

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
------------------------------	--

Report of:	Democratic Services
Relevant Executive Member:	Not Applicable
Submitted to:	Children's Scrutiny Panel
Date:	15 July 2025
Title:	Setting the Work Programme 2025/2026 for the Children's Scrutiny Panel
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	A healthy place
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
That the Children's Scrutiny Panel consider and agree its work programme for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year. Once agreed, the work programme will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board, for approval.

Executive summary
<p>The Children's Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider its work programme for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.</p> <p>The primary function of a Scrutiny Panel is to influence the policies and decisions of the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services. It does this by gathering evidence on issues that affect local residents and making informed recommendations based on its findings.</p> <p>Work programmes provide structure to the activity of the Scrutiny Panel and allow for the effective planning and preparation of work. The Panel is asked to select two scrutiny</p>

investigation topics and note the standard agenda items for updates throughout the Municipal Year.

The Scrutiny Panel 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 an influence.
- Are not issues which the Overview and Scrutiny Board or Scrutiny Panels have considered during the last 12 months.
- Do not relate to an individual service complaint.
- Do not replicate matters dealt with by another Council Committee unless the issue deals with procedure.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions.

1.1 Managing an effective work programme is essential to the success of Scrutiny Panels, as it assists with planning and managing the workload, focussing on the Council's ambitions and aims to assist with maximising impact on the Council's performance and outcomes for residents.

1.2 Scrutiny ensures that the decisions taken by the Council and its partners are appropriate. It creates an open and transparent way for Members to shape, question, evaluate and challenge policies, decisions and performance.

1.3 Scrutiny investigations are usually carried out over the course of several meetings, which consider information from relevant sources and examine current policies and practices. At the end of the exercise, a report is prepared which summarises the Scrutiny Panel's findings and puts forward recommendations.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to agree a work programme for the Children's Scrutiny Panel, ensuring scrutiny investigation topics and updates support the delivery of the ambitions of the Middlesbrough Council Plan 2024-27:

Our ambitions	Aims
A successful and ambitious town	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities.</i> - <i>Improve attainment in education and skills.</i> - <i>Ensure housing provision meets local demand.</i>
A healthy Place	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities.</i> - <i>Protect and improve our environment.</i> - <i>Promote inclusivity for all.</i> - <i>Reduce poverty.</i>

Safe and resilient communities	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Support adults to be independent for longer.</i> - <i>Improve transport and digital connectivity.</i> - <i>Promote new ideas and community initiatives.</i> - <i>Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.</i>
Delivering best value	<p><i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Ensure robust and effective corporate governance.</i> - <i>Set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability.</i>

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Children's Scrutiny Panel agrees a work programme for approval by Overview and Scrutiny Board by:

1. Noting the updates / presentations that will be scheduled throughout the Municipal Year.
2. Selecting two scrutiny investigation topics, taking into consideration the suggestions from stakeholders and additional suggestions from Panel Members.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 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.

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 19 March 2025, a new structure for scrutiny arrangements in Middlesbrough was agreed. As a consequence, Middlesbrough Council now operates three Scrutiny Panels for 2025/2026 in addition to its Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel.
- Children's Scrutiny Panel.
- Place Scrutiny Panel.

4.2 For Members' information, the topics and updates considered by the People Scrutiny Panel in 2024/2025, which are relevant to the Children's Services remit, were as follows:

Scrutiny Investigation Topics

Completed	Ongoing	Not Started
Children Missing from Education (CME)	Homelessness	N/A

Updates / Presentations

South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report 2023-24
Tees Suicide Prevention - Strategic Plan 2024-2029

4.3 At the start of every Municipal Year, Scrutiny Panels discuss the topics that they would like to review during the coming year. The Panel is asked to select topics for investigation and to note the updates that will be scheduled as part of the work programme.

4.4 As part of the process for establishing the Panel's work programme, Democratic Services gather information and views from a number of sources. Following an annual consultation exercise which ran between 3 April 2025 and 9 May 2025, several topics were suggested by Councillors, residents, officers, and other stakeholders, which are listed in Appendix 1. Members are advised that the list is not exhaustive and that additional topics can be added and considered at the Scrutiny Panel meeting.

4.5 When considering topics for the work programme, Members need to consider the following to prioritise issues where scrutiny can make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development:

- Does the issue affect a majority of the population of Middlesbrough or specific area?
- Is the issue strategic and significant?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?
- Will it be duplicating some other work?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and others?
- Is it an issue of community concern?
- Are there adequate resources to do the activity well?
- Is the scrutiny activity timely?

4.6 In addition to the selected scrutiny investigation topics, Panel Members are asked to note the following update items which will be presented during the Municipal Year:

	Update
1	South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report
2	Performance data

4.7 In addition to these updates, it was suggested at the 24 June 2025 Panel meeting that Children's Services financial updates also be received during the year. A Councillor also suggested that further information/an update in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the local offer also be provided.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

Ward Members were invited to submit topic suggestions as part of the consultation.

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

No other alternatives are put forward as part of the report.

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Details of Financial impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Legal	Details of Legal impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Risk	Details of Risk impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	Details of Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Reducing Poverty	Details of Reducing Poverty impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Climate Change / Environmental	Details of Climate Change / Environmental impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Details of Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Data Protection	Details of Data Protection impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Approved recommendations to be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board	Democratic Services Officer	21 July 2025

Appendices

1	Suggested Scrutiny Topics for 2025/26
----------	--

Background papers

None.

Contact: Joanne Dixon / Chris Lunn

Email: joanne_dixon@middlesbrough.gov.uk / chris_lunn@middlesbrough.gov.uk