

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Setting the Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme 2024-2025

26 JUNE 2024

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To invite the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) to consider its work programme for the 2024-2025 Municipal Year and suggest potential topics for the People and Place Scrutiny Panels.

REVIEW OF 2023-2024

2. At a meeting of OSB held on 7 May 2024, a new structure for scrutiny arrangements in Middlesbrough was agreed. Consequently, OSB will work with the People and Place Scrutiny Panels for this year to deliver Scrutiny in Middlesbrough. The topics below were placed on OSB's work programme for 2023/24 but were not progressed due to other emerging issues throughout the year.

Scrutiny Investigations

- Homelessness
- Electoral Registration.
- Cyber Security

BACKGROUND

3. At the start of every Municipal Year, OSB and scrutiny panels discuss the topics that they would like to review during the coming year.
4. Work programmes are useful as they provide some structure to a scrutiny panel's activity and allow for the effective planning and preparation of work.
5. As part of the process for establishing the work programme, support officers gather information/views from several sources. Each scrutiny panel will decide its own workplan for the 2024/25 municipal year, but OSB will have the opportunity to suggest topics it feels those panels should examine. Following an annual consultation exercise which ran between 15 May 2024 and 14 June 2024 several topics were suggested by Councillors, residents and other stakeholders which are listed below. Members are advised that the list of possible topics is not exhaustive and that additional topics can be added and considered at the scrutiny panel meeting. Priorities from the Council Plan 2024-2027 are also listed below for information.

Suggestions for People Scrutiny Panel

Suggestion	Details
Resident	<p>Outwood Ormesby Outwood Ormesby School is failing to provide the education our children deserve. Bullying, assaults, and attacks are rampant, both in person and online. Some children are resorting to self-harm due to the stress. The school's response to these issues has been inadequate.</p> <p>This school is not fulfilling its duty to care for families and children, focusing instead on financial gains. Legal action is being considered to enforce necessary changes and ensure the safety and education of our children.</p> <p>Councillors should prioritize education and children's welfare, ensuring schools are properly managed. Outwood Ormesby has been placed in Ofsted special measures and received the lowest rating possible. As a parent with five children who attended this school, I have witnessed a decline in education quality since Outwood's takeover. The school appears to prioritize financial gains over students' needs, particularly for SEN children. Many parents share similar grievances, and it's time for action to support parents and children, turning Outwood from a money-focused institution into a proper educational facility.</p>
Council Officer	Universal Services for secondary school young people (aged 11 to 16).
NHS	Grateful if the councillors could look into the roll out of the reasonable adjustments digital flag and how this could make it easier for deaf people and those with disabilities to use health services.

Suggestions for Place Scrutiny Panel

Suggestion	Details
Councillor P Storey	<p>Bereavement services and future planning for cemeteries and cremations</p> <p>(urgently needed as Acklam cemetery will be full in under two years and I don't know what has been done about it and the furnaces need replacing at the crematorium).</p>
Councillor P Storey	Implementation of the new Brown garden waste bins and service
Councillor P Storey	Home to school transport

Resident	<p>Neglected Thorntree and Brambles Ward</p> <p>This ward has become an area with few facilities for the public. We lack a sports hall and have only two playgrounds for our children—one in Pallister Park and the other in Thorntree Park. There are no playgrounds in Brambles or St. Anthony's, and we need more than one in the Thorntree area.</p> <p>Thorntree Hub is only open four days a week and lacks many essential facilities. Millbrook Park, known locally as Spider Park, needs an update to provide Brambles Farm with a park, which it currently lacks.</p> <p>Thorntree Park also needs attention. The road requires repairs, the park fences need painting, the annual flooding issue needs addressing, and the MUGA pitches should be revamped into volta cages for daily public use.</p> <p>Providing recreational facilities will foster a healthier and more vibrant community. We seek Middlesbrough Council's support to enhance our community's quality of life.</p>
Resident	<p>Motorbikes/Drug Dealing</p> <p>Brambles and Thorntree are plagued by motorbikes and drug dealing. Quads and off-road bikes are rampant, some used for drug dealing and others causing disturbances. Riders are often without helmets and sometimes have children on board without helmets. The community council has received numerous complaints and action is needed.</p> <p>Drug dealing occurs openly, near children, outside shops, close to schools, and behind local buildings. These activities are disrupting local businesses and residents.</p> <p>We urge MBC to collaborate with Cleveland Police and local housing associations to address these issues, making Brambles and Thorntree safer and cleaner.</p>
Resident	<p>Gangs of Youths</p> <p>There is growing concern among residents about large groups of youths loitering in the ward, making it unsafe for people to walk around, shop, or even visit local pubs. Residents desire a safe and enjoyable local environment.</p>
Resident	<p>Litter and Bins</p> <p>Brambles and Thorntree suffer from a significant litter problem and a shortage of bins. Thorntree Park once had 12 bins, more than the</p>

	rest of Thorntree combined. Cargo Fleet Lane has only five bins, the Greenway has none, and the rest of Thorntree has barely five bins. Brambles has three bins near Marshall Ave shops and fewer elsewhere. St. Anthony's has none, Town Farm has one, and other areas of the ward have only two bins each, which is insufficient. We need more bins to manage litter effectively.
Resident	<p>Rubbish Dumping</p> <p>Residents are struggling with the high costs of waste disposal. The free service is slow, leading people to dump items in gardens, streets, becks, fields, and parks. This issue needs urgent attention. MBC must find a solution for the fifth most deprived area in the UK to dispose of rubbish for free and promptly. Residents shouldn't have to walk past discarded beds, sofas, and TVs due to unaffordable disposal costs.</p>
Council Officer	<p>Decline of Middlesbrough spaces and place</p> <p>What do our communities want/ need. What matters most to them and what can we do to bring about positive change i.e. lighting up a dark area, disrupting adverse behaviours with structures or diversion activities, painting railings, community ownership (bedding plants given to schools to upkeep – taking an allotment approach to spaces).</p>
Council Officer	<p>Town Centre and local communities shop space investment</p> <p>– evaluating our attempts to reinvigorate Middlesbrough Town Centre and local shop space in communities</p>
Council Officer	<p>Challenging landlords in communities</p> <p>– what is non-negotiable for a landlord, who is operating below the expected level and why.</p>

Updates for the People Scrutiny Panel

Quality Accounts 2023/24	COMPLETED Annual review of South Tees Hospital Foundation Trust Quality Accounts.
TSAB	Annual update from the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board.
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership	Annual update from South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

Updates for the Places Scrutiny Panel

<p>Flood Risk Management</p>	<p>The Pitt Review 2007, undertaken as a result of major flooding in the UK, made a number of recommendations, including that local authorities' scrutiny committees should receive annual updates in relation to the actions taken locally and review of the work carried out to manage flood risk.</p>
<p>Toxic Chemicals in the River Tees/Crustacean Working Group</p>	<p>At a meeting of Council on 6 July 2022, Motion No. 153, it was determined that regular updates on this topic be provided to the relevant scrutiny panel.</p>
<p>RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers) (annual update)</p>	<p>RIPA is the law governing the use of surveillance techniques by public authorities, including local authorities. RIPA requires that when public authorities need to use covert techniques to obtain private information about someone, they only do so if surveillance is necessary, proportionate, and compatible with human rights. Typically, this relates to suspected criminal activity that is likely to result in a custodial sentence of six months or more.</p>
<p>Prevent and Channel (annual update)</p>	<p>In 2011, the Prevent strand of the UK's long-term strategy for countering international terrorism, known as CONTEST was explicitly changed by the Government to deal with all forms of terrorism, and target not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism. This change in strategic direction was enacted in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The Act, which became law in February 2015, places a duty on specified authorities to have "Due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". In response an Action Plan for Middlesbrough was developed to respond to the specific elements of the Prevent agenda. In 2018, the Counter-Terrorism Strategy was published and the former Culture and Communities and Environment Scrutiny Panels received an update regarding PREVENT actions and annual updates thereafter.</p>
<p>Community Safety Partnership (annual update)</p>	<p>The powers of the Police and Justice Act 2006 relating to Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 require the Middlesbrough's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to present the partnerships intentions, and actions to Scrutiny on an annual basis. This requirement commenced in 2009 and the former Culture and Communities and Environment Scrutiny Panels have received annual updates since that time. On 24 January 2023, the Executive approved an extension to the Community Safety Plan which would run in its current form until March 2024.</p>

Council Plan

Priority: A successful and ambitious town Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.
Priority: A healthy place Helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives.
Priority: Safe and resilient communities Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.
Priority: Delivering best value Changing how we operate to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.

6. It should be noted that the topics and updates outlined above are suggestions. When considering the work programme, the panel is advised to select topics that are of interest to it, as well as topics that the panel feels by considering, could add value to the Local Authority's work.
7. In addition to undertaking the agreed work programme, scrutiny panels have also previously responded on an ad-hoc basis to emerging issues - such as considering relevant new legislation, guidance or Government consultation documents. This approach occasionally results in further topics being identified for investigation or review throughout the year.
8. The scrutiny panel is also advised that, under the terms of the Local Government Act 2000, local authorities have a responsibility of community leadership and a power to secure the effective promotion of community well-being. Therefore, in addition to the scrutiny panel's generally recognised powers (of holding the Executive to account, reviewing service provision, developing policy, considering budget plans and performance and financial monitoring), panels also have the power to consider **any** matters which are not the responsibility of the Council but which affect the local authority **or** the inhabitants of its area. For example, nationally, local authorities have undertaken scrutiny work on issues such as post office closures, rural bus services, policing matters and flood defence schemes.

Scrutiny work plan prioritisation aid

9. When considering topics for the work programme, Members may wish to use the aid attached at **Appendix 1** to prioritise issues where scrutiny can make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

10. OSB is asked to consider its work programme for the 2024-2025 municipal year and suggest any topics it feels the People and Place Scrutiny Panel should consider. Further information can be requested from relevant officers if required, for example with regard to timely scheduling.
11. When considering its work programme, OSB is asked to ensure that topics agreed for inclusion:

- Affect a group of people living within the Middlesbrough area.
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which the Council has a significant stake or over which the Council has an influence.
- Are not issues which the OSB or the scrutiny panels have considered during the last 12 months.
- Do not relate to an individual service complaint.
- Do not relate to matters dealt with by another Council Committee, unless the issue deals with procedure.

12. It is suggested that OSB has a mixture of working styles in its programme. This can include detailed and in-depth reviews, shorter topics, or one-off investigations.

RECOMMENDATION

13. That OSB initially identifies no more than 3 topics it would like to include in its work programme for 2024-2025. It is also recommended that OSB suggest topics it feels either the People or Place Scrutiny Panel should undertake. A final work programme report will be submitted to the July meeting of OSB for approval.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

14. None.

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