

Middlesbrough Council: Independent Improvement Advisory Board (IIAB)

Terms of Reference

This non-statutory advisory board is established jointly by Middlesbrough Council and the Local Government Association.

The aims and objectives of the Board are to provide oversight, support and challenge to Middlesbrough's improvement and transformation journey working with established and proven sector leaders.

It will particularly focus on the need for the Council to ensure it complies with its Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999, notably:

- Cultural and governance issues, including those identified through previous CIPFA and previous, and any future, external auditor reports.
- Financial sustainability – including a balanced medium term financial strategy aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Board will also oversee progress by the Council towards implementing the actions arising from the Section 24 Statutory Recommendations of the outgoing auditors, EY, dated 21st August 2023.

The work of this Board will align with the work of the Middlesbrough Children's Executive Improvement Board (CEIB) established under Department for Education oversight to deliver good outcomes for children in Middlesbrough.

To achieve its objectives, the Council will need to:

- consider the clarity and possibility of its ambitions for Middlesborough
- ensure the way the Council operates and is governed through its systems, Constitution, Codes of Conduct, management structure, performance management arrangements (etc) ensure effectiveness and efficiency
- ensure the values by which the Council seeks to operate are lived within the organisation
- develop a clear corporate strategic plan supported by a medium term financial plan to demonstrate improved outcomes and financial sustainability
- address the issues raised in Children's Services and ensure that these improvements are supported by the wider Council

The Council is responsible for its own improvement and will lead on all actions necessary (with partners, as appropriate). The role of the IIAB will be to:

- 1) Review how the council is progressing against the above actions as outcomes in its improvement journey.
- 2) Review how the council is progressing against the requirements of the Best Value Notice issued on the 24th January 2023 and the Auditor's Statutory Recommendations issued on 21st August 2023.

- 3) Provide challenge and act as a critical friend to ensure focus, grip, pace and effective change.
- 4) Provide support and guidance.
- 5) Identify and signpost appropriate good practice.
- 6) Make recommendations as appropriate with regard to progress being made in relation to the Best Value Notice and the Auditor's Statutory Recommendations, and to further the improvement journey

Membership and Way of Working

It is proposed that the membership of the Independent Improvement Advisory Board is made up of:

- a. A recently retired, experienced, local authority CEO as Chair
- b. An experienced unitary local authority (peer) Mayor/Leader
- c. An experienced unitary local authority (peer) Monitoring Officer
- d. An experienced unitary local authority (peer) Chief Finance Officer
- e. The LGA Regional Lead.

To ensure alignment between the work of the IIAB and the CEIB as described above, the chair of the CEIB, Stuart Smith OBE, will have a standing invitation to the IIAB on matters of mutual significance.

The Chief Executive, Mayor, Section 151 officer and Monitoring Officer will attend at the invitation of the IIAB and other officers and members will attend as required.

Should the Board consider it necessary to add further sector specialists to assist the improvement journey, it will have the power to do so.

Board members will have reasonable access to relevant members, officers and data to be able to make informed judgements. The Monitoring Officer will be the final decision maker in terms of the release of information where it is considered sensitive.

The Board is planned to be in place for approximately 12 months with the first meeting being in October 2023, with an interim review after 6 months of the composition of the Board and the terms of reference to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. It will meet monthly, on site or remotely as agreed.

Administrative support to the Board will be provided by the Council.

As part of an agreed exit strategy, the Council will have an LGA-managed Corporate Peer Challenge around 3-6 months after the IIAB's departure.

Reporting

The IIAB will report quarterly to the Council's Executive and Council. These reports will be discussed in public. The IIAB report will be considered, as appropriate by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and/or Corporate Affairs and Audit.

The Chair of the IIAB will liaise regularly with DLUHC officials to enable DLUHC to whether progress in addressing the best value notice is satisfactory.

The aim of this reporting cycle is to assure the Council and its stakeholder that the right actions are being undertaken, the right changes are being made, and the fundamental issues are being resolved.

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