

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Finance and Transformation (s151 Officer) – Andrew Humble
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<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Mayor – Chris Cooke
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
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<b>Date:</b>	16 July 2025
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<b>Title:</b>	Middlesbrough Priorities Fund
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<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	All
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<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will incur expenditure or savings above £250,000 and have a significant impact in two or more wards
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<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Non-urgent report
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<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>																																	
That Executive:																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approves that the second tranche of proposals totalling £1.310m as summarised below and detailed in this report, be funded from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund</li> </ul>																																	
<table> <tr> <th>Proposal</th><th>Amount Requested (£m)</th></tr> <tr> <td>Homeless Intervention Team</td><td>0.100</td></tr> <tr> <td>Iris Programme</td><td>0.032</td></tr> <tr> <td>Domestic Abuse Coordinator</td><td>0.055</td></tr> <tr> <td>AI Interactive 'Coach' (Front Door)</td><td>0.050</td></tr> <tr> <td>Grants for Schools</td><td>0.150</td></tr> <tr> <td>Energy Assessments</td><td>0.015</td></tr> <tr> <td>NEETS Programme</td><td>0.200</td></tr> <tr> <td>Corporate Parenting/Foster Carers Forum and Survivors Panel</td><td>0.020</td></tr> <tr> <td>MUSICINC Growth</td><td>0.075</td></tr> <tr> <td>In-House Arbor Team</td><td>0.370</td></tr> <tr> <td>Multibank</td><td>0.060</td></tr> <tr> <td>Trading Standards</td><td>0.058</td></tr> <tr> <td>Financial Investigator</td><td>0.075</td></tr> <tr> <td>Investment Prospectus</td><td>0.050</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td><b>1.310</b></td></tr> </table>	Proposal	Amount Requested (£m)	Homeless Intervention Team	0.100	Iris Programme	0.032	Domestic Abuse Coordinator	0.055	AI Interactive 'Coach' (Front Door)	0.050	Grants for Schools	0.150	Energy Assessments	0.015	NEETS Programme	0.200	Corporate Parenting/Foster Carers Forum and Survivors Panel	0.020	MUSICINC Growth	0.075	In-House Arbor Team	0.370	Multibank	0.060	Trading Standards	0.058	Financial Investigator	0.075	Investment Prospectus	0.050		<b>1.310</b>	
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### **Executive summary**

- 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.
- Proposals approved in the initial Middlesbrough Priorities Fund report to Executive 30 April 2025 totalled £0.915m
- Following on from the recommendations included in the initial Middlesbrough Priorities Fund report to Executive on 30 April 2025, this report sets out the next tranche of proposals for support from the Fund for approval by Executive. The total of the proposals included in this report total £1.310m.
- Appendix 1 to this report details the budget available, the amount approved to date by Executive, and the amount of uncommitted budget which will be available if all of the proposals in this report are approved for support from the Fund.
- The recommended decision needs to be taken by Executive in line with the governance arrangements outlined in the initial report of 30 April 2025 to ensure effective use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund budget allocation set aside for 2025/26.
- The alternative would be for no further proposals to be submitted. However, the absence of any proposals being submitted for use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund would mean that the Fund is not utilised to its maximum potential provided for in the 2025/26 Budget approved by Council on 19 February 2025

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

- 1.1 The initial Middlesbrough Priorities Fund report to Executive on 30 April 2025 outlined both the governance arrangements and the initial proposals for support from the Fund and recommended that all future requests for support from the Fund be approved by Executive. A standing item has since been added to the Executive agenda for 2025/26 to enable proposals for support from the Fund to be brought forward for consideration and approval by Executive.
- 1.2 Following on from the initial report to Executive on 30 April 2025, this report sets out the next tranche of proposals which are requested to be funded from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund.
- 1.3 As outlined in the report of 30 April 2025, one of the key conditions of all proposals for support from the Fund is that projects must link to one of the thirteen aims of the Council Plan.
- 1.4 The table below demonstrates which of the four Council Plan themes each of the proposals contained in this report links to:

Proposed Scheme	Council Plan elements covered			
	A successful & ambitious town	A healthy place	Safe and resilient communities	Delivering best value
Homeless Intervention Team			✓	
Iris Programme		✓		
Domestic Abuse Coordinator		✓		
AI interactive 'coach' (Front Door)		✓	✓	
Grants for Schools	✓			
Energy Assessments			✓	
NEETS Programme	✓			
Focus Groups and Panels		✓		
MUSICINC Growth	✓			
In-House Arbor Team		✓	✓	
Multibank		✓		
Trading Standards	✓	✓	✓	
Financial Investigator	✓	✓	✓	
Investment Prospectus	✓			

## 2. Recommendations

### 2.1 That the Executive

- Approves that the second tranche of proposals totalling £1.310m as summarised below and detailed in this report, be funded from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund

Proposal	Amount Requested (£m)
Homeless Intervention Team	0.100
Iris Programme	0.032
Domestic Abuse Coordinator	0.055
AI Interactive 'Coach' (Front Door)	0.050
Grants for Schools	0.150
Energy Assessments	0.015
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In-House Arbor Team	0.370
Multibank	0.060
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Financial Investigator	0.075
Investment Prospectus	0.050
	<b>1.310</b>

- Notes that if the proposed schemes included in this report are approved, that the unallocated balance remaining in the Fund will be £2.142m

## 3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 This will enable effective use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund budget allocation set aside for 2025/26 and ensure Best Value is obtained.

## 4. Background and relevant information

4.1 Proposals for funding from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund from Directorates were subject to completion of a pro-forma outlining the proposal and detailing both which of the Council Plan objectives and scheme criteria the proposal linked to. All proposals received from Directorates were added to proposals received from Executive Members, and were collated into an overall 'log' spreadsheet which was assessed by the Mayor,

with support from the Chief Executive, to determine which were to progress for approval by Executive within each tranche and which measures were either of lower priority or could be funded by other means. As signalled in the Executive report of 30 April 2025, following this prioritisation the decision to implement the selected measures, or not, will be taken by Executive. Once implemented the measures will be tracked as part of the Council's performance management framework, including measurement of the impact and outcomes.

4.2 As detailed in the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund report to Executive on 30 April 2025, 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 Fund is to deliver high impact, one-off projects for the benefit of the communities in Middlesbrough.

4.3 Proposals to date which have already been given Executive approval to proceed are set out in the table below:

Proposal	Amount approved (£m)	Date approved
Childhood Enrichment Team	0.250	30/04/2025
Youth Group Seed Funding	0.100	30/04/2025
Shopping Area Improvements Scheme	0.180	30/04/2025
Grass Verges Replacement	0.150	30/04/2025
Ward Councillor Initiatives	0.235	30/04/2025
	<b>0.915</b>	

4.4 This report sets out the next tranche of schemes, totalling £1.310m, which it is proposed will be supported by the Fund. All of these projects are one-off revenue funded activities with no financial recurrence being initially identified, which align with one or more of the principles to be assessed, and which contribute towards delivery of the Council Plan priorities and aims, as outlined in the governance arrangements in the report to Executive on 30 April 2025. More detail can be found within paragraphs 4.5 to 4.18 below.

#### **Homeless Intervention Team**

**£0.100m**

4.5 The funding would support the development of a small intensive intervention team (two posts) to work with the ten most complex individuals currently contributing to a high system cost across numerous stakeholders including health, police and retail. The dedicated posts would be able to spend more time with these individuals identified as requiring support to enable more successful outcomes. The posts would be fixed term for one year as a pilot to determine if this style of intervention can be successful. The initiative should result in a reduction in crime & anti-social behaviour, reduced complaints, and an improved outcome for the affected individuals in terms of housing and stability.

#### **Iris Programme**

**£0.032m**

4.6 Iris is a training programme for general practitioners to identify and support victims of domestic abuse. The funding would enable support for a further year of the programme whilst discussions progress with the Integrated Care Board for mainstream funding. The

programme will facilitate an increase in the number of GP's trained in regard to domestic abuse, and in how to identify and support victims and survivors.

**Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator** **£0.055m**

- 4.7 The funding would enable appointment of a fixed term post of Domestic Abuse Coordinator, to support and track learning and actions from Domestic Homicide Reviews as outlined by the Community Safety Partnership and Internal Audit. The post would be fixed term for one year and beyond that would be considered for mainstream funding from the Medium-Term Financial Plan. The post would enable completion of outstanding actions from all Domestic Homicide Reviews, provide support to the Community Safety Partnership and facilitate improved joint working with Children's Services.

**AI Interactive 'Coach' (Front Door)** **£0.050m**

- 4.8 This proposal is to identify and develop an Artificial Intelligence solution to support the Adult Social Care "front door" as part of the prevention initiative shift. This will be similar to that of "Bridgit Cares" in which individuals will receive personalised interactive support to navigate community connections and alternative solutions rather than entering adult social care for assessment. The funding would be used as seed funding for initial development, the ongoing revenue costs can be met from the revenue costs linked to the existing Middlesbrough Matters system. This new development would replace Middlesbrough Matters which is an outdated system which is difficult to navigate. The initiative would reduce contacts 'at the front door', leading to reduction in service users of Adult Social Care.

**Grants for Schools** **£0.150m**

- 4.9 This proposal is to provide grants for schools to contribute to books, sports equipment and performing arts activities.

**Energy Assessments** **£0.015m**

- 4.10 This proposal is to cover the costs of energy assessments for faith and community buildings, to aid them being able to prioritise capital spend and become more sustainable.

**NEETS Programme** **£0.200m**

- 4.11 This proposal is a project led by Middlesbrough College and is an initiative to support those who are not currently in employment, education or training to progress. The programme requires initial first year funding but will be self-sustaining from then on, and will be a rent payer, providing an income stream for the Council.

**Focus Groups and Panels** **£0.020m**

- 4.12 This proposal is to support the development of forums for Corporate Parenting and Foster Carers, and the creation of a Survivors Panel. The funding would enable the groups to be run on a trial basis, and dependent upon success, potential ongoing funding would be considered.

### **MUSICINC Growth**

**£0.075m**

- 4.13 This proposal is to enable replacement of musical instruments and also to enhance the offer currently provided by the Service.

### **In-house Arbor Team**

**£0.370m**

- 4.14 This proposal is to cover the staffing, fuel and replacement equipment costs necessary to enable an in-house Arbor Team to be established. The proposal would provide resilience to manage the Council's own tree stock without the need for external consultants. It would also enable the Council to better monitor tree standards and safety across the town, with enhanced adherence to tree management and maintenance legislation, and management of tree disease such as ash die back more effectively. An in-house Arbor Team would enable the Council to conduct its own tree surveys for monitoring purposes on a more frequent, pro-active basis. It would also provide resilience in terms of responding to reactive tree safety concerns, reducing the risks to the public by means of better tree management and more proactive approach to tree stock.

### **Multibank**

**£0.060m**

- 4.15 This proposal is to provide an upfront payment to cover support costs for the Tees Valley Multibank for years two and three. Each of the Tees Valley authorities make contributions to the initiative which is a central hub which collects and then distributes essential items such as warm clothes, hygiene products, school uniforms, crockery, and household furnishings to people in need. The Council made a contribution of £0.025m in 2024/25 for year 1 of the initiative.

### **Trading Standards**

**£0.058m**

- 4.16 This proposal is to secure an additional Trading Standards Officer on a fixed term basis to increase proactive work on product safety, counterfeit products and illicit tobacco products, including further and sustained operations targeting repeated offenders and premises, with enhanced partnership working with HMRC, Immigration and the Police.

The post will also undertake duties relating to prevention of underage sales including test purchasing and inspections, and preparation work for the new laws for tobacco products and vapes, fair trading and digital markets.

### **Financial Investigator**

**£0.075m**

- 4.17 This proposal is to fund an Accredited Financial Investigator post on a fixed term basis to increase the financial investigation capabilities of the Council, in order to improve criminal case outcomes, increase civil debt recovery and increase asset recovery under Proceeds of Crime Act. The aim of the post is to improve the information available thereby improving outcomes of investigations into offences through more effective legal cases and increased levels of civil debt recovery. This, plus subsequent confiscation proceedings following conviction, should serve as an effective deterrent for offending and additionally improve compliance levels in relation to product safety, fair trading, illicit

tobacco products, counterfeit goods, health and safety, food safety, planning and crime and disorder.

## Investment Prospectus

**£0.050m**

- 4.18 The proposal would enable the Council to commission expert capacity to prepare an economic strategy, town centre plan and investment prospectus. This will be achieved by the development of a joint set of investment priorities with anchor organisations in the Town.

## 5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

- 5.1 There is no specific ward member engagement for the proposals contained in this report.

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

- 6.1 The alternative would be for no further proposals to be submitted. However, the absence of any proposals being submitted for use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund would mean that the Fund is not utilised to its maximum potential provided for in the 2025/26 Budget approved by Council on 19 February 2025.

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

Topic	Impact																		
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	<p>The use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund should have a positive impact on Social Value as the initiatives are required to link to the Council’s Council Plan. The table below shows the balance which would remain on the Fund, should the proposals included in this report be approved:</p> <table><tr><td></td><td>£m</td><td>£m</td></tr><tr><td>Budget</td><td></td><td>4.367</td></tr><tr><td>Approved in Executive Report 30/04/25</td><td>0.915</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Requested for approval Executive Report 16/07/25</td><td><u>1.310</u></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td><u>2.225</u></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>2.142</td></tr></table>		£m	£m	Budget		4.367	Approved in Executive Report 30/04/25	0.915		Requested for approval Executive Report 16/07/25	<u>1.310</u>				<u>2.225</u>			2.142
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		<u>2.225</u>																	
		2.142																	
Legal	The recommendations will be in accordance with the Council’s Constitution and Financial Regulations.																		
Risk	The recommendations should mitigate the risk of not providing Best Value in the use of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund.																		
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	There are no potential applicable issues to consider within this report affecting Human Rights or the Equality Duty. The application of some of the proposed initiatives may have a positive effect on Community Cohesion.																		

Reducing Poverty	Some of the proposals for the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund contained within this report may be relevant to these groups. In addition, future proposals may be relevant to these groups.
Climate Change / Environmental	Some of the proposals for the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund contained within this report may be relevant to these groups. In addition, future proposals may be relevant to these groups.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Some of the proposals for the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund contained within this report may be relevant to these groups. In addition, future proposals may be relevant to these groups.
Data Protection	There are no concerns that the proposals within the report will impact negatively on data protection or GDPR.

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

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
If approved by Executive on 16 July 2025 Directors will be informed that for the initiatives proposed in this report implementation can commence.	Director of Finance & Transformation (s151 Officer)	17/07/25 (subject to call in)
Further initiatives for the remaining funding will be submitted to Executive for approval	Director of Finance & Transformation (s151 Officer)	31/03/26
Monitoring of the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund to be included in the quarterly budget monitoring reports throughout 2025/26	Director of Finance & Transformation (s151 Officer)	30/06/26
Identify within existing resources, support to monitor impact and outcomes of approved schemes and feed back to Executive	Director of Legal & Governance / Head of Strategy, Business & Customer	31/03/26

### **Appendices**

<b>1</b>	Middlesbrough Priorities Fund 2025/26 – Summary of Schemes Approved and Proposed to date
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## Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Middlesbrough Priorities Fund	30 April 2025

**Contact:** Andrew Humble – Director of Finance and Transformation (s151 Officer)  
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