

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Philippa Storey - Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture

DATE OF MEETING: 15 October 2025

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on areas of activity within my portfolio including performance against strategic priorities.

COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES

- *Successful & Ambitious Town*
- *A Healthy Place*

1. HIGHLIGHTS

Update:

Education and Partnerships

1.1 Family Hubs

Work is progressing on Middlesbrough's Family Hubs, with refurbishments now complete at West Middlesbrough and Park End Hubs. Services continue to be delivered across all sites and planning is now underway to refresh the offer at our Best Start Family Hubs to bring them in line with new national guidance. The new guidance will ensure that Best Start Family Hubs address school readiness to improve a child's Good Level of Development (GLD) by providing holistic, family-wide support and moving beyond just early education. This contrasts with the narrower, child-focused approach of previous models and acknowledges that a child's readiness is deeply influenced by their entire home environment. This takes the model back to the original ambitions of Sure Start.

Key changes are being introduced to Family Hubs to significantly expand their reach, strengthen integrated services, and improve data and digital capabilities. The current government's Best Start in Life strategy is driving these changes, aiming to establish up to 1,000 "Best Start Family Hubs" across every Local Authority in England by 2028. This builds on and extends the previous Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. This will include a family hubs delivery grant and funding for the delivery of parenting and home learning interventions to support the 0–5 period. There will be a particular focus, in the first two years.

1.2 Education Alliance Board

The board is developing at great pace and much work has been undertaken to develop action plans to drive forward the agreed priorities of:

- School readiness

- Attendance
- Suspension and exclusions
- NEETs

The first meeting of the academic year took place on Friday 19th September and focused on understanding 2025 attainment outcomes and workstream updates.

There is great enthusiasm and commitment within the education community and partners in ensuring that collectively, we can and will make a difference. Relationships have blossomed and sharing best practice meetings have taken place enabling school to school support. From this, schools and partners have planned further meetings aimed at supporting the development of the priorities as well as addressing any emerging issues.

1.3 Exclusions and suspensions

Last academic year we saw a small reduction in the number of permanent exclusions from Middlesbrough schools. This is the third year in a row that the number has decreased, and although levels are still higher than regional and national rates, the work that is being done locally to tackle exclusion is starting to have an impact.

Suspension rates also remain high, but the number of days lost to learning has reduced significantly meaning that although suspension continues to be used as a sanction for behaviour, children are not spending as much time out of school losing learning.

This impact is likely in part due to recent increases in intervention capacity in alternative provision, along with the continued work of schools via the inclusion partnership and education alliance board to address exclusion. The Local Authority has been invited to discuss the approach to exclusions at a national Council for Disabled Children webinar which is taking place in November.

1.4 Grants for Schools

9 grant applications have been made by schools so far and I look forward to more coming forward.

1.5 Schools received an email in September offering them the opportunity to apply for a small grant to support with the purchase of equipment such as sports, arts, play equipment and books. To date we have received 14 applications. These are from:

- Parkend Primary
- Acklam Whin
- Archibald
- Discovery Special School
- Lingfield
- Lift North Ormesby
- River Tees
- Sacred Heart
- St Augustine's
- St Bernadettes
- St Gerards
- Sunnyside
- Thorntree
- Whinney Banks

1.6 South Tees Youth Justice Inspection - result to follow

Culture

1.7 Middlesbrough Museums

Thanks to successful funding application to the Arts Council England's Museums Renewal Fund programme, the Museum Service has been awarded a grant of £239,551 to support a range of improvements to the visitor experience including new digital interactives, signage and creative programming, plus the relocation of the Walkabout Gallery at the Cook so that it becomes part of the main visitor route. It also includes funds for staff to open the Cook for a period over the winter, marketing of the museum service, the establishment of a volunteer programme across the two museums, and a contribution towards the feasibility work being undertaken on a new Captain Cook Museum at Stewart Park.

The supported winter opening of the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum will run from 3 October 2025 to 25 January 2026, with a short closure for Christmas between 25 December 2025 and 3 January 2026. During the new opening period, the museum will be open to the public from 10:00 – 16:00, Tuesday to Sunday.

I'd like to thank JR and the museum team for all the effort and work they have put in.

1.8 Town Hall

Programming highlights for September included:

- Southpaw Rehearsals
- Fenwicks Christmas Shop window rehearsals
- Jimmy Carr – two sold out shows
- Smoggy Queens Series 2 Filming
- Tees Dance & Anthony Lo-Giudice Dance Showcase & Performance
- Middlesbrough Art Week Launch night
- Middlesbrough Pride 2025

Upcoming Highlights – October & November 2025:

- Comedy – Georgie Carroll, Jason Manford, Rhod Gilbert, Iain Stirling, Jimeoin
- Theatre – Sherlock Holmes Theatre Go Round with Middlesbrough Theatre
- Music – Lightning Seeds, Elvana, Skindred, The Younguns, Fishermans Friends
- Taste Of Africa Showcase
- Classical Season 25/26 Launch & Classical Café
- An Audience with – Bernie Slaven, Brett Tippie
- Middlesbrough College graduations
- Middlesbrough Christmas Light Switch On

The Town Hall takes a great of management and I'd like to thank Kesia and the team for their amazing hard work.

1.9 Theatre

1.9.1 In September, the Theatre welcomed back two international companies who have placed the theatre firmly on their touring circuit such as The Crown Ballet with Swan Lake

which will return in November with another perennial and personal favourite, The Nutcracker.

1.9.2 The month also saw the first visit by Northern drama company Thunder Road with their visually stunning production of an original sci-fi horror “The Void” which attracted an encouraging and appreciative audience.

1.9.3 Highlights in October include the classic 60s radio comedy Round the Horne and The WOW Show (Women of the World) on its first visit to the North-East, whilst in November the theatre sees the return of the joyful adaptation of A Christmas Carol as well as Count Arthur Strong with his unique take on the Dickens classic.

1.9.4 Local amateur companies are also well-represented with Tees Valley Gilbert and Sullivan Society’s production of the rarely-performed The Sorcerer, Teesside Musical Theatre Company’s 42nd Street and Middlesbrough Little Theatre’s production of The Laramie Project – a bold choice for the company.

The year is rounded off by the annual pantomime- Goldilocks and the Three Bears – which is being presented for the first time since 1999 and is not to be missed.

1.9.5 Schools who have currently applied for the Theatre Grant:

Outwood Academy Ormesby	Confirmed Booking 18 March
Priory Wood	Confirmed Booking 4 June
Archibald Primary	Pencilled 10 June
Tees Valley Education	Pencilled 16-17 June
St Edwards	Confirmed Booking 15 & 18 June
Sacred Heart Primary	Confirmed Booking 22-23 June
Pallister Park	Pencilled 30 June
Linthorpe Primary	Confirmed Booking 1-2 July

Quotes from Schools regarding Schools Theatre Grant:

It absolutely filled me with joy. It’s wonderful to read the Council share their recognition of how ‘truly life-changing and inspirational’ participation in the performing arts can be. – Lisa Connor, Priory Woods.

I have spoken to our RSC partner and we would love to use the theatre for our festival. – Jackie Blyth, Archibald Primary.

I would just like to say again a massive thank you for the staff and support for our production of Shrek. It was just magical and I am sure will be remembered by staff and children for a long time. It is wonderful to hear that you have remaining funds to cover the rest of Shrek- this really does go a long way to ensure we can do even more activities like this. The production was a great success with 150 primary and secondary children involved. – Louise Stockdale – Tees Valley Education.

Completely agree about being a life-changing experience and so glad that it has been recognised by the town. – Kerry Mallam, Sacred Heart.

Events

1.10 Community Action Day, Sunday 14 September

As part of their We Shall Be programme, Navigator North held a Community Action Day in the historic station quarter. The purpose of the day was to clean up the area with the support of volunteers and partners. 20 bags of rubbish were filled, planters refreshed, the team from STACK did a brilliant job pressure washing the square, and Council teams commenced repainting of the railings, with more to be completed over the coming weeks.

This focus on improving how people experience the town, is also behind the public artworks currently going into the same area. Also funded through the We Shall Be programme, new murals have appeared on the A66 bridge over Albert Road and a new large-scale sculpture by Stuart Langley on the rail station concourse. All of these pieces have been shaped by community input over the past few months and reflect the people of Middlesbrough's stories and ambitions for their town.



Left: Volunteers at the Community Action Day. Right: Stuart Langley's 'Hold Me & Show Me You Love Me'

1.11 Parking Day, Friday 19 September

Teesside-based creative placemaking and fabrication studio SAWDUST presented Middlesbrough's first [PARK\(ing\) Day](#) on Albert Road — a one-day transformation of a town centre parking space into a temporary public spot for creativity, music, and conversation. Part of a global movement reimagining urban streets, the project invited passers-by to take part in a playful, community-led space built with local makers. Parking Day was made possible thanks to support from Borderlands and our amazing Town Centre Team of Michelle Shelton and Tom Rhind.

1.12 Middlesbrough Pride, Saturday 27 September

Middlesbrough Pride 2025 brought a colourful celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community to the heart of the town, with the Town Hall team and Curious Arts.

The Town Hall hosted a vibrant Pride market with local support services, businesses and makers. An array of artists performed on the market stage and the Pride stage. There were also family friendly art workshops, which were excellent.

A Pride Parade made its way around the town centre where other events were also taking place at the Holiday Inn Express, MIMA and Centre Square, where there was an outdoor theatre performance of the 'Turkey and the Caterpillar'.

1.13 Middlesbrough Art Week, Thursday 25 September – Saturday 4 October

Middlesbrough Art Week kicked off with a spectacular launch night on Thursday 25 September with events and installations taking place across the town, including a performance from A Man Called Adam at the Town Hall. The festival runs until Saturday 4 October.

2. THE TIME AHEAD

Update:

2.1 Upcoming Events

Saturday 4 October 2025	Orange Pip Market (Baker & Bedford Street, & Albert Road) – weather dependent
Sunday 12 October 2025	Trafalgar Day Parade & Service (Civic Event)
Saturday 25 October 2025	HMS Jupiter 50 th Anniversary Service (Civic Event)
Saturday 25 October 2025	Diwali (Centre Square)
Thursday 6 November 2025	Laying of the First Poppy (Civic Event)
Sunday 9 November 2025	Remembrance Day (Civic Event)
Tuesday 11 November 2025	Armistice Day (Civic Event)
Sat 22 – Sun 23 November 2025	Shine on Boro (Town Centre)
Sunday 23 November 2025	Middlesbrough Lights Switch On
Fri 28 – Sun 30 November 2025	Nightfall at Stewart Park

**All Civic Events of this nature will take place at Middlesbrough Cenotaph*

I'd like to thank Lisa Templeman for her exceptional hard work and welcome to the events team Ellen Howarth - Creative Programmes Officer, and Louise Williams, Events Assistant Apprentice.

2.2 Teesside Archives

At the forthcoming JAC (Joint Archives Committee) meeting, the committee will be asked to agree an interim plan for the service whilst work continues on a longer-term development plan following the completion of the Tees Valley Heritage Feasibility study, commissioned by TVCA but with no financial support from TVCA in place to implement any of the suggestions.

As the lead authority we are proposing a number of interim arrangements for the service including:

- Agreeing a new 3-5 year Service Level Agreement
- Extending the current collections contract with Restore to July 2028
- Agreeing annual targets for outreach programme delivery in each of the four boroughs
- Pursuing the conversation with TVCA and OPCC and Mayoral Development Corporations about becoming a partner in Teesside Archives

- Developing the relationship between Teesside Archives and Tees Valley Museum Group NPO
- Committing to find funding to implement a digital preservation system for the management of digital collections

In Middlesbrough, our Community Engagement Officer led a heritage walk, in partnership with the Carers Together Service. 13 participants met at the Transporter Bridge visitor centre and walked through Transporter Park, talking about the first industry of the town - Middlesbrough Pottery - and the modern industries making their home in this part of town including the digital/gaming sector. The group visited the Old Town Hall to discuss the future regeneration of this important symbol of the first planned railway town in the world and returned past the Customs House, before ending again at the Transporter Bridge.



2.3 Breastfeeding Update

- The South Tees “Mamazing” breastfeeding campaign, a collaborative project involving colleagues from Public Health, Family Hubs, Marketing and Communications, Maternity Services and the Middlesbrough 0-19 team was delivered between April and June 2025, with further marketing messages delivered during World Breastfeeding Week in August 2025. During this week, one of the “Mamazing” Ambassadors featured on BBC Radio 5 Live, engaging in a discussion about the importance of breastfeeding and the benefits for mother and baby. We are currently undertaking public consultation on the campaign, with the aim of using this information to inform the next phase of the campaign, which will take place between January and March 2026.
- The aim of the campaign is to increase breastfeeding rates, encouraging mothers to breastfeed for longer, and normalising breastfeeding. The campaign contributes towards Middlesbrough becoming a Breastfeeding Borough and the Start for Life offer within the Middlesbrough Family Hubs.