

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
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<b>Date:</b>	17 January 2024
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<b>Title:</b>	Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board: First Update Report
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<b>Report for:</b>	Information
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Strategic priority:</b>	All
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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 the Executive notes the first report of the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board.

<b>Executive summary</b>
The Board's first report sets out the background to its appointment, a summary of activity to date and a forward view on the future focus the Council should have in its improvement journey.

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The Board’s first report sets out the background to its appointment, a summary of activity to date and a forward view.

**2 Recommendations**

2.1 That Executive notes the content of the board’s first report.

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

3.1 The Council must respond effectively and at pace to the deliver the improvements set out in both the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and the Section 24 report if it is to effectively address the concerns around its culture, governance and financial challenges.

3.2 The report of the Board provides an independent view of progress made to date and its expertise and advice 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 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 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 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 The September 2023 Council report set out that the Board will report its views on progress to Executive in January 2024 and will provide a further update to Council three months after that. The Board’s first report is appended to this report.

**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 Not applicable.

***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**

1	Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board: First 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

### Contact:

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