

**EXECUTIVE**

A meeting of the Executive was held on Wednesday 30 April 2025.

**PRESENT:** Mayor C Cooke (Chair) and Councillors P Gavigan, L Henman, J Ryles, P Storey, J Thompson and N Walker

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor I Blades (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** D. Hodgson (Local Democracy Reporting Service)

**OFFICERS:** M Adams, D Alaszewski, S Bonner, C Cannon, G Field, A. Glover, L Grabham, A Humble, G Kirby, E Scollay and A Wilson

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillor T Furness

24/90 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

24/91 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 5 MARCH 2025**

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 5 March 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/92 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE FOR PROPERTY - 2 APRIL 2025**

The minutes of the Executive Sub-Committee for Property meeting held on 2 April 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/93 **MIDDLESBROUGH PRIORITIES FUND**

The Mayor and Executive Member for Finance submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The purpose of the report was to propose the governance arrangements for the use of the £4.367m Middlesbrough Priorities Fund. The fund was created as part of the Budget for 2025/26 which was approved by Full Council on 19 February 2025 in the 2025/26 Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan, and Council Tax setting report.

The report set out how the Council proposed to allocate the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund, and in paragraphs 4.16 to 4.27, set out the initial list of initiatives proposed by the Mayor and the process for identification and approval of future initiatives.

The Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 3 February 2025, announced significant one-off funding for Middlesbrough Council in 2025/26.

In response to the significant level of single year funding, a Middlesbrough Priorities Fund of £4.367m for 2025/26 only was established and approved by Full Council on 19 February 2025 as part of the 2025/26 Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan, and Council Tax setting report.

The intention of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund was to deliver high impact, one-off projects for the benefit of the communities in Middlesbrough. The temporary nature of this funding meant the Council was unable to build it into the ongoing revenue budget. However, elements of it may be announced in the future as being recurrent, in which case those elements will be built into ongoing budgets.

The report outlined the governance arrangements for the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund, and how the Fund would be allocated and how relevant initiatives would be approved.

It was proposed that the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund was split between two elements namely an amount allocated for elected Ward Councillors to bid for, and the remainder for initiatives proposed by the Mayor.

To make sure the Council addressed specific issues at a ward level, a portion of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund would be made available for elected Ward Councillors to submit proposed initiatives, and this would be allocated at a rate of £5,000 per Ward Councillor for projects within their wards. To secure the funding, all Ward Councillors in each Ward must agree the use of the funding within the Ward. This would mean that an amount of £0.235m would be allocated for this with the remaining £4.132m being allocated for initiatives proposed by the Mayor. It was noted this would be in addition to the current Members Small Scheme within the Council's approved Capital Programme and would not replace it.

All funding from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund needed to be in line with set criteria identified in paragraphs 4.8 to 4.11 of the report.

Projects funded from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund had to be one-off revenue-funded activities with no financial recurrence and which aligned with one or more of the cited principles which contributed towards delivery of the Council Plan priorities and aims.

The principles against which proposals would be assessed (in addition to impacting positively on the Council Plan) were:

- Invest to Save.
- Extension of existing work / activity, to release additional benefits.
- Pilots and / or proof of concept activity which will involve a small-scale preliminary project to validate the feasibility before potential full-scale implementation.
- Corporate Peer Review recommendations.

The amount allocated for the Mayor's initiatives would also need to demonstrate the principles addressed and identify the Council Plan priority and aim addressed.

Full documentation would need to be completed for all expenditure from the Fund to ensure a full audit trail was maintained and that all expenditure was in line with the criteria outlined above.

Work had already been undertaken to identify projects for the Mayor's initiatives, having an allocation of £4.132m. A total of £0.680m of one-off revenue funded activities with no financial recurrence had been initially identified which aligned with one or more of the following principles, and which contributed towards delivery of the Council Plan priorities and aims. Details of the initial initiatives proposed were provided in the paragraphs 4.16 to 4.27 of the report below and it was requested that Executive approve these initial initiatives for implementation.

The Deputy Mayor expressed her thanks that the child enrichment team would be created as part of the priorities fund. It was also commented that all Member briefings should be established to both update, and distinguish, between the Priorities Fund and the Members Small Scheme Allocation.

## **OPTIONS**

**The absence of a governance and application process for the use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund could mean that the Fund was not utilised in accordance with that set out in the 2025/26 Budget approved by Council on 19 February 2025. There would also be a risk that the allocated funding was not used in accordance with Best Value considerations.**

**ORDERED that Executive:**

- 1. APPROVES the governance arrangements for the £4.367m Middlesbrough**

### **Priorities Fund**

2. **APPROVES** the proposed allocation of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund between an allocation for elected Ward Councillors (£0.235m) with the remaining amount for initiatives proposed by the Mayor (£4.132m)
3. **APPROVES** the following initial list of initiatives proposed by the Mayor totalling £0.680m with details being provided in paragraphs 4.16 to 4.27 of the report, namely Childhood Enrichment Team (£0.250m); Youth Group seed funding (£0.100m); Shop fronts improvements scheme (£0.180m) and Grass verges replacement (£0.150m).
4. **APPROVES** the process for identification and approval of future initiatives proposed by the Mayor, including the requirement for the Executive to approve budget allocations for future initiatives from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund.

### **REASONS**

**The decision would enable the effective use of the approved Middlesbrough Priorities Fund and ensure Best Value was obtained.**

24/94

### **NEIGHBOURHOODS MODEL**

The Mayor submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the introduction of a Neighbourhood Model as a key part of the Council's core operating model and to agree the funding to support its introduction.

The Council recognised that, in order to provide high quality and modern services within an affordable budget, it needed to transform into an organisation that worked with the community to achieve its aims and objectives. To achieve this the elected Mayor of Middlesbrough had set out his 'Recover, Reset and Deliver' transformation programme.

The Neighbourhood Model was part of the transformation programme and aimed to ensure partners (both internal across Council departments and external partners) worked together, doing things 'with' communities and not 'to' them. The Council also needed to understand what people really wanted and needed to thrive in their lives.

The vision for Neighbourhoods was '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 was routed in the 2024 – 27 Council Plan which set out the Mayor's vision and ambition for the town.

The Neighbourhood Model sought to achieve a joined-up system change centred on a recognition that the Council needed to reconfigure relationships between statutory organisations, voluntary sector, the private sector, residents, and businesses to achieve change by developing collaborative approaches that addressed the underlying causes of community problems. The model aimed to strengthen community resilience with a focus on prevention, building social capital, and making better connections across the community.

As well as focusing on the community and building social capital, the model also recognised that teams across the Council and partners needed to work closely to deliver a multi-agency response and this was best achieved by working together on the ground in each neighbourhood. The model would also see the introduction of several Community Navigator posts that would deliver intensive interventions within a multi-agency environment aiming to intervene at the earliest opportunity.

One of the key principles of the Neighbourhood Model was prevention and early intervention that helped to reduce escalations. The Navigators would work with partners and apply a 'whatever it takes' attitude to engaging and supporting people who needed 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 saved public services money and provided better outcomes for people. The work of the Neighbourhood Model could accelerate this, by reinforcing the support that was available within community settings. The enablers (e.g. policy, research, finance, data, etc.) would also help with evaluation and understanding the business

case for better outcomes and lower spend.

The Navigators would work with partners to identify high intensity users of services and look at how collectively the Council could better support them with community links.

Link Workers would 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.

The Council had recently adopted a tiered Customer Model that aimed to provide an improved journey for the Council's customers, and this would work closely with the Neighbourhood Model to provide customers with a more consistent and streamlined experience.

The current Neighbourhood Model was established in 2024 having learned from the Locality Working pilot (2020 – 2023) and brought together several community and environmental services. Four Neighbourhood Managers were appointed to oversee the work that needed to take place in order to understand the community, learn what needed to change, what role each key stakeholder needed to play (including the community) and help to create the conditions that were needed to facilitate the changes needed.

The Neighbourhood Managers were currently stretched due to the fact they were 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 had been removed from these areas and this needed to be redressed if the model was to be successful. This would be resolved through the addition of the Neighbourhood Safety Co-ordinator and a number of internal reviews.

The Executive Member for Finance welcomed the creation of the Neighbourhoods model and commented that elected Members were a vital stakeholder within the model as they were the link between the Council and communities.

It was also discussed that the Neighbourhoods Model would place communities at the heart of Council work and would help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

## **OPTIONS**

**The other alternative was not to introduce the Neighbourhood Model. However, this would act against the Council's Target Operating Model approach and would prohibit gaining the benefits that could be achieved through Neighbourhood Working.**

**ORDERED that Executive:**

- 1. APPROVES the introduction of the Neighbourhood Model within Middlesbrough.**
- 2. APPROVES 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:**
  - a. 8 Neighbourhood Navigators to take on a caseload (2 in each of the 4 areas) - Grade K**
  - b. 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 o Community Safety Co-ordinator - Grade K**
  - c. 4 Neighbourhood link workers to be embedded on rotation within partner organisations such as schools and hospitals.**
- 3. APPROVES 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.**
- 4. APPROVES 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.**
- 5. APPROVES that annual reports are submitted to Executive to inform them of its achievements and any further development requirements.**

## REASONS

**Neighbourhood Working was a key transformational strategy within the Target Operating Model. Over the medium-term, its intention was to increase efficiency and reduce demand pressure.**

**Neighbourhood Working would provide better outcomes for the citizens of Middlesbrough.**

**Neighbourhood Working would become the operational model that addressed the entrenched challenges within the neighbourhoods of Middlesbrough.**

24/95

## SOCIAL VALUE CHARTER- FIRST ANNUAL UPDATE

The Mayor submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The purpose of the report was to set out the impact of the Council's Social Value Charter following its adoption 12 months ago. Successful delivery of the 42 commitments within the Social Value charter had the potential to have a significant impact on all the Council Plan ambitions. Each of the 42 commitments had been aligned to the Council Plan ambition it most directly linked to, with many cutting across two or more of the ambitions. The table at paragraph 1.1 set out the elements of the commitments within the Charter that had been delivered to date.

As local authorities were required to become increasingly financially self-reliant, many were looking at how to make their limited resources go ever further while still maintaining the quality and breadth of services.

Councils, along with the rest of the public sector were being encouraged to use procurement to achieve wider financial and non-financial outcomes, including improving wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment by making social value a decision-making criterion when awarding contracts.

Continued implementation of a Social Value Charter had the potential to deliver the a number of benefits including encouraging a more diverse range of suppliers to work with the Council and its partners, including the participation of small and medium sized enterprises (SME's), Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, and local suppliers in general as well as promoting fair employment practices that ensured workforce equality and diversity within supply chains.

The Council established a working group to oversee activity to embed the commitments within the Social Value Charter which had met every four weeks during 2024/5. The achievements of that group were summarised in section one of the report and the table in the report set out the planned activity over the next 12 months to ensure it continued to drive implementation of the Charter. Those activities included:

- Explore opportunities to seek a town wide systematic approach to social value exploitation within partnership working across the town through the re-established Town Board for partnership working.
- Reflect the new Procurement Act Social Value obligations and within Council action to exploit opportunities and consider the national model.
- Launch the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Support a bid for funding to improve support to international families to access employment opportunities by assisting them to get qualifications achieved in their home countries, recognised.
- Reestablishing provision of meaningful work experience opportunities within the Council.
- Use the increased capacity within the Procurement team to increase visibility of social value achieved through procurement and strengthen monitoring of compliance.

Work with communities had identified there was a significant number of people that wanted to volunteer in outdoor activities such as street cleaning/litter picking. They could see an instant benefit to their voluntary work, as well as getting the opportunity to meet up outdoors with likeminded people and undertake some physical activity. Volunteers could also bring children

and get them involved.

The Deputy Mayor queried if social value could include work experience of schools. The Mayor responded that the impact section of Executive reports needed to reflect such things going forward.

## **OPTIONS**

**The Council could choose not to continue to deliver the commitments in its Social Value Charter. It would still be compliant with its duties in relation to Best Value. This was not recommended as an option as the Council would miss the opportunity to deliver the wider benefits to the organisation and the town that could be achieved through social value, while still achieving Best Value from its commissioning and procurement activity.**

**AGREED that Executive:**

- 1. NOTE the progress made in the last 12 months to implement the commitments set out in the Social Value Charter as set out in section one of the report**
- 2. ENDORSE the continued implementation of activity to embed the charter over the next 12 months, which is summarised in section four for the report.**

## **REASONS**

**Social Value had the potential to release millions of pounds of public money for community benefit and support regeneration of the town. It encouraged smarter spending to not only deliver a proposed service but also addressed social, economic, and environmental issues in the local community. Continued implementation of the commitments in the Charter would ensure the Council's significant procurement spend had a positive, measurable impact on the communities it served.**

24/96

## **RESETTING THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO TRANSFORMATION AND DELIVERY OF THE COUNCIL PLAN**

The Mayor submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The purpose of the report was to set out the proposed direction of travel in relation to the Council's Recover, Reset, Deliver transformation programme.

Middlesbrough Council's transformation programme was agreed in the report submitted to Council on 27 March 2024 entitled, "Approach to Transformation of Middlesbrough Council". The report set out the proposed direction of travel in relation to the Council's Recover, Reset, Deliver transformation programme.

Though improved, the Council's financial position remained challenging. It was still true that the Council must change the way it delivered services and engaged with the community, to reduce costs, maintain return on investment and improve outcomes for residents.

Having progressed the initial transformation themes for approximately one year, the report, while remaining true to the initial report submitted to Council, highlighted proposed changes to the transformation themes to reflect the Council's current needs; priorities and requirement to harmonise more effectively with the Council Plan 2024-27.

In the report of 27 March 2024 titled Approach to Transformation of Middlesbrough Council, the organisation's structure for our initial phase of transformation was established and this identified the key thematic areas for transformation which included:

- Adults
- Children's
- Property
- Customer

A programme Board, led by a member of the Leadership team was established for each of the thematic areas and a portfolio of transformation projects was initiated. The thematic

programme boards worked alongside the Programme Management Office and fed into the Corporate Transformation Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, to co-ordinate progress across the Council.

At the outset of the transformation programme, the acuity of the Council's financial challenge compelled the Council to minimise financial risk in all activities; in practice this meant there were limitations on the Council's ability to take the managed risks that accompanied the fundamental transformation of service delivery.

The Council's current portfolio contained over sixty initiatives, many of which were important continuous improvement activities or savings rather than fundamental transformation. This distinction mattered because true transformation changed how the Council operated at a fundamental level - redesigning services around residents' needs, adopting new ways of working, and shifting from reactive to preventative approaches with a clear focus on the delivery of outcomes for our community. It also meant continuous improvement enhanced existing services and processes - making them more efficient, responsive, and cost-effective within our current ways of working.

In line with discussions with both the Middlesbrough Independent Improvement Advisory Board (MIIAB), which had been stood down, and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team, there was a recognised need for an additional "Transformation Lead" role working to the Director of Finance and Transformation. It was anticipated this role would identify the inter-dependencies and opportunities across the transformation themes to act effectively as a "design authority", ensuring all elements of the transformation programme remained connected and consistent with the Council's aims and plans. It was proposed, therefore, that this role would be put in place for an initial two-year period using Flexible Use of Capital Resource (FUoCR) funding.

It was therefore proposed that the Council's reset Transformation Portfolio would focus on four key programmes that directly supported delivery of the vision articulated in the Council Plan 2023-27 - making Middlesbrough a thriving, healthier, safer, and more ambitious place.

## **OPTIONS**

**In principle the transformation portfolio could have remained as initially established. However, the nature of the projects with Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care were predominantly in the nature of incremental service improvements in line with their respective improvement plans. This was no less important than transformation but was qualitatively different from the narrative and communication plan that would be developed to support the reset transformation themes.**

**ORDERED that Executive:**

- 1. APPROVES the proposed changes to the structure of transformation themes as outlined below.**
- 2. APPROVES the realignment of transformation themes with the Council Plan 2024-27.**
- 3. APPROVES the recruitment of a Head of Transformation.**
- 4. APPROVES the establishment of Continuous Improvement Team.**

**AGREED that the Executive:**

- 1. NOTES that the transformation of Council services remained critical to achieving service improvements from a lower cost base to stabilise the Council's financial position and achieve financial sustainability over the medium to long term.**

## **REASONS**

**The previous year had been one of building necessary foundations for Middlesbrough Council. It faced significant challenges head-on, making difficult but necessary decisions to secure its financial future. The lifting of the Government's Best Value Notice marked a significant milestone in that journey - not just as a technical**

achievement, but as recognition of the hard work and dedication shown by everyone across the organisation. Middlesbrough Council stood at a pivotal moment in its history; the decisions it made and the actions it took over the next three years would shape the town's future for generations to come. The Council had a unique opportunity to transform Middlesbrough into a place where everyone could thrive, and the Council needed to ensure absolute focus on delivery of the Council Plan.

24/97

## **DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health submitted a report for Executive consideration. The purpose of the report was to set out how we work together collectively to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities. It highlighted the different experiences of health and illness across South Tees and the key challenges that were faced.

The Report used the experience and learning from the You've Got This (YGT) programme which was a Sport England funded Place Partnership that had challenged traditional ways of working over the last six years. The programme took a place-based systems approach driven by insight and learning, collaboration and distributed leadership, framed within the context of physical activity.

There were several learning points detailed at paragraph 3.1 in the report which aimed to extract the learning of value to a much broader context than the work to create and support "Active Lives as a Way of Life". Those learning points included:

- a) Leadership was often considered in a hierarchical sense, with the value and importance of leadership perceived to increase moving up the hierarchy. The You've Got This Programme had demonstrated that different types of leadership existed throughout organisations and in communities and influencing leadership much more broadly was necessary to achieve change within and across organisations.
- b) Traditional partnership models of delivery that focused on compliance and accountability could often exclude creativity and discovery as well as building shared ownership. These models could drive a transactional approach and miss the opportunity to develop relationships within and between people in organisations that could also influence behaviours beyond the immediate work. This in turn could open new and different areas to progress the aspirations of the partnership. Engagement of the leadership of the "horizontals" was important.
- c) To achieve system-change the Council needed to pay attention to organisational policies, processes and structures and how they promoted or acted against achieving desired outcomes. For example, competitive procurement processes were often a barrier to collaboration, pitting potential partners against each other, rather than encouraging them to combine their strengths. Deeper consideration of those policies, processes and organisational structures and their impact on achieving system change is necessary to fully realise the benefits of partnership working.

## **OPTIONS**

There were no other options put forward as part of the report.

## **AGREED that Executive:**

1. **NOTES and consider the learning detailed in the report as a set of principles to inform the development of transformation programmes and shape the development of a future-ready organisation.**
2. **NOTES and consider the learning detailed in the report to support understanding of how the Council could work more effectively together across agencies and communities to achieve the improvements in wellbeing articulated in the Mission-led Health and Wellbeing Strategy.**

## **REASONS**

**The learning identified in the Report will contribute to the development of transformation programmes and shape the development of a future-ready organisation.**



**Learning from the You Got This programme, which had been developed over six years, challenging traditional ways of working, taking a place-based systems approach driven by insight and learning, collaboration and distributed leadership will support delivery of the Middlesbrough Council Plan 2024-2027.**

24/98

## **THRIVE AT FIVE**

The Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval of the Council's involvement with Thrive at Five as detailed in the report. The decision required an Executive decision in line with the constitution at section 6.38.1 (b).

Thrive at Five was a registered national charity that aimed to help children in the early years develop strong foundations for life and learning. They built capacity in communities by supporting parents and carers and enabled collaboration across the public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve sustainable change in early years outcomes. They were a place-based initiative, bringing significant resource and capacity to the areas within which they worked. They operated in areas where the Local Authority worked as a key partner and were pathfinding the development of an approach and a replicable model that could be implemented across the country.

Thrive at Five were currently working in Stoke-on-Trent and Redcar & Cleveland, as their first and second pathfinders respectively. They were now looking for another area to partner with to deliver a pathfinder. The report outlined the rationale for Middlesbrough agreeing to work with Thrive at five.

The quality of a child's early experience was vital for their future, as children that started school developmentally ready would have a happier, healthier life. Conversely those that started behind fell further behind as they progressed through school. School readiness was shaped by many interrelated factors such as the effects of poverty, the impact of high-quality early education and care, and the influence of 'good parenting'.

In Middlesbrough a significant number of children started school behind their peers without the skills necessary to flourish at school. The average figure hid significant variances between areas of Middlesbrough that contributed to the inequalities experienced. In some Middlesbrough communities it was more likely that a child would not be ready for school on starting at Reception.

The attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers had continued to grow over the last 20 years, particularly in locations where poverty was at its highest, like Middlesbrough, where significant socio-economic challenges had driven inequalities in attainment in recent years.

Parents and carers, and their children, often struggled because the system of support around them in their community was fragmented. A 2021 Government review reported "The Start for Life offer is still patchy, is not joined up, and is not easily accessible for parents, making it almost impossible for them to navigate the system". Strategies for support were often developed in a piecemeal fashion, without sufficient reference to what the evidence and data, including, critically, the views of parents, said about needs and how best to address them.

Thrive at Five saw Middlesbrough as a good fit with their ethos as they wanted to work in areas where there was a driver of disadvantaged inequalities in levels of child development and strong local system leadership and commitment. As a local area Middlesbrough had a strong commitment to improve outcomes in the early years, and therefore aligned well strategically with Thrive at Five. Whilst there had been some progress, it had been difficult to bring about significant and lasting change to the abilities of children starting school. To improve outcomes for children there was a need for a collective effort with the public, voluntary and private sector working more closely together and with better connection to families and the local community. This was exactly what Thrive at Five aimed to achieve.

It was commented that the agenda for the meeting of Executive was focused on investing on young people. However, this was important given the statistics showing a 40% school

readiness gap between certain areas of the town. This initiative, alongside programmes such as SHIFT, would help reduce this.

It was also commented that children and young people had not featured prominently on the policy agenda for the previous 14 years and this needed addressing. The approach detailed in the report relied on the knowledge and expertise of communities. Which was vital to the programme success.

The Mayor suggested that recommendation three in the report be changed to six-monthly rather than annual.

## **OPTIONS**

**If Middlesbrough Council chose not to enter into a partnership and do nothing, it pass-up the opportunity to bring an additional £3m of funding to narrow the outcome gap in school readiness.**

**The commitment from Thrive at Five to work with Middlesbrough was an opportunity to bring in investment, capacity and expertise to bring about positive and lasting change for children in the early years which would ultimately reduce the demand for more costly services and intervention in later life.**

**ORDERED that Executive:**

- 1. APPROVES the amendment to recommendation three of the report from an annual update to a bi-annual update.**
- 2. APPROVES the investment into the partnership model with Thrive at Five.**
- 3. APPROVES in principle, to enter into the five-year Partnership Agreement with Thrive at Five subject to legal and finance review and approval.**
- 4. APPROVES, in accordance with the agreed amendment; to receive a bi-annual update of progress.**

## **REASONS**

**The Health and Wellbeing Strategy had adopted a mission-led approach, where each mission was a response to a significant local challenge, where innovation, working together and aligning resources had a big part to play in driving large-scale change. Missions could not be resolved by any single agency acting in isolation. Each mission had a set of ambitious goals that further articulate and explain that mission.**

**The mission, “We will narrow the attainment gap between children growing up in disadvantage and the national average” included two goals on children’s attainment, the first one being to “eliminate the school readiness gap between those born into deprivation and their peers”.**

**The Middlesbrough Council Plan 2024-2027 included an aim to improve attainment in education and skills. There were wide inequalities in the abilities of children starting school in Middlesbrough. The gap in development at Reception age widened as children progressed through the school system. Improving the overall school readiness and reducing the gap in attainment was critical to improving attainment on leaving school.**

**Whilst there has been some progress, it had been difficult to bring about significant and lasting change to the abilities of children starting school. To improve outcomes for children there was a need for a collective effort with the public, voluntary and private sector working more closely together and with better connection to families and the local community. This was exactly what Thrive at Five aimed to achieve.**

**The Thrive at Five model was a partnership approach, with Thrive at Five bringing expertise, enthusiasm and resources. The proposed Council investment would leverage in twice as much additional investment from Thrive at Five.**

The Executive Member for Children's Services submitted a report for Executive consideration.

The purpose of the report was to seek Executive's approval to support Children's Services change in its approach to one which focused on prevention and that the remaining capital funding of £3.253m identified for 2026/27 would no longer be required.

In February 2023, a report was presented to Executive which laid out a plan to make savings in Children's Services by increasing the number of residential and supported accommodation places provided internally by Middlesbrough Council, thereby reducing the spend on external placements. The report entitled "Revenue Budget, Council Tax, Medium Term Financial Plan, and Capital Strategy 2023/24" submitted to Council on 27 February 2023 provided £4.5m of capital investment funding to help support the achievement of the plan and the associated savings.

By February 2024, it was clear that the delivery of the plan was being hampered by the cost of refurbishment of several identified buildings which were higher than expected and made proceeding unviable.

The report presented to Executive on 28 February 2024 (listed at Appendix one of the report) updated the three workstreams contained in the earlier plan in an attempt to get the savings back on track. Those workstreams were Capital Developments - In-house Children Residential Homes; Partnership Commissioned Arrangements; and Optimising in-house resources.

Workstream one focused on using capital funding to purchase properties allowing the Council to open more homes; workstream two included plans to partner with commissioned providers to complement the residential and supported accommodation placements for Middlesbrough children and workstream three was focused on selling beds to other Council's in return for income.

In light of all of the information to hand, it was decided to cease work on workstream one. It was also felt the Council was not in a position to progress with workstream three, which meant both associated savings were at risk, and this was subsequently reported in line with the PMO process and budget reporting.

The move to a prevention focus would also review the use of unregulated accommodation for Middlesbrough children and young people, ensuring the Council had sufficiency in other placement opportunities to avoid continued use. It was hoped that Workstream 2 commissioning of more supported placements will offer one route to assist in this matter as well as trying to understand why unregulated placements are being relied on so that changes to delivery models in our homes can be considered.

Members discussed the change in focus detailed in the report and how Children's Services needed to adapt to changing circumstances. It was also commented that innovative work was being undertaken in Children's Services which was evident from budget clinic exercises. It was clarified that the provision of residential homes was still part of Children's Services service offer, and that the change in direction detailed in the report would support this.

The Mayor expressed his thanks to all officers and Members involved in the creation of the report and noted the improvements that had been made in Children's Services.

## **OPTIONS**

**The work detailed in the report was being carried out and future options would be presented once plans were confirmed in order to seek appropriate governance approval.**

**ORDERED that Executive:**

- 1. APPROVES a change in approach to focus on prevention**
- 2. APPROVES that Capital of £3.253m in 2026/27 is no longer required.**

## **REASONS**

The Service was now on its journey to embed a focus of working in a preventative delivery model, which in turn would reduce the need for placements especially residential. This in turn meant the plans for internal growth were no longer fit for purpose and capital funding was no longer required. The tables at paragraphs 3.2 I the report detailed placement types for children and young people in care. The table below shows the breakdown of placement type for the 97 children and young people in residential care.

Children in Care Population had reduced from 528 to 500. There had been 28 children less in care during this period.

There had been an increase of one child that was now in residential placements. The Council had seen a decrease of 13 Foster Placement over the 15-month period. The suggested new prevention approach of having a programme of work which would focus on Preventing Care Starts and Placement Sufficiency through the Children's Transformation Programme would aim to increase the net number of foster carers, which would support the reduction of residential placements needed. This programme of work would also complement the residential placements governance, to support managing the need and future demand of children's residential home placements.

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## **FINAL REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - WASTE MANAGEMENT**

The former Environment Scrutiny Panel had undertaken a review entitled Waste Management. A copy of the full report was attached. The Scrutiny Panel had made six recommendations upon which a response was sought from the relevant service area.

The Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability and the Director for Environment and Community Services submitted a service response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel. A copy of the action plan was appended to the report.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board introduced the Scrutiny report and advised the review had been undertaken by the previous Environment Scrutiny Panel, whose remit now came with in the Place Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair of the Place Scrutiny Panel presented the Scrutiny report.

The Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability provided a response to the Scrutiny report and presented the Service Response.

The Mayor commented there were new legislative updates concerning waste management and that the introduction of a new waste transfer station was getting nearer. As such a suggestion was made to amend to the Service Response to include additional actions. Those actions were for updates be provided on relevant forthcoming legislative changes associated with waste management and for an update to be provided on timescales for the introduction of the waste transfer station.

The Service Area commented that an Executive report was scheduled for consideration by Executive in the near future regarding the waste management transfer station.

It was also suggested that any updates provided to Executive should also be provided to Scrutiny the Overview and Scrutiny Board or the Place Scrutiny Panel via the Executive Forward plan.

### **ORDERED that Executive:**

1. **APPROVES** the amendments to the action plan (Appendix two) to include an update on relevant legislative changes and timescales on the forthcoming waste transfer station. Such updates would also be communicated to the relevant Scrutiny Panel.
2. **NOTES** the content of the Environment Scrutiny Panel's final report on Waste Management (Appendix one).
3. **APPROVES** The action plan, as amended, developed in response to the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations.

## REASON

**It was a requirement that Executive formally considered the Scrutiny Panel's report and confirmed the service area's response to the accompanying plan.**

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## INTERIM FUNDING AGREEMENT POLICY

The Executive Member for Finance and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health submitted a report for Executive's consideration.

The purpose of the report was to approve the Interim Funding Arrangement Policy which would enable the Council to secure repayment of the short-term loan provided in respect of residential care fees, whilst providing assurances to the resident that their care home fees were being fully covered.

Central Government provided Local Authorities with statutory guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 in respect of a single legal framework for charging for care and support under sections 14 and 17. The Act was supported by the Care and Support Regulations (Statutory Instruments) and Care and Support Guidance and Annexes issued under the Care Act 2014. Local Authorities needed to follow this when charging individuals for their care and support needs.

In the majority of instances, residents who required residential care were able to manage their own affairs or, alternatively, have someone who could legally act on their behalf. In these situations, if someone was unable to pay the required fees for their care, they routinely entered into a DPA which secured payment of their care home fees moving forward. However, there were some instances when residents lacked the mental capacity to act for themselves and did not have someone legally appointed to act on their behalf.

In such circumstances, the Council was required to put alternative funding arrangements in place to support those individuals.

Implementing this Policy would provide short-term funding where a person's ability to pay for care was based upon their capital, such as a property, and where they were unable to enter a DPA or access appropriate funds. The Policy would only apply if someone lacked mental capacity, and another person was applying to become their financial Deputy.

## OPTIONS

**The Council did have the option not to implement the Policy. However, by doing so this would have had a negative impact on the Council as it would not be able to recover care home fees, apply interest, or charge the administrative costs associated with these arrangements.**

**Under the Care Act, the Council had a duty to provide support to residents who were required to go into a care home, including paying care home fees where a resident was unable to access funds. If the Policy was not implemented, the Council would not have had the financial assurance of an Interim Funding Arrangement to secure payment of large debts.**

**ORDERED that Executive:**

- 1. APPROVES the Interim Funding Arrangement Policy to take effect from 7 May 2025.**
- 2. APPROVES the delegated authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and Director of Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Member of Adult Social Care and Executive Member for Finance to make any future minor revisions / modifications to reflect the financial / economic climate and / or statutory guidance changes.**

## REASONS

The policy was a key decision that would impact on two or more wards and as such required Executive approval.

The policy upheld good practice within democratic processes and provided residents with a clear understanding of how short-term funding could be provided to support those in residential care who lack mental capacity to deal with their financial affairs.

The policy would result in no changes to the support provided, however would further strengthen current working arrangements should any queries arise in respect of any financial support available.

The policy provided clarification to residents, and those applying to become their financial Deputy, with simplified and clear details of their financial responsibilities and the support that may be available from Middlesbrough Council.

As the policy would be a working document, it was recommended that delegated authority to the Director of Adult Social Care and Director of Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Member of Adult Social Care and Executive Member for Finance be given to approve future minor modifications to the policy to maintain service operation levels. Failure to keep pace with new legislation or working practices would leave the Council at risk and could result in inconsistent practices.

Until the policy has been formally implemented, special arrangements were being utilised to secure the repayment of debts for residential care. Once the policy was in place, the special arrangements would end. Those with special arrangements in place would be contacted in respect of moving to Interim Funding Arrangements, as per the policy. There was no consequential financial impact on residents following the change from special arrangements to the policy.

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**ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.

All decisions will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) was published unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures.