurement, as the process is inherently contractual in nature and the Council needs to achieve Best Consideration in respect of any asset disposal.
- 8.3 The marketing and disposal strategy will cover internal client related matters concerning procurement, subsidy control and best value, together with Legal matters associated with contractual structures that protect the Council's interest.
- 8.4 The Council's governance processes will be observed accordingly throughout the disposal process.

## **9. Risk**

- 9.1 The disposal of Hemlington Grange West for housing development project will contribute towards the following ambitions in the Council Plan 2024 to 2027:
- a) A successful and ambitious town – The disposal will help ensure that housing provision meets the needs and aspirations of the town's residents.

- b) Delivering best value – The disposal of the site will assist with the requirement to set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan by generating additional Council Tax and a capital receipt.

9.2 The following high-level risks identified in the Strategic and Directorate Risk Registers, will be reduced as a consequence of the market intervention enabled by the recommended decisions:

- a) O1-045 - If the Housing Programme does not meet the projected targets, then this can have a negative impact on the assumptions within the MTFP.
- b) O8-059 - If incorrect assumptions are made in the MTFP this will result in a funding gap requiring further savings to be made.
- c) O1-029 - Insufficient Council Tax C and D properties are built to enable Middlesbrough to retain its economically active population resulting in further population decline and impact upon the MTFP.

### ***10. Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion***

The Impact Assessment, attached as Appendix 3 has concluded that the decisions would not have any disproportionately negative impacts on protected groups.

### ***11. Climate Change / Environmental***

As part of the Council's drive to achieve net carbon and in line with One Planet Living, developers will be encouraged to implement energy efficiency measures in line with Building Regulations, and to reuse and source local materials and labour to reduce transportation impacts.

### ***12. Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers***

The Impact Assessment demonstrated that this development presents no impact on children and young people cared for by the Authority and care leavers.

### ***13. Data Protection***

The proposed decision does not involve the collation and use of personal data.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
POS & Land Appropriation	Housing Officer / Legal Services	30/08/2024
Site Investigation Work	Housing Officer	20/10/2024
Development Guidance	Housing Officer / Consultant	25/12/2024
Outline Planning	Housing Officer / Planning / Design Services	03/04/2025
Market the Site	Housing Officer / Valuation and Estates	01/08/2025
Executive Approval to Dispose	Housing Officer	29/09/2025
Exchange Contracts with Developer	Housing Officer / Legal	02/01/2026
Legally Complete	Housing Officer / Legal	16/08/2026
Developer Starts on Site	Developer	19/09/2026
First Completions	Developer	14/09/2027

**Appendices**

1	Site Plan
2	Asset Disposal Business Case - Redacted
3	Exempt From Publication – Valuation Figures
4	Impact Assessment

**Background papers**

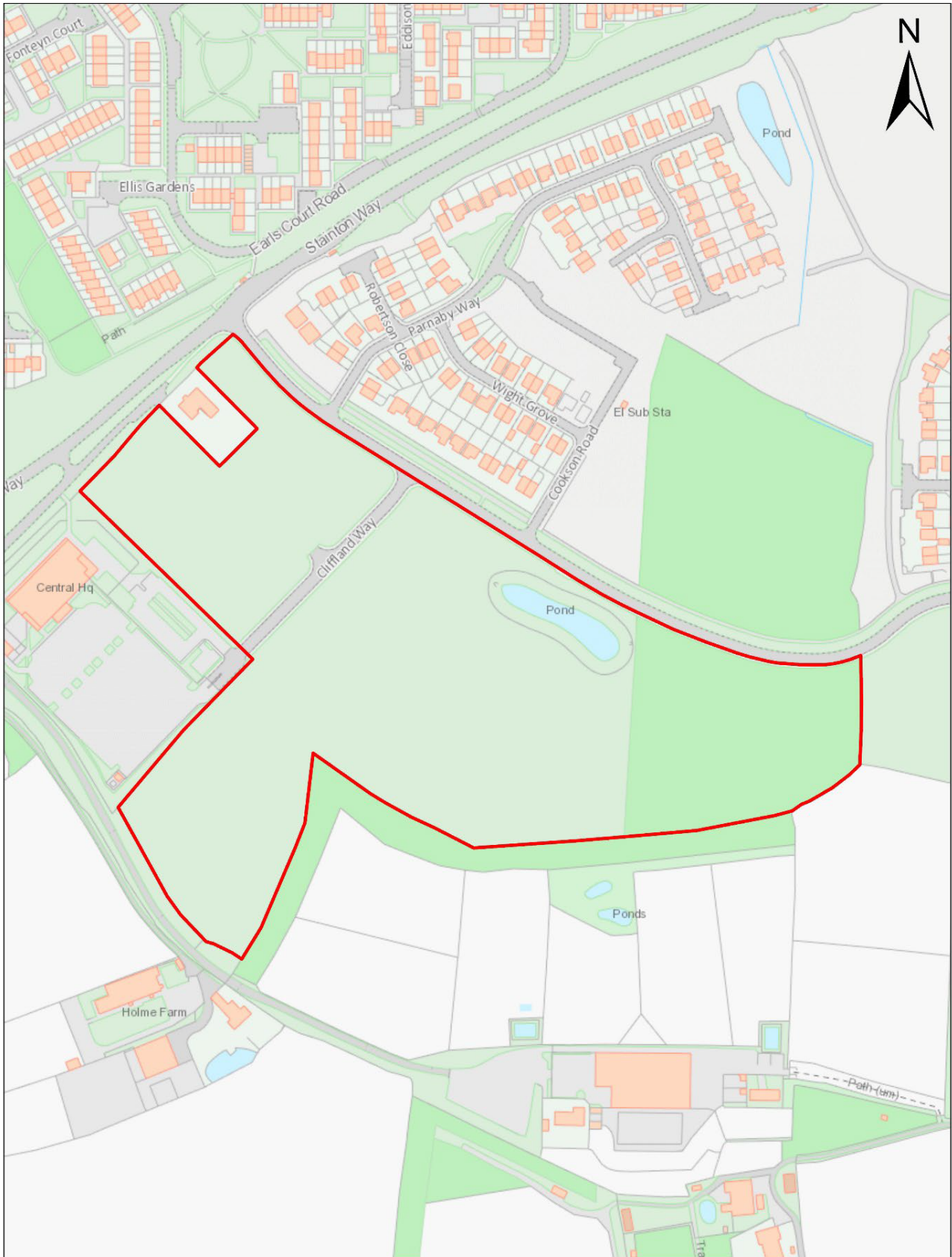
Body	Report title	Date
Council	Middlesbrough Local Plan	November 2014
Council	Middlesbrough Draft Local Plan	January 2024


**Contact:** Nicola Norman

**Email:** [Nicola\\_Norman@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola_Norman@middlesbrough.gov.uk)



**Appendix 1 – Site Plan**



	Address: Middlesbrough Council Fountain Court 119 Grange Road Middlesbrough TS1 2DT	Date: 10/01/2024	Scale: 1:2,000	Title: Housing Allocation - HO4i Hemlington Grange West
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### Asset Disposal Business Case

Name of Asset:	Hemlington Grange West
Asset Register Number:	12212/063
Current Use:	Development site
Valuation at Current Use (Asset Register) £:	<p>The last AR valuation was undertaken in March 2022 by Align Property Partners.</p> <p>The land was assumed to be for commercial use and the 8.11 ha (20.05 acres) was valued at [REDACTED] per acre, totalling [REDACTED]</p>
Reason for Disposal:	<p>Sale of the land (as shown on the attached plan) for the development of housing, local centre/retail provision (subject to the adoption of the draft Local Plan).</p> <p>The Draft Housing Local Plan (2024) sets out the policy for the development of the site under policy HO4i.</p> <p>The site is allocated for the development of approximately 170 dwellings and a new Local Centre. It is considered appropriate for a mix of dwelling types and sizes, including bungalows, that complements and enhances the choice and quality of housing in the local area.</p> <p>Vehicular access will be taken from Hemlington Grange Way, whilst incorporating access to the adjacent Holme Farm allocation for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists.</p> <p>Development of this site will contribute towards improving Middlesbrough's overall housing offer, ensuring there is a sufficient supply of high-quality affordable housing to prevent residents moving outside of the town. This will also increase the vibrancy of the town and support Middlesbrough's overall economic growth and stem out migration.</p>
Latest Valuation (Proposed Disposal):	<p>[REDACTED] [pro rata @ [REDACTED] per acre] – pending agreement of any allowable scheme development, infrastructure &amp; abnormal cost deductions identified following the completion of relevant site planning, engineering, diligence &amp; investigations.</p>

## Appendix 2 – Redacted.

### Asset Disposal Stream (Please Select):

Generate Capital Receipt	✓ [01]
Stimulate Economic Activity	✓ [02]
Support Communities	✓ [03]

(In the event of more than one stream being relevant please rank in order of importance (1), (2), (3))

### Officer requesting Disposal (Responsible Service Manager):

Name:	Nicola Norman
Position:	Housing Officer

### Could the asset be disposed of for an alternative use that may give a higher capital receipt to the Council?

(To be completed by Valuation and Estates): (Tick)

Yes		No	✓
-----	--	----	---

### If yes please outline potential use:

N/A
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Estimated Value at Alternative Use:	£N/A
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### Key factors to be considered when assessing potential disposals:


1.	Potential for generating housing plots to meet the Borough's housing requirement.
2.	Compliance with the emerging Local Plan as a site allocated for residential development.
3.	Compliance with V&E tender criteria, guidance, and requirements.
4.	Provision of recurring income [Business Rates & Council Tax] in perpetuity.

### Any additional financial factors to be considered other than immediate capital receipt:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional Council Tax</li> <li>• New Homes Bonus</li> <li>• Local employment opportunities</li> <li>• Bringing unused land into beneficial use</li> </ul>
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## Appendix 2 – Redacted.

Asset Not Needed by the Council - Approved to proceed:

Head of Asset Management:	(Yes) Tick	No (Tick)	Date:
	✓		15/04/2024


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Preferred Method of Marketing (to be completed by Valuation & Estates): (Tick)

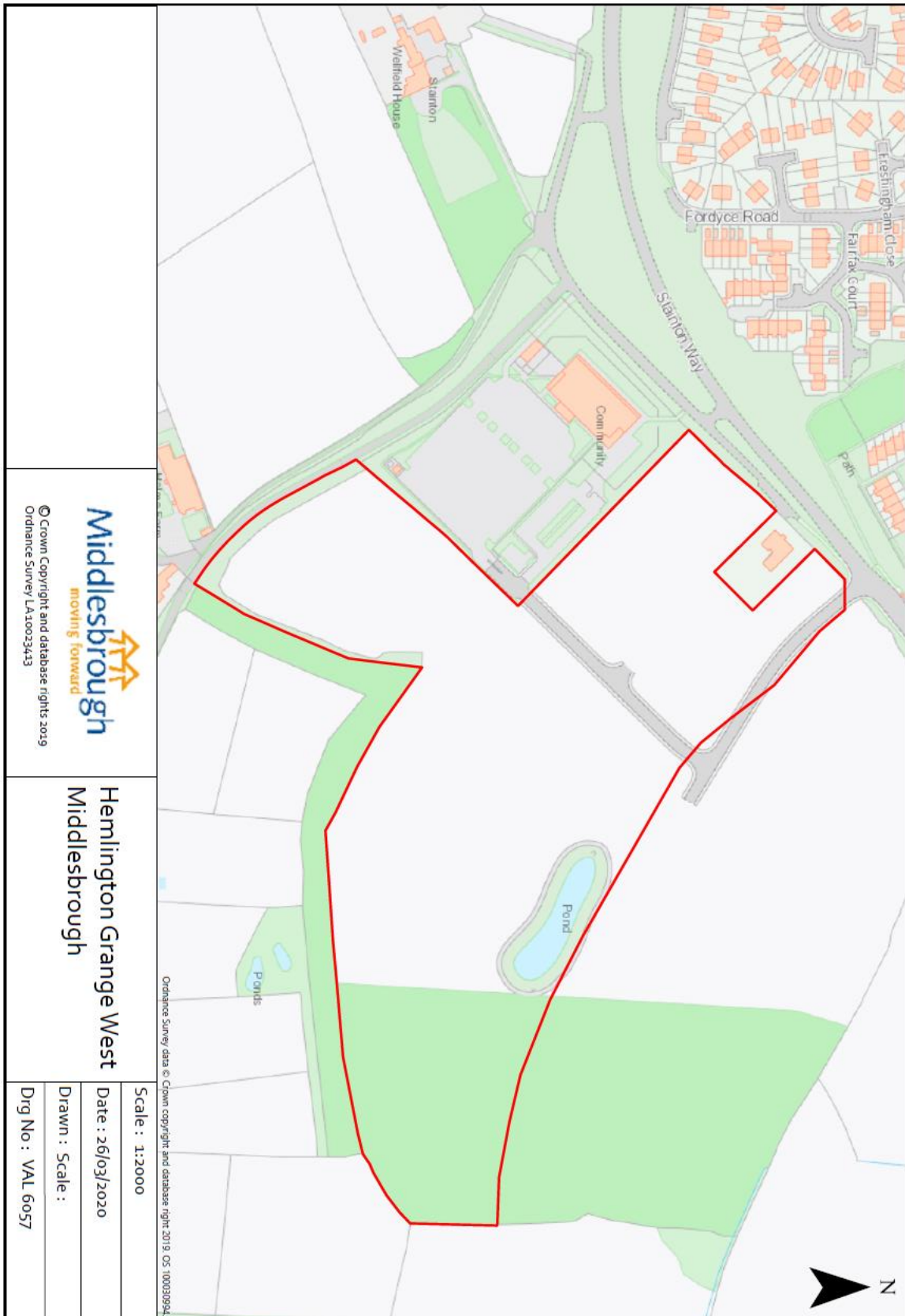
Formal / Informal Offers	✓
Private Treaty	
Auction	
Community Asset Transfer Process	

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Method for Final Approval (before proceeding with preferred method of marketing) :

Estimated Value:	Approval Required:	Authorised:	Date:
Less than £50,000	Valuation & Estates Manager		
Between £50,000 and £250,000	Director of Finance		
More than £250,000	Executive Committee		15 <sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Appendix 2 – Redacted.**  
**Disposal Plan**



**Appendix 4 - Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment**

<b>Subject of assessment:</b>	Hemlington Grange West			
<b>Coverage:</b>	Site-specific			
<b>This is a decision relating to:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strategy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Policy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Service</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Function</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Process/procedure</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Programme</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Project</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Review</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Organisational change</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other (please state)</b>		
<b>It is a:</b>	<b>New approach:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Revision of an existing approach:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>It is driven by:</b>	<b>Legislation:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Local or corporate requirements:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>Description:</b></p>	<p><b>Key aims, objectives and activities</b></p> <p>To assess the impact of the proposal to dispose of Council land for residential development.</p> <p>Disposal of the assets are required to assist the Council in meeting its MTFP projections, reducing financial risk and uncertainty, and aligns with the Local Plan (2014). Controlled sale of the parcel will ensure that development is delivered across the town in line with market demand.</p> <p><b>Statutory drivers</b></p> <p>The Local Government Act 1972 Section 123, as amended by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 Section 118 Schedule 23 Part V.</p> <p><b>Differences from any previous approach</b></p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p><b>Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate)</b></p> <p>The Council, developers and the local community.</p> <p><b>Intended outcomes</b></p> <p>The proposed disposals would allow the Council to secure capital receipts, generate Council Tax, redevelop underutilised land and meet its obligations under the current Local Plan (2014).</p>
<p><b>Live date:</b></p>	<p>November 2023</p>
<p><b>Lifespan:</b></p>	<p>Until the site is developed or the site allocation in the Housing Local Plan is removed/changed.</p>
<p><b>Date of next review:</b></p>	<p>Not applicable</p>



Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
<b>Human Rights</b> Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation?*	☒	☐	☐	It is considered that the disposal of the subject parcels of land will not impact negatively on individual human rights as the proposal represents a significant and positive enhancement for the local and wider areas, which outweighs the loss of the parcel of land.
<b>Equality</b> Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law? Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups?*	☒	☐	☐	<p>a) The Council has a duty to consider the impact of the proposed decision on relevant protected characteristics, to ensure it has due regard to the public sector equality duty. Therefore, in the process of taking decisions, the duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;</li> <li>(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and</li> <li>(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.</li> </ul> <p>It is considered that the proposal to facilitate the development of housing will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on a group, or individuals, because they hold a protected characteristic. Evidence</p>

\* Consult the Impact Assessment further guidance appendix for details on the issues covered by each of these broad questions prior to completion.

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
				used to inform this assessment includes engagement to date with relevant Council departmental teams.
<b>Community cohesion</b> Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that there will be any adverse impact on community cohesion or negative impact on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town.
<b>Sustainable Community Strategy objectives</b> Could the decision impact negatively on the achievement of the vision for Middlesbrough? Does the decision impact on statutory duties associated with these key objectives? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The parcel of land is currently allocated for commercial use, with the possibility that this land could have its use changed to residential and follow on from the current residential development. Considering the above, it is not thought that there will be any negative impact on the Council's sustainable community strategy objectives.
<b>Organisational management / transformation</b> Could the decision impact negatively on organisational management or the transformation of the Council's services as set out in its transformation programme? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disposal of this parcel of land would generate Capital Receipt and Council Tax, supporting the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. In light of the above, it is not considered that there will be any negative impact on the organisational management or the transformation of the Council's services set out in its transformation programme
<b>Next steps:</b> ➡ If the answer to all of the above screening questions is No then the process is completed. ➡ If the answer of any of the questions is Yes or Uncertain, then a Level 2 Full Impact Assessment must be completed.				
<b>Assessment completed by:</b>	Nicola Norman		<b>Head of Service:</b>	Steve Fletcher
<b>Date:</b>	01/11/23		<b>Date:</b>	20/11/23

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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