

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 17 September 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), E Clynch, D Coupe, J Kabuye, T Mohan, I Morrish, J Platt, M Saunders, Z Uddin, G Wilson and J Young

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors P Storey (Executive Member for Education and Culture)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: D. Hodgson (Local Democracy Reporter)

OFFICERS: S Bonner, C Cannon, R Horniman and S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Branson, L Lewis and M McClintock

25/17 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all those present at the meeting and described the evacuation procedure.

25/18 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

25/19 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 30 JULY 2025**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 30 July were submitted for OSB's consideration.

A Member suggested the following amendments:

- At Minute item 25/6 the Minute that read "four periods of assistance (Summer, October Half Term, Christmas Half Term and February Half Term)" should instead read "four periods of assistance (Summer, October Half Term, Christmas and February Half Term)".
- At Minute item 25/6 the Minute that read "Linthorpe Road Cycle Lane had a removal date of the 26 August" should read "Linthorpe Road Cycle Lane had a removal commencement date of 26 August."
- At Minute item 25/14, recommendation m) should read rating valuation system, rather than valuable rating system. It was confirmed this amendment would also be communicated to the Chair of the People Scrutiny Panel as the recommendation was taken from the final report into Empty Properties.

With the approval of the proposed amendments the Minutes were accepted as a correct record.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 4.8.25 the Chair proposed a motion without notice, which was seconded and agreed, to change the order of business. The motion proposed that Agenda Item 8 "Scrutiny Chairs Update" be heard next.

It was agreed that the order of business for the remainder of the meeting be items 8, 5, 6, 6.1, 7 and 9.

25/20 **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair invited Scrutiny Panel Chairs to provide their updates.

The Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel had met on Monday 15 September at which a presentation was delivered about how to vary special provision. The Panel also discussed independent provision and how work had helped to reduce this since 2023. The Panel would be looking at its draft Terms of Reference for this topic at its next meeting.

The Chair of Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel advised the Panel had last met on Monday 8 September and received information relating to the Panel's review into Healthy Placemaking with a focus on Childhood Obesity. The Panel received information from Mark Fishpool of the "You've Got This" project and Lindsay Cook of the Public Health Service. The Panel also received a quarterly update on the CQC inspection progress as well as information about the Health Determinants Research Collaboration. The next meeting of the Panel was scheduled for 20th October.

In the absence of the Chair of the Place Scrutiny Panel, the Democratic Services Manager advised that the Panel had met recently and had agreed the Panel's Work Programme which included examining the Council's role in housing. The next meeting of the panel was scheduled for 20 October.

NOTED.

25/21

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The Chair welcomed the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture, who was accompanied by the Directors of Education and Partnerships and Regeneration, respectively.

The Deputy Mayor was invited to deliver her presentation. The presentation was separated into three parts: Culture, Education and Partnerships and Other Areas.

Members were advised there was a need for Cultural Services to embed their work into school's educational programmes. This this had already started with the Museums Service working with Primary Schools such as Beechgrove. The work undertaken with the school was well received and it was hoped the presentation created by the children could be installed in the Town Hall in the future. This collaboration had generated interest from other schools, and it was hoped this work would continue with other schools.

In terms of the Town Hall and Middlesbrough Theatre, one of the main objectives for these venues was to balance financial sustainability and community use. The Deputy Mayor stated that if OSB decided to undertake more work in this area it would be welcomed. There had been a reduction in use of the Town Hall venue owing to other venues in the area such as the Globe in Stockton. Conversely, Middlesbrough Theatre had seen an increase in use, particularly from School Groups which had increased from four to fifteen groups.

In terms of the Events team, there had been significant challenges in terms of capacity. However, there was now a Programming Officer in place which was helping with this.

Teesside Archives service needed substantial investment, but this was difficult as it was a shared service across the Tees Valley. It was commented that the Teesside Joint Archives Committee was not able to make financial decisions. The Archives Service also faced significant challenges around digitisation or records. It was commented that if the Archives Services was not able to do this effectively it was in danger of losing its accreditation. The Chair queried if the Terms of Reference for the Teesside Joint Archives Committee could be changed to allow it to make financial decisions. It was commented that the Terms of References needed to be reviewed.

A discussion took place about how important the Archives Service was for the Teesside's local history which included allowing people to research their family history.

The Chair queried if the Tees Valley Combined Authority had a role in this area. The Deputy Mayor responded there was nothing in legislation to compel the Combined Authority to do this.

A Member queried if schools contributed to the cost of the work undertaken by the Museums Service and to the wider cultural offer made by the Council. The Deputy Mayor confirmed there was no school contribution as schools faced the same financial challenges as the Council. However, there was a need for such initiatives as many cultural events were based in the town centre and some children would not ordinarily access. It was recognised that growth in this area would be beneficial going forward.

The Deputy Mayor outlined her priorities in this area which included:

- Supporting Schools through cultural development.
- Increasing capacity of the Events team.
- Supporting child literacy.
- Creating access to facilities to improve childhood experiences.
- Enhance creative ways of learning

As there were no further questions on the Cultural element of her presentation, the Deputy Mayor continued with the Education and Partnership section. In terms of working with schools, the Deputy Mayor wanted to reduce the number of exclusions and suspensions. This would be achieved through sharing good practice, as well as improving access to the Inclusion and Outreach Service. There was also a need to drive strategies that supported better outcomes for young people.

In terms of Family Hubs, there was a move to recreate services that resembled SureStart centres but there were several barriers in place to achieving this. It was also stated that breaking down those barriers would take time. The Chair commented that his own experiences with Family Hubs had been positive, and it was something the Council needed to publicise more. He also commented it was good to see a people from a range of backgrounds using the service, but noted the numbers were low. It was recognised that services, such as Bloom, were beneficial for children and parents.

It was queried where the Family Hubs were located, and it was clarified they were in former children's centres.

A Member asked what the financial cost was for exclusions. The Deputy Mayor confirmed it cost £23,000 for every exclusion. A Member further queried what the process was after the exclusion. Members were advised that alternative provisions, such as home schooling, were required to ensure the excluded child received an education. This meant the Council had to source those alternative provisions, usually via the private sector. Members also queried the condition of relationships between the Council and School Academies. The Deputy Mayor advised those relationships were strong owing the hard work carried out by the Council's Education teams. It was also commented that exclusions were reducing and that exclusions moved problems rather than solved them. It was also clarified that schools were aware of the cost of the exclusions.

Members discussed the issue of children that were not registered and therefore not receiving mainstream education. The Deputy Mayor was aware of this and advised robust systems were in place to monitor the situation. The Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel advised that the systems in place for this were robust and had been considered as part of the People Scrutiny Panel's review into Children Missing Education.

A Member queried where Family Hubs were advertised. It was clarified they were advertised in several places, such as social media. However, the Deputy Mayor did not have a definitive list.

In terms of Youth Justice, this was a shared service between Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Council. The key objectives were to drive delivery of the Youth Justice Plan and to strengthen partnerships.

A Member commented that the Youth Justice process could take a long time to complete. It was also stated that, for those involved in the process, it was difficult to give the impression action was being taken because of this.

A Member queried how many young people were in the Youth Justice system and it was agreed that the Deputy Mayor would collate this information and circulate it to the Board.

Members also discussed how a small cohort of people could generate significant problems and how new legislation would provide more information to the victims of crime.

There were no further questions on this element of the presentation and so the Deputy Mayor proceeded with the final section of the presentation.

Members were advised the Deputy Mayor was also the Chair of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) which involved working with other Domestic Abuse Services and partners. This role also involved supporting the Survivors Panel which had been set up by the Mayor. The Deputy Mayor commented that not all relevant partners attended partnership meetings.

The Deputy Mayor also helped to coordinate the workings of the Civics Working Group, which was an informal, cross party, working group. Members were advised that any Member could contribute to its workings. For Members wanting to be involved, they could email the Deputy Mayor.

The Membership of the Survivors Panel was queried, and it was confirmed it consisted of victims of domestic abuse and comprised mainly women. It was also commented that the Civics Working Group also helped coordinate veteran's events and it was hoped this role would become stronger going forward.

Part of the Deputy Mayor's roles was to ensure the town's civic collection was catalogued and accounted for. A conversation took place regarding how cataloguing the town's civic collections was important as some items were on loan to other institutions including the British Museum.

In terms of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, there was a need to look at this issue through an overarching strategy.

A Member queried the frequency of Civics events, and it was clarified there were approximately six events per year and there was the intention of adding more events to that calendar, such as Veteran's Day. It was also clarified that Civic events were spread across the year but tended to be held during the autumn. The Chair queried why Pride events were held in the autumn, but LGBT month was in July. It was commented that the Council did not set the dates of the events, it simply supported them.

Continuing with the Anti-Poverty theme, the Deputy Mayor stated that a lot of work had been carried out with Children in this area, such as the Multi-Bank. Addressing Child Poverty was crucial to tackling poverty generally, but the Council had encountered several barriers to achieving its goals and that challenge to those barriers would be welcomed.

A conversation took place about how the Anti-Poverty agenda could be cross-authority. The Deputy Mayor stated she would like to see the Tees Valley Combined Authority take a lead on this issue, in a similar way to the North East Combined Authority.

A Member queried the nature and operation of the Multi-Bank. It was explained the Multi-Bank was operated by The Junction and distributed essential, surplus items that local business no longer needed. Those items were distributed to local charities who in turn identified people who needed the items most. It was also clarified the Multi-Bank was in its second year of operations and that speeding up ordering times was proving difficult but efforts were being made to achieve this.

There were no further questions from the Board and the Chair thanked the Deputy Mayor for her presentation.

At this point the Deputy Mayor, as well as the Directors of Education and Partnerships and Regeneration withdrew from the meeting.

ORDERED that

1. The total number of young people engaged in the Youth Justice system would be provided to the Board.
2. That the information presented be noted.

25/22 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report for OSB's consideration. A copy of the Work Programme was attached at Appendix A and Members were asked to raise any issues they had in relation to any of the items listed.

There were no questions from Members on the Executive Forward Plan.

The Chair commented that the Forward Plan was fuller than the last meeting of OSB but felt more prospective decisions should be on the Forward Plan. The Chair asked that the DSO write to the Council's Leadership Management Team to express this view.

ORDERED that

1. The Democratic Services Officer write to LMT on the Chair's behalf expressing the view that the Executive Forward Plan should contain more decisions that were being listed.
2. That the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

25/23 **FORWARD PLAN ACTIONS PROGRESS**

The Democratic Services Officer advised that the questions raised by Members at the 30 July meeting of OSB had received responses from the service area. Those responses had been emailed to OSB on 1 August and 10 September respectively.

NOTED

25/24 **DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE - POVERTY, ITS IMPACT, AND EFFORTS TO TACKLE IT.**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the Draft Terms of Reference for OSB's review, "Poverty its impact, and efforts to tackle it."

The draft Terms of Reference were:

1. To understand the definition of poverty and what this means for Middlesbrough.
2. With a specific focus on demographics, understand the causes and impact of poverty in Middlesbrough.
3. To explore the strategies, plans and policies the Council has in place to address and alleviate poverty in Middlesbrough.
4. To understand what work is being undertaken with external stakeholders to address and alleviate poverty in Middlesbrough.

Members were advised that it was for OSB to amend and decide the Terms of Reference put before them and invited Members to debate the issue.

There were no questions from Members and OSB accepted the Terms of Reference as they were presented.

ORDERED that the Draft Terms of Reference of OSB's review, Poverty, its impact, and efforts to tackle it be accepted.

25/25 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.