

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 6 January 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), J Cooke, C Cooper, J Ewan, J Kabuye, A Romaine and L Young

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: The Mayor, C Cooke
S Monk and T Parkinson, Jomast

OFFICERS: R Horniman, S Lightwing, J McNally, A Shippey and M Walker

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Jackson, T Livingstone, and D McCabe

24/55 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the building evacuation procedure.

24/56 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

24/57 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 2 DECEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 2 December 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

In response a query from a Member, it was confirmed that the information requested from the Thirteen Group in respect of empty properties had been circulated.

24/58 **EMPTY PROPERTIES SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Representatives from Jomast, were present at the meeting to provide information in relation to the current scrutiny investigation of empty properties in Middlesbrough. Jomast Developments Limited was a private property developer and regeneration specialist.

The Managing Director explained that Jomast was a substantial private landlord in Middlesbrough and nearly all of their properties were currently let. Whilst there were some voids, they were not available for letting due to being in a refurbishment programme.

Examples were provided of two projects that Jomast were undertaking. The first was the refurbishment of Church House, a high rise building in central Middlesbrough that had been vacant for a number of years. The project would provide 86 newly refurbished apartments and was due to complete in late summer 2025.

The second project was the refurbishment of 67 houses in the Gresham area of central Middlesbrough in Wentworth, Waverley and Union Streets and Princes Road. Artist impressions of both projects were provided to the panel. All 67 properties were currently let.

Property management was a challenging business due to the capital required and work needed to meet the necessary standards and engage good tenants. A major issue for private landlords was the capital needed to refurbish properties to the appropriate standard including the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) requirements. Increasing the energy performance of a building required substantial investment but it was important to achieve a good rating to make it satisfactory for the occupants, especially in light of increasing utility costs. Refurbishments costs for a single dwelling could be approximately £40K and often private landlords did not have that capital.

It was confirmed that Jomast were keen to continuing investing in Middlesbrough. However, the Company was selective with the type of property purchased because in some cases, although a property could be purchased at low cost, it was not commercially viable. Projects

of scale usually made more commercial sense.

In respect of tenants, tenant management was an important skill set and all tenants were vetted to ensure they had adequate income and that they would hopefully keep to their terms of their tenancy and make a positive contribution to the local community. One of the main issues experienced with a minority of tenants in Gresham was dumping refuse in the alleyways. This problem had to be addressed on a weekly basis and contributed to the management costs.

A Member queried the refurbishment of Church House, which had been subject to three planning applications since 2012. The Managing Director explained that Church House was a 14-storey redundant office block. Following the financial crash in 2008, many property developers had gone out of business. The next ten years were a very challenging period and Middlesbrough was a fairly deprived area. Jomast had been able to secure a grant of £1.4 million from Middlesbrough Council that had enabled the Company to finally get the project under way. The costs of refurbishing a high rise building in compliance with building regulations ran into millions of pounds.

In relation to a further query as to why a private company needed Council investment, the Managing Director stated that it was about viability. If the level of investment did not produce a satisfactory return it was difficult to invest the capital. Church House was purchased as a long-term investment on the basis that at some point there would be a proposition for the scheme to come forward.

In relation to referencing and Selective Landlord Licensing (SLL) confirmation was provided that generally Jomast secured good tenants and was fully compliant.

The Managing Director explained that he was happy to continue to engage with Council Officers with a view to bringing empty properties back into use as appropriate and refurbishing them to a high standard. A strategic approach was required to generally improve the market.

The Chair thanked the representatives from Jomast for attending the meeting.

The Mayor was present at the meeting and updated the Scrutiny Panel in relation to two potential new policies. One was in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing which would affect all HMOs, regardless of size, across the whole town and the other was the development of a letting agency run by the Local Authority based on a similar model in place at Hartlepool Council.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

24/59

ANNUAL UPDATES - COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP AND PREVENT AND CHANNEL

The Head of Neighbourhoods and the Community Safety Partnership Officer were in attendance and gave a presentation in relation to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Prevent and Channel.

The CSP was a statutory partnership made up of key Responsible Authorities who had equal responsibility for reducing crime and anti-social behaviour under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014 and the Policing and Crime Act 2017).

The Responsible Authorities included Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue Authority, Health, Probation and Youth Justice Service (YJS). They worked 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, re-offending and serious violence.

In order to deliver the statutory requirements of the CSP, the following functions were carried out:

- A strategic intelligence assessment that informed a community safety plan was produced. The plan set out what the priorities were and how they would be addressed. The

plan was reviewed every two years.

- Consultation and engagement with the community.
- A strategy to reduce re-offending by adult and young offenders was formulated and implemented (Section 108 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009).
- An information sharing protocol was agreed and signed by all Responsible Authorities to disclose certain sets of depersonalised data at least quarterly.
- A Committee was established with power to review or scrutinise decisions made; or other action taken, and to make reports or recommendations. (Section 19-21 of the Police and Justice Act 2006).
- Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) were established as appropriate. (Section 9 of the Domestic Violence and Crimes Act 2004).
- Prevention of violent extremism (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015).
- Prevention and reduction of serious violence. (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022).

In terms of governance, the business of the CSP was open to scrutiny by all agencies and in particular the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Council. The working practices of the Partnership should enable Overview and Scrutiny to make early, constructive contributions to policy as well as supporting scrutiny of decisions made, monitoring of outcomes and targets achieved and review of practice and progress.

The Active Intelligence Mapping (AIM) group monitored patterns and trends in multi-agency data and partnership resources were deployed to address emerging issues on a monthly basis. The AIM Chair reported to the CSP.

Multi-agency thematic groups were in place and task and finish groups were established as and when required. The groups also linked into the four Neighbourhood Action Partnership meetings (NAPs) and the operating areas were aligned to the neighbourhood model. A daily briefing also took place with the Police, led by a senior officer and officers on the ground. All Councillors and key partners were invited to discuss key issues for those areas.

There were CSP Priorities for 2024/2026 as follows:

Priority 1 - Feel Safe (perceptions).

Objectives:

- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (including 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.
- Improving environmental cleanliness.
- Addressing underlying community issues.

Building on the partnership approach to working in Middlesbrough, creative and new ways of working continued to be developed, 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.

The Neighbourhood model had been introduced to ensure communities were at the heart of what the CSP did. Four co-located multi-agency teams had been developed to cover East, North, West and South of the town, focussed on improving neighbourhoods.

An Action Plan had been developed through the CSP which set out what each of the partner

agencies would do to achieve the objectives identified under the 3 priorities. A key action of the CSP was to co-ordinate delivery, bring partners together and identify resources and skills to achieve the best possible outcomes. The Action Plan was built around a robust outcome-based performance management framework to review and monitor progress and would be reviewed and refreshed annually.

In relation to mental health, particularly for young people, the CSP had been working with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and the Tees Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) NHS Trust to align with mental health delivered services and link those services in with the neighbourhood model. The TEWV was keen to work alongside the neighbourhood teams.

The Community Cohesion Strategy was under review to ensure it reflected the current delivery model. Each neighbourhood had different issues but through the AIM and daily meetings the CSP could respond by directing resources to the most appropriate place, collectively with partners. There had been an overall reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour but some increases in certain crime types, such as violent crime. The CSP also worked closely with Cleveland Crime Reduction Unit.

Prevent

The aim of Prevent was to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent also extended to supporting the rehabilitation and disengagement of those already involved in terrorism. The Programme used early intervention to protect individuals and communities from the harms of terrorism.

Prevent was delivered through a wide network of partners within communities, civil society organisations and public-sector institutions.

Middlesbrough Operational Prevent Group was a multi-agency group which led on action plans designed to reduce the risk by increasing communities' resilience and awareness. The group focussed on ensuring compliance with statutory requirements defined in the Prevent Toolkit for Local Authorities (Home Office), training and awareness raising and promotion of the safeguarding nature of Prevent.

The Middlesbrough Operational Prevent Group combined local authority departments including youth justice, children's social care, adult social care and external organisations including Middlesbrough College and Northern School of Arts.

In addition to Overview and Scrutiny, the work and actions of Prevent were overseen by Ofsted, the CSP, peer observation, Regional Contest Board and the Annual Benchmarking Assurance Exercise conducted by the Home Office.

Following the introduction of the revised Prevent Duty Guidance, actions have been taken to ensure compliance including:

- Reinforcing the training provision with use of the new Home Office package for local authority staff.
- Reinforcing the referral pathway-embedding the new National Prevent referral form and process internally and externally with partners by sector.
- Formalising the engagement process with increased focus on roadshows and participation in community events.
- Incorporation of the Security Threat Check Process requirement - now included in Prevent plans, Channel and overseen by the CSP.

The Panel were shown a comprehensive list of recent actions as part of the presentation.

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

- Delivery of face-to-face training and guidance.

- Advice on the Prevent referral process, including Notice, Check, Share, the referral pathway, and signposting to CTPNE channels such as ACT Early.
- Support on embedding processes for Prevent/Channel.
- Provision and support of delivery of Home Office eLearning products relating to both Prevent and Channel.

Following the release of the new Home Office training product for professionals the Prevent lead had focused on ensuring internal departments requiring the face-to-face training (in addition to the online version) participated in the sessions.

In total over 250 local authority staff from departments including children and adults social care, early help, youth justice and community safety had completed the face to face Prevent Awareness package.

Work had commenced on training staff using the extended extremist ideologies product focusing on adult and children's social care and community safety staff.

Additional sessions had also been offered to designated Safeguarding Leads in schools across the borough.

Awareness raising of the safeguarding process of Prevent continued with professionals both within the authority and with external partners and third sector to further promote the referral pathway to safeguard someone at risk of radicalisation.

Interventions included awareness sessions with schools, community groups, commissioned services, third sector training, social media campaigns on themed areas to increase critical thinking and resilience and promotion of its safeguarding ethos.

Roadshows in the community in high footfall areas such as colleges and hospitals also further increased awareness and help demystify any confusion around the nature of Prevent, with successful roadshows and roundtables held throughout 2024 with more planned for 2025.

Working with schools we have been also able to work with parents around themes which relate to Prevent to increase resilience which include online risk, misinformation and practical aspects around parental controls can help reduce the risk of online radicalisation.

Channel

Channel across Cleveland was a bespoke provision as the regional figures were low in comparison to other areas.

The Channel panel was a safeguarding meeting of multi-disciplinary professionals who worked towards assisting the individual at risk build their resilience against the radicalising narrative whilst addressing any susceptibilities or vulnerabilities they might have.

Channel operated on a consensual basis and consent must be sought from the individual. Channel Intervention support for individuals was confidential and voluntary.

The support available through Channel was wide-ranging, and could include help with education or careers advice, dealing with mental or emotional health issues, or digital safety training for parents: dependent on the individual's needs.

In the year ending 31 March 2024, there were 6,922 referrals to Prevent. This was an increase of 1.5% compared to the previous year (6,817).

Of the 6,922 referrals made to Prevent in the year ending 31 March 2024, 893 individuals (13% of referrals) were discussed at a Channel Panel, and 512 individuals (7% of referrals) adopted as Channel cases and received support.

The Education sector made the highest number of referrals (2,788), accounting for 40% of all referrals. This was similar to the previous year and was the highest proportion for any source

of referral since data was first published in 2015 to 2016.

6,884 referrals were made to Prevent where the age of the individual was known, and those aged 11 to 15 accounted for the largest proportion (2,729; 40%); while those aged between 16 and 17 accounted for the second largest proportion (892; 13%) of referrals.

511 cases were adopted by Channel where the age of the individual was known, with individuals aged between 11 and 15 accounting for half (50%) of cases adopted by Channel.

As in previous years where sex was specified (6,906), most referrals were for males (6,114; 89%).

Referrals categories: Vulnerability present but no ideology or Counter Terrorism risk referrals (2,489; 36%), Extreme right-wing concerns (1,314; 19%), Islamist concerns (913; 13%).

The majority of referrals that went on to be adopted as a Channel case were for Extreme right-wing concerns (230 out of 512; 45%); while 118 (23%) were for Islamist concerns and 90 (18%) were for those with a conflicted ideology.

A Member queried what would happen where someone did not wish to engage. The officer explained that if there was a concern and an individual refused to engage, the Police would decide what action to take. A Counter Terrorism Case Officer might offer support on a one-to-one basis. It was unlikely that an individual who posed a serious risk would be referred to the Channel Panel.

AGREED as follows that:

1. the information provided was received and noted.
2. a copy of the Community Safety Partnership Action Plan and recent statistics in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour would be circulated to the Scrutiny Panel.

24/60 **HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE FROM TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

A summary of the latest meeting of the Task and Finish Group on Home to School Transport held on 13 December 2024 had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chair advised the Panel that a meeting would be arranged for Members of the Task and Finish Group with the Integrated Transport Unit Manager to obtain further information that was required in respect of the scrutiny investigation.

24/61 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on items considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board that was held on 18 December 2025.

24/62 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for Monday 27 January 2025 at 4.30 pm.

24/63 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.