

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Theo Furness - Executive Member for Development

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

Place & People

1. HIGHLIGHTS

Update:

1.1 Planning Policy

The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 30th September. This statutory stage is formal start of the Independent Examination, and a Planning Inspector will now be appointed to conduct the Examination. In accordance with the legislation, the Local Plan consultees have been notified of the submission and the Local Plan Examination web page is now live. All the submission documents and evidence library can be found on the web page, which will also be used to publish any future news, correspondence and other examination documents. www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/local-plan/local-plan-examination/

1.2 Central Library Reopens

One of Middlesbrough's most iconic buildings, our Grade II-listed Central Library, has reopened following a £1.9 million refurbishment. Funded by the Arts Council, the Future High Streets Fund and Middlesbrough Council, the project has delivered a redesigned children's library, new ICT suite, flexible event spaces, and improved accessibility. Historic features have been sensitively restored, ensuring the building remains a cultural cornerstone for generations to come.

1.3 Shopfront Improvement Grants

1.3.1 In September, we launched a new grant scheme to support small businesses in improving the appearance of their shopfronts. £180,000 has been made available through the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund, with grants of up to £5,000 available to eligible businesses in the hospitality, leisure, personal care and non-essential retail sectors. These grants can be used for signage, lighting, and improvements to doors and windows - small

changes that make a big difference to the look and feel of our high streets. Applications are open until 31 October 2025.

1.4 Outwood Academy Riverside – Construction Begins

Work has begun on the long-awaited permanent home for Outwood Academy Riverside in Middlehaven. The Department for Education has appointed Bowmer and Kirkland as contractors, with the new three-storey building expected to open in Spring 2027. This marks the end of years of delay since the school was first announced in 2018. I want to thank the school community for their patience and resilience, and acknowledge the combined efforts of Council officers, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, the DfE, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, our MP, and colleagues across the Council in securing this breakthrough. The new school will not only benefit students and staff who have coped with temporary arrangements for far too long, but also unlock further development opportunities in the surrounding area.

2. THE TIME AHEAD

Update:

2.1 Development of Middlehaven

Plans are being brought together for a major development in Middlehaven. We intend to first share with central Councillors and then will share with all Councillors, to be scheduled shortly. While this site has had previous proposals which haven't come to fruition, we have worked closely with an experienced and highly credible partner to bring together a plan which, if successfully delivered, will have a positive impact not just on the town centre but on the town as a whole.

2.2 Investment in Temporary Accommodation

We are currently exploring new ways of working to look at how we can invest in long term empty properties in order to bring them back into use. This will not only tackle buildings which are becoming sources of blight in our town, but also make sure that we have more access to a reliable housing stock which is in our control, improving our ability to support people and families across Middlesbrough facing homelessness.

2.3 Capital Investment in Council Buildings

It is vitally important that we invest in our own buildings across our Council sites. The report which will come to Executive on 12th November will consider both buildings and repairs needed, in order to make our buildings environmentally efficient and fit for the future. If Councillors would like a briefing on this I am more than happy to arrange.