

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: MAYOR CHRIS COOKE

DATE OF MEETING: 16 October 2024

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic Priority: Reducing inequalities in health

Common Allocations Policy Review – Consultation and Proposed Changes

1. The Tees Valley Lettings Partnership, which includes Middlesbrough Council and other local authorities and housing providers, is conducting a consultation on proposed changes to the Common Allocations Policy (CAP). The CAP governs the allocation of social and affordable housing. The consultation runs from October 7th to November 18th, 2024, seeking feedback from registered social housing applicants and relevant stakeholders. The proposed changes come as a response to the growing demand for housing and the pressures faced by local authorities and registered providers, aiming to enhance fairness in the allocation process while addressing the region's evolving housing needs.
2. Key changes include a Local Connection Requirement, under which applicants must now demonstrate a local connection (such as living, working, or having family ties in the area) to register for social housing. Exemptions apply to specific groups such as military veterans, victims of domestic abuse, and participants in the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Furthermore, the exclusion period for applicants with a history of anti-social behaviour is proposed to be extended from 12 to 36 months. Additionally, applicants in higher priority bands will be required to actively bid on suitable properties or risk losing their priority status.
3. Significant changes are also proposed in support of members of the armed forces and their families. A proposed revision introduces a new Band One Plus priority, ensuring those with an urgent need for housing, such as recently discharged personnel, are given higher priority. Additionally, armed forces members who have left within the last five years, but do not have an urgent housing need, will receive Band Three priority on their first tenancy. Bereaved or divorced spouses of service personnel who are required to vacate Ministry of Defence accommodation will be exempt from the local connection requirement. These changes reflect the council's commitment to supporting the armed forces community and ensuring fair access to housing for those transitioning to civilian life.

CQC Inspection of Adult Social Care Services

4. A recent meeting took place between Middlesbrough Council and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), where senior leadership from Adult Social Care, commissioning, procurement, and Public Health delivered an overview of services. Six cases from our Social Care Teams have been submitted to CQC, and the inspectors will now engage with families and case holders. Once the CQC provides their timetable, we will plan staff conversations to continue the inspection process.

Strengths-Based Practice and Three Conversations Approach

5. The Strengths-Based Practice and the Three Conversations Approach have been adopted following staff and public consultation. This approach focuses on empowering individuals by emphasising their strengths, promoting autonomy, and working collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes. The Three Conversations, in collaboration with service users, intend to Listen and Connect; Work Together to Resolve Issues; and Build a Long-Term Support Plan. The benefits of these approaches include enhanced person-centred care, increased independence, better use of resources, and improved outcomes.
6. A 13-week innovation site has been launched with the Access Team, starting from October 7, 2025, to further embed this approach. Weekly reflective sessions, morning huddles, and fortnightly meetings with senior leadership will ensure the approach is effectively implemented and continuously improved.

Trading Standards Tobacco Products Enforcement

7. Middlesbrough Trading Standards, in collaboration with Cleveland Police, seized over £50,000 worth of illicit tobacco and vapes in a recent operation. The haul included 37,000 cigarettes, 2,000 vapes, and 300 pouches of hand-rolling tobacco. This joint operation, supported by the regional serious organised crime unit, also uncovered Class A drugs, cash, and a large knife. The operation was the culmination of intelligence gathering and surveillance, targeting illegal tobacco being sold from off-site residential premises and vehicles. Enforcement methods included test purchases, inspections, and multi-agency raids with tobacco-sniffer dogs. Sanctions ranged from seizures and warnings to prosecution and licensing reviews.
8. Middlesbrough's enforcement efforts for 2024, including 70 complaints about illicit tobacco and 17 complaints regarding underage sales, led to the seizure of over 47,000 cigarettes, 4,000 vapes, and 38kg of hand-rolling tobacco in the first half of the year. Collaborative efforts with partner agencies have further removed nearly

9. 80,000 cigarettes and 35,000 vapes from circulation. Recent joint work with immigration authorities also led to the seizure of a further 94 illicit vapes.

HIGHLIGHTS

Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough Awards – 07/10/24

10. It was an honour to present awards at this year's Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough Celebration Event, organised by the incredible team at Dementia Action Teesside. 25 outstanding local businesses and organisations were recognised for their dedication to creating a more inclusive community for those living with dementia. These businesses are truly making a difference, and I am incredibly proud of how our town is coming together to support such a vital cause. Sarah, the keynote speaker, shared her heartfelt story about caring for her mother, Anne. Her powerful words reminded us of the importance of compassion and community in supporting those with dementia and their families.



NAME: Mayor Chris Cooke

DATE: 16 October 2024