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| MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL |  |
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| Report of: | Director of Environment and Community Services |
| Relevant Executive Member: | The Mayor |
| Submitted to: | Executive |
| Date: | 30 April 2025 |
| Title: | Neighbourhoods Model |
| Report for: | Decision |
| Status: | Public |
| Council Plan priority: | Safe and resilient communities |
| Key decision: | Yes |
| Why: | Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards |
| Subject to call in?: | Yes |
| Why: | Non-urgent Decision |

| Executive summary | |
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| <p>This report outlines the Council's approach to Neighbourhood Working. It explores the objectives on Neighbourhood Working and the way in which it will achieve outcomes in accordance with the Council's strategic objectives.</p> <p>The report demonstrates how working with partners over four neighbourhood areas will enable the Council to improve the lives of those living and working within those neighbourhoods. Further it demonstrates how the approach can assist in reducing medium term demand for services as well as seeking to address longer term entrenched problems within communities.</p> <p>The report seeks Executive approval for both the further development of the Neighbourhood approach and the required resource allocation required to achieve this.</p> | |

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek approval for the introduction of Neighbourhood Model as a key part of the Council's core operating model and to agree the funding to support its introduction.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Executive

- a. Approves the introduction of the Neighbourhood Model within Middlesbrough.
- b. To approve the Transformation Programme funding from the flexible use of capital receipts to fund the following posts for a 2 year period at a cost of £1.021m per annum:
 - 8 Neighbourhood Navigators to take on a caseload (2 in each of the 4 areas) - Grade K
 - 8 Community Development workers to build community capital and engage with the community, schools, voluntary and community sector and local businesses (2 in each of the 4 areas) - Grade J
 - Community Safety Co-ordinator - Grade K
 - 4 Neighbourhood link workers to be embedded on rotation within partner organisations such as schools and hospitals.
- c. Approve a capital allocation of up to £5m for improvements to the neighbourhood focused community hubs funded by Transformation Programme funding from the flexible use of capital receipts.
- d. Approve that an analysis of IT requirements takes place in respect of both infrastructure and reporting/ management programmes and that this is fed into the IT refresh requirements.
- e. Approve that annual reports are submitted to Executive to inform them of its achievements and any further development requirements.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

- 3.1 Neighbourhood Working is a key transformational strategy within the Target Operating Model. It should over the medium-term increase efficiency and reduce demand pressure.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood Working will provide better outcomes for the citizens of Middlesbrough.
- 3.3 Neighbourhood Working will become the operational model that addresses the entrenched challenges within the neighbourhoods of Middlesbrough.

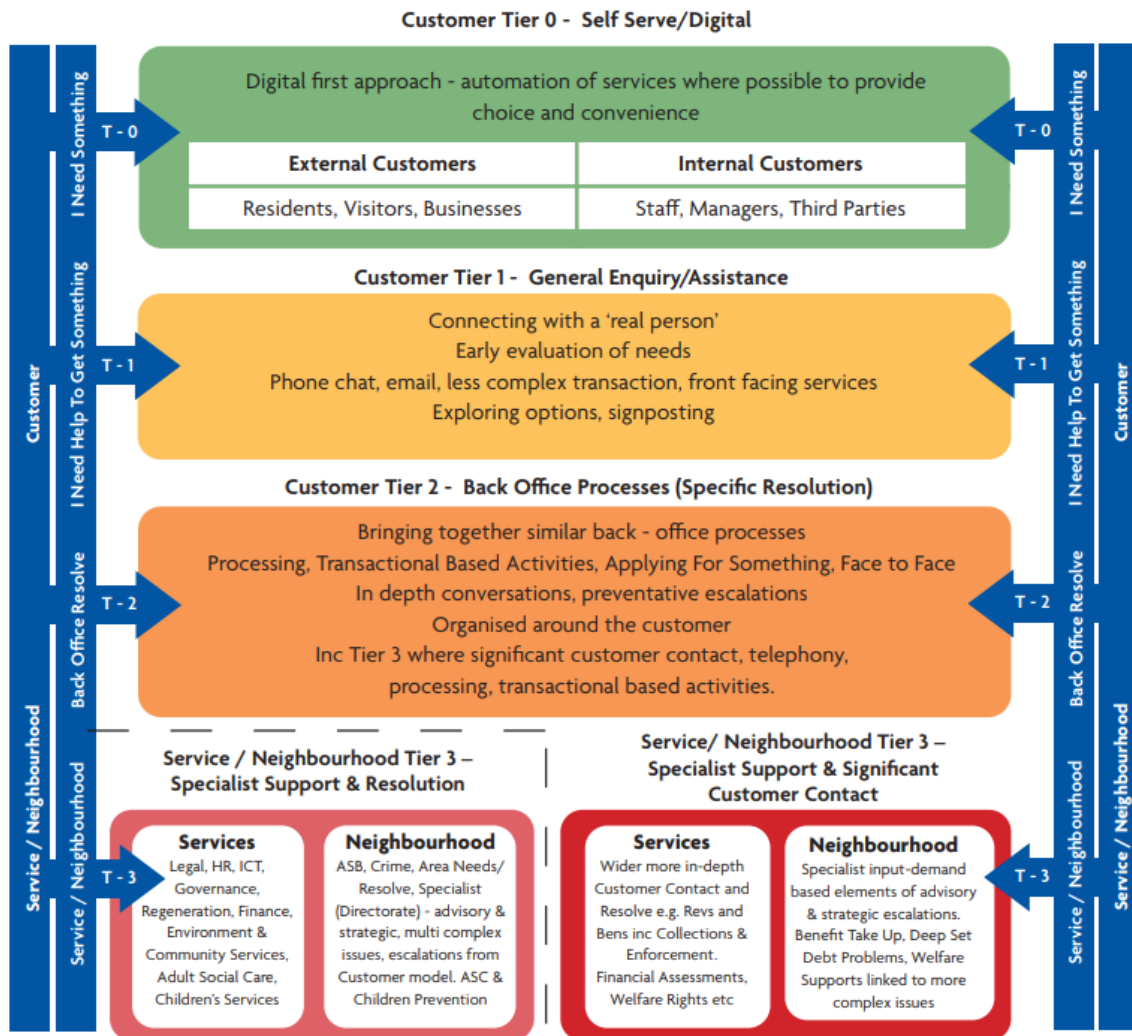
4 Neighbourhood Working in Middlesbrough

- 4.1 The Council recognises that in order to provide high quality and modern services within

an affordable budget, it needs to transform into an organisation that works with the community to achieve its aims and objectives and as such the elected Mayor of Middlesbrough has set out his 'Recover, Reset and Deliver' transformation programme. The Neighbourhood Model is part of this transformation programme and it aims to ensure that partners (both internal across Council departments and external partners) work together, doing things 'with' communities and not 'to' them and to understand what people really want and need in order to thrive in their lives.

- 4.2 The vision for Neighbourhoods is *'to make Middlesbrough a cleaner, safer, stronger, and healthier place to live through proactive, intelligence-led partnership work and by building community resilience, doing things 'with' communities and not 'to' them.'* This vision is routed in the 2024 – 27 Council Plan which sets out the Mayor's vision and ambition for the town.
- 4.3 The Neighbourhood Model seeks to achieve a joined-up system change centred on a recognition that we need to reconfigure relationships between statutory organisations, voluntary sector, the private sector, residents, and businesses to achieve change by developing collaborative approaches that address the underlying causes of community problems. The model aims to strengthen community resilience with a focus on prevention, building social capital, and making better connections across the community.
- 4.4 As well as focusing on the community and building social capital, the model also recognises that teams across the Council and partners need to work closely to deliver a multi-agency response and this is best achieved by working together on the ground in each neighbourhood. The model also sees the introduction of a number of Community Navigator posts that will deliver intensive interventions within a multi-agency environment aiming to intervene at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.5 One of the key principles of the Neighbourhood Model is prevention and early intervention that helps to reduce escalations. The Navigators will work with partners and apply a 'whatever it takes' attitude to engaging and supporting people who need help and support. In Adult Social Care for example, there has been a shift towards supporting people to stay in their homes for as long as possible, which saves public services money and provides better outcomes for people. The work of the Neighbourhood Model can accelerate this, by reinforcing the support that is available within community settings. The enablers (e.g. policy, research, finance, data, etc.) will also help with evaluation and understand the business case for better outcomes and lower spend.
- 4.6 The Navigators will work with partners to identify high intensity users of services and look at how collectively we can better support them with community links.
- 4.7 The Link Workers will work within key partners to break down barriers with their service users and in particular work to reduce the resistance of some service users to contact the council.
- 4.8 The Council has recently adopted a tiered Customer Model that aims to provide an improved journey for our customers and this will work closely with the Neighbourhood Model to provide customers with a more consistent and streamlined experience.

- 4.9 The Neighbourhood Model integrates with the Customer Model at tier three as shown in the diagram below.



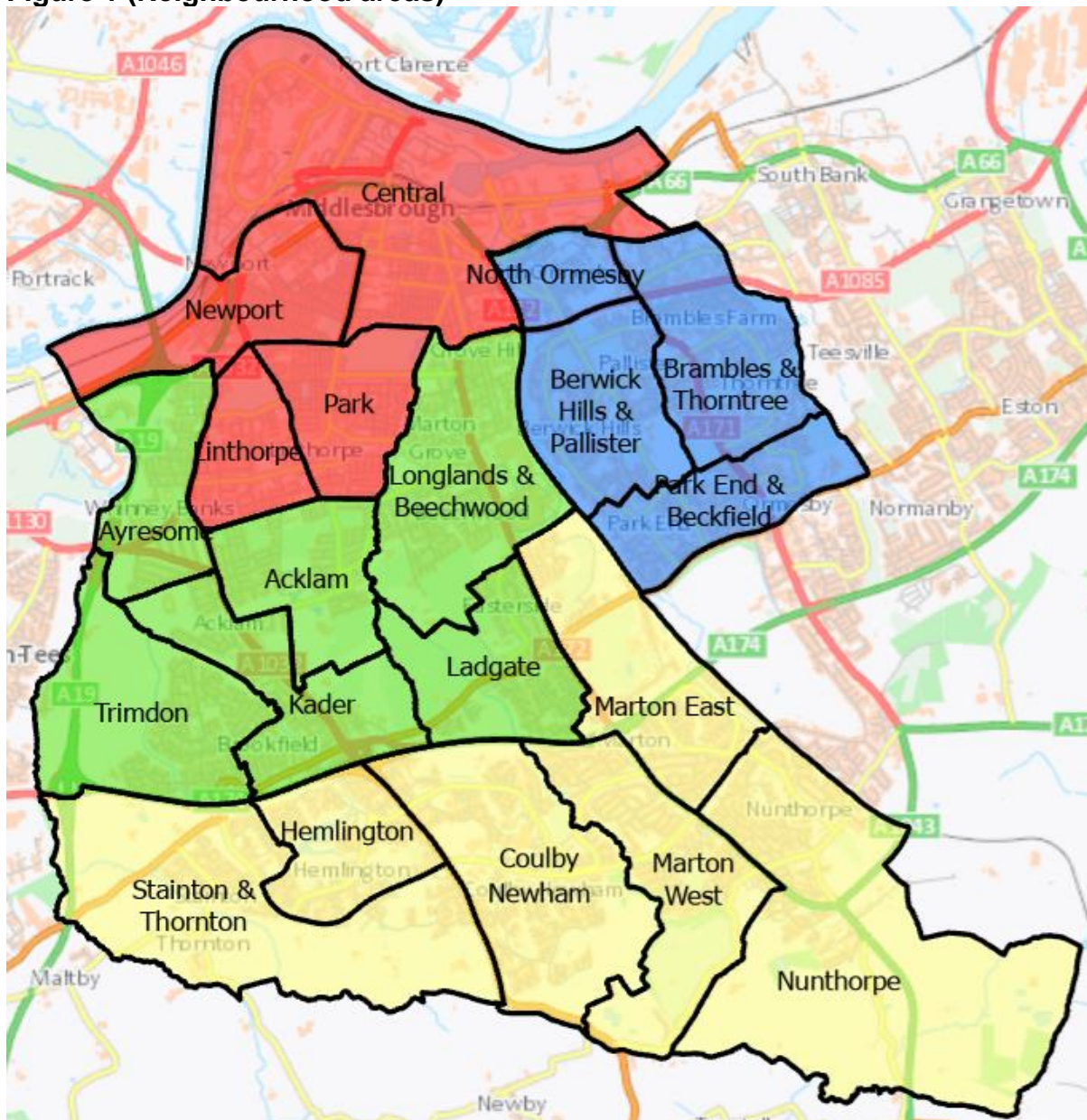
- 4.10 The current Neighbourhood Model was established in 2024 having learned from the Locality Working pilot (2020 – 2023) and brought together a number of community and environmental services. 4 Neighbourhood Managers were appointed to oversee the work that needs to take place in order to understand the community, learn what needs to change, what role each key stakeholder needs to play (including the community) and help to create the conditions that are needed to facilitate the changes needed.
- 4.11 The Neighbourhood Managers are currently stretched due to the fact they are also responsible for managing large service areas such as Area Care, Community Safety, and the library and community hubs. The need to make fiscal savings management and supervisory support has been removed from these areas and this needs to be redressed if the model is to be successful. This will be resolved through the addition of the Neighbourhood Safety Co-ordinator and a number of internal reviews.
- 4.12 Neighbourhood Working has been in existence within Middlesbrough for over a number of years, initially as a pilot that took place before the Covid years. The pilot produced

real change most notably in the Newport Area. An evaluation of the pilot identified positive benefits of the approach with perception of residents indicating that they have a voice in terms of localised issues, at the beginning of the project 27.96% of respondents in Newport felt they could influence local decisions increasing to 73.82% by September 2021. In terms of feeling safe, perceptions of feeling safe during the day in Newport rose from 31.18% in September 2020 to 68.65% in October 2021.

- 4.13 One of the other main reasons for implementing locality working in the 2 pilot areas was the growing trend of children's social care issues. During the pilot we saw significant increases in the number of early help cases closed with a positive outcome in both localities. Newport increased from 68% to 82% and North Ormesby from 0% to 90.9%
- 4.14 The locality model also allowed staff and partners to improve information sharing and increase opportunities to discuss individual cases within the ward and this has helped identify vulnerable people and swiftly put support plans in place.
- 4.15 We also saw an increase in the percentage of people interested in volunteering from 19% to 65% in Newport and significant increases in the number of people indicating that they intend to live in the area for over 3 years in both localities. In addition, the number of adults accessing learning opportunities increased from 53 to 168 in the Newport ward.
- 4.16 Most recently more formal Neighbourhood Working has been initiated in Middlesbrough with the formation of four neighbourhood areas and an associated management structure. The Neighbourhoods Working Model has begun to tackle structural issues within the four neighbourhoods and begun to increase community engagement. The teams are based in four areas of North, South, East and West. These teams work directly with residents, community groups, local organisations and partners to identify and address issues.
- 4.17 The approach at the moment has a significant focus on environment, crime and anti-social behaviour and community activity. Whilst showing some impressive results alongside the developed significant relationships and joint working arrangements with partner organisations, this approach needs to develop further to encompass the delivery of wider strategic outcomes within the organisation.
- 4.18 Each of the 4 neighbourhoods has a dedicated Neighbourhood Action Partnership (NAP) and the Council has reconfigured its place-based services and where possible, services are delivered at a neighbourhood level reporting to 4 dedicated Neighbourhood Managers. This currently includes community safety, area care, community development, environmental enforcement, pest control in public areas, stray dogs and library and community hub teams. In addition to this, the Neighbourhood Managers are responsible for coordinating partnership activity and each neighbourhood locality base has representation from Police, Fire, Thirteen Housing Group, other social housing reps where appropriate, voluntary sector and others in line with each area. This includes links to Mental Health service, Probation, Youth Justice Service, Public Health, Acute health services, schools and colleges and faith organisations.

- 4.19 The NAP's are made up of elected Members from the wards within each area and they are chaired by the relevant Neighbourhood Manager. They are attended by multiple partner organisations who present updates and take away shared actions on key issues with elected Members also taking an active role in solutions.

Figure 1 (Neighbourhood areas)



- 4.20 Performance of the NAP's is reported to the Community Safety Partnership via the Active Intelligence Mapping (AIM) group and any issues that cannot be addressed by NAP can be escalated via this route.
- 4.21 The foundations of Neighbourhood Working are in place however there is an opportunity now to extend its reach and impact, building on the good practices already in place in terms of partnership working, but moving beyond the current predominant focus on containment. With significant spend on acute services, as well as strong evidence of the potential for transformation, there is a compelling case for change.

4.22 Neighbourhoods and the Target Operating Model

4.23 The development of the Target Operating Model places Neighbourhood Working as a key element of its structure.

4.24 The Target Operating Model has Neighbourhood Working as one of its key pillars. It focuses Neighbourhoods to undertake four key activities:

- Resolving complex customer issues.
- Providing a rich source of service improvement feedback.
- Helping to expand community engagement and capacity.
- Developing and implementing neighbourhood plans to resolve longer term development needs.

4.25 Resolving complex customer issues

4.26 Individuals in Middlesbrough often simultaneously experience a multitude of stressors that have the potential to tip someone from 'coping' into 'crisis'. Within the Customer Model this would be recognised as Tier 3 contacts. This indicated the potential for designing joined-up services focused on addressing root causes of demand and identifying duplication of efforts across services to realise greater resource utilisation, operational efficiency, and improving service provision to contribute to community resilience.

4.27 Moreover, a key focus of the Neighbourhood Model on a move from a reactive to a preventative approach allows the public service provider space to move to a collective approach to the reduction of future demand pressures. This will reduce the cost of service provision but more importantly improve outcomes for the residents of the town.

4.28 Rich source of service improvement feedback

4.29 The benefit of complex case management is the ability for a rich feedback loop to be developed between the customer contact and the operating models of the organisations. The drawing together of different agencies challenges silo approaches in resolving the public service space. When aligned with strategic outcome objectives this should allow participants to explore service development and policy changes to allow improved outcomes to be delivered.

4.30 Helping to expand community engagement and capacity

4.31 The model will empower communities and further encourage active participation in local decision-making and service design and delivery, ensuring that everyone feels heard and valued. It will also involve working in partnership with other statutory organisations, such as the Police, NHS health partners, community assets, and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), to create a comprehensive support network. Additionally, technology will be utilised to bring people together and support cross-system collaborative working. This approach responds to the recognition that different neighbourhoods have unique needs and strengths. The model will shape and prioritise

services using both data-driven insights and deep community knowledge, creating tailored local strategies that empower communities to actively shape their own future.

- 4.32 The Neighbourhood Team will form collaborative partnerships and community empowerment, working within existing networks while cultivating new connections. It will include an enhanced, integrated community capacity and development function, recognising the importance of building community resilience and strengthening social cohesion. These teams will establish joined-up access to services, build community capacity, and support self-help initiatives, with a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Using data and insights will enable proactive identification of those households that need help early, such as those struggling with debt or domestic violence.

4.33 Develop and implement Neighbourhood Plans to resolve longer term development needs

- 4.34 A crucial element of the Neighbourhood Model is to be able to work with partners and communities to “shift the dial” on long term issues within the various neighbourhoods. Middlesbrough has been described as a number of villages within a townscape. The areas of Middlesbrough whilst close in geographical terms have distinct structures, cultures and challenges.

- 4.35 The key to Neighbourhood Working is to work to improve each area of Middlesbrough and make a real difference to longstanding issues. Be this historical intergenerational unemployment, housing conditions, environmental concerns, transport interconnectedness, loneliness, crime and antisocial behaviour and health inequalities to name but a few, there will be different priorities and approaches required to improve the outcomes within neighbourhoods.

- 4.36 The key approach to “shifting the dial” is to produce neighbourhood plans that will produce focused action plans that draw in all partners to address the priorities that are outlined in those plans.

4.37 Implementation timetable

- 4.38 It will take a number of years to introduce and embed the Neighbourhoods Model. It is anticipated that the following indicative timescales will be followed.

Phase 1. Introduce new Staff, implement buildings fund to improve and prepare the hubs for partner onboarding. Introduce relevant IT software and Equipment, Engage with communities through engagement fund and introduce localised events. Develop onboarding plan for internal staff and local organisations.

Phase 2. Onboarding plan implementation for both internal staff and relevant local organisations. Create Neighbourhood Plans.

Phase 3. Model fully operational and impact assessments of the new Neighbourhoods model begin.

Phase 4. Reflect and refocus properties to ensure Neighbourhoods deliver against changing pressures.

- 4.39 A primary outcome of the Neighbourhoods model is that it sustains a positive learning loop both within services and at the policy level. A positive neighbourhood model will be able to influence council policy across the organisation as learning from its working is understood.
- 4.40 The Neighbourhoods model will as it learns of areas of need be able to pull in a wider range of services and organisations into its remit. Clearly, as need is understood and solutions derived it will inevitably be the case that both the council and its partners will see neighbourhoods as a key delivery route for policy and service delivery implementation.

4.41 Resource requirement

- 4.42 In order to introduce the Neighbourhood Model there will be a requirement to invest in both facilities and staff. In respect of facilities, it is envisaged that each of the four neighbourhood areas will have a primary community hub that will be the base for locality teams and will also provide a limited front door for communities. These facilities will need to be confirmed and their capacity to deal with their role as the primary community hub understood.
- 4.43 In respect of staff, whilst there is a neighbourhood structure in place, there will be a requirement for additional staff to be in place. This will be a team of resolution staff at each neighbourhood hub that will be able to facilitate those with complex needs who enter the neighbourhood space. Secondly, there will be a requirement to strengthen community engagement staff numbers.
- 4.44 For each neighbourhood there will be a requirement for an additional 2 Community Development Officers and 2 Neighbourhood Navigators who will report to the relevant Neighbourhood Manager and 4 Neighbourhood link workers.
- 4.45 Through the implementation of the Neighbourhood working model it is anticipated that staff from across the organisation will move into neighbourhood working practices. To what extent this requires physical relocation will be determined as the project rolls out.
- 4.46 The report outlines the need for a community engagement fund of £0.050m. This fund will allow communities to undertake local activities to both improve the local areas and to develop a range of activities and groups to increase the level of community capacity and resilience.

5 Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

- 5.1 The other alternative is not to introduce the Neighbourhood Model. However, this would be acting against the approach with the council's Target Operating Model and would prohibit gaining the benefits that can be achieved through Neighbourhood Working.

6 Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

| Topic | Impact | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Financial (including procurement and social value) | <p>The total cost of additional staff required is expected to be £1,020,991 per annum over a 2 year period. This is detailed in the table below.</p> <table><tr><th>Post Name</th><th>Cost</th><th>No of posts</th><th>Total</th></tr><tr><td></td><th>£</th><td></td><th>£</th></tr><tr><td>Community Development Workers (Grade J)</td><td>46,655</td><td>8</td><td>373,240</td></tr><tr><td>Neighbourhood Navigators (Grade K)</td><td>49,827</td><td>8</td><td>398,616</td></tr><tr><td>Community Safety Co-ordinator (Grade K)</td><td>49,827</td><td>1</td><td>49,827</td></tr><tr><td>Neighbourhood Link workers (Grade K)</td><td>49,827</td><td>4</td><td>199,308</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Total</td><td>1,020,991</td></tr></table> <p>These posts would be recruited to on a 2 year fixed term contract and funded from Transformation Programme funding from the flexible use of capital receipts.</p> <p>It is anticipated that permanent revenue resource will also be required in order to provide the requisite facilities. These will be established as the initiative progresses, and a further report will be presented towards the end of this period outlining the benefits of the project with a proposal to potentially allocate some permanent resource from the MTFP.</p> <p>There will also be a requirement of up to £5m from the Transformation Programme funding within the Council's current Capital Programme. A further report will be brought forward once the detailed plan has been completed.</p> <p>The level of savings achieved cannot currently be determined but will becoming apparent over the initial two year period.</p> | Post Name | Cost | No of posts | Total | | £ | | £ | Community Development Workers (Grade J) | 46,655 | 8 | 373,240 | Neighbourhood Navigators (Grade K) | 49,827 | 8 | 398,616 | Community Safety Co-ordinator (Grade K) | 49,827 | 1 | 49,827 | Neighbourhood Link workers (Grade K) | 49,827 | 4 | 199,308 | Total | | | 1,020,991 |
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| | £ | | £ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Total | | | 1,020,991 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Legal | There are no legal implications | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Risk | There are no significant risks associated with this report | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty | There are no human rights implications. Neighbourhood Working will aid community cohesion through working closely with residents within neighbourhoods. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| and Community Cohesion | |
| Climate Change / Environmental | As part of the Neighbourhood's work, environmental education activity will be an integrated aspect. This will help the council to fulfil its climate change objectives. |
| Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers | A key part of Neighbourhood Working is to support children and young people. Through integrated partnership working this workstream will both provide a better community, with lower levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in which young people can thrive but also have greater focus on resolving complex cases involving young people and children. |
| Data Protection | There are no data protection issues. Joint information sharing protocols are in place with partner organisations. |

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

| Action | Responsible Officer | Deadline |
|---|---------------------|---------------|
| Recruit staff as outlined in the report | Marion Walker | August 2025 |
| Undertake community consultation | Marion Walker | November 2025 |
| Formulate Locality plans | Marion Walker | April 2026 |

Appendices

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Background papers

| Body | Report title | Date |
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