

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 29 September 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors D Branson (Chair), D Coupe, J Ewan, D Jackson, J Kabuye, T Mohan and B Hubbard

OFFICERS: J McNally, T Frankland, S Gilmore and Shelton

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received by Councillor L Lewis

25/15 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

25/16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

25/17 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 17 JULY 2025**

The minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 17 July 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

25/18 **BARRIERS TO REGENERATION - SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Head of Growth and the Town Centre Manager were in attendance and provided a presentation on Barriers to Regeneration.

From December 2024 to February 2025, a consultation had been carried out whereby a simple and open questionnaire had been sent to stakeholders and partners to highlight matters which were of critical importance to their organisation and how Middlesbrough could collectively work towards addressing those issues and boost Middlesbrough's economic prospects.

It was noted that the top five challenges which were holding Middlesbrough back from fulfilling its potential were as follows:

1. ASB & Crime – general feeling even if not backed up with statistics.
2. Empty properties / over supply – structural condition. Middlesbrough was the hub in Tees Valley previously. Shopping centres were very different now due to out-of-town shopping and online shopping. Multiple shopping centres – retail space needed to be reduced. Remove properties / reduce supply / or diversify - public services/cultural uses/office space.
3. Reduced funding from central government – had improved over last five years with capital funding
4. Poor perception
5. Footfall / work patterns – working from home had an impact.

In addition, the top five things which needed to change for Middlesbrough to improve were as follows:

1. Safer environment – additional lighting/policing. Street security proposals – successfully funded
2. Improve physical environment
3. High profile and consistent policing
4. Animation and events was key. People needed a reason to be in Middlesbrough in their free time.
5. Diversify / repurpose vacant units and 'Blight Sites'. Many units had been left for many years – incentives were not working.

Finally, the top five things that Middlesbrough needed to collectively concentrate investment in or apply for funding for were as follows:

1. Make the town centre feel safe and increase police presence – security presence
2. Attractions and events (focused in the heart of the town centre)
3. Rebalance / diversify Middlesbrough's economy
4. Improve physical environment – elevating the space. The town was not as busy as previous years so things were more noticeable.

General barriers to regeneration in Middlesbrough were also discussed which included the following:

- Infrastructure capacity – acute atm. Power supplies. £20m additional power supply needed
- Funding availability – need to wait for budget/spending review
- Disposable income – consumer economy – 800,000 people within 30 min drive
- Skill gaps, employment and opportunities. Lose talent
- Perceptions internally and externally
- Takes time to grow. Tech sector
- Immature professional sectors
- Fragility to shocks – deprivation areas – much more fragile. If one sector falls – distortive impact
- Confused legislative environment (business rates, incentives, taxes)
- Competition wider-region / alternative methods – can't do Teesworks – no room for this. Concentrate on events etc
- Aligning multiple stakeholders – starting to improve
- Cost / value equation – all sectors. Not worth it – commercial sector particularly
- Fragmented vision (major area of work now) – need to have one vision and consistent

On the other hand, it was advised that opportunities for growth included:

- Street security proposals (funded)
- Stronger relationships with MDC officers
- Right direction of travel (long journey)
- Working to repurpose major sites (Debenhams, HoF, Next etc)
- Genuine engagement and ownership of Town Board
- Investment Zone status
- Strengths in digital and creative – education and commercial
- Fair Funding settlements (based on need) – should be positive for Middlesbrough
- Cultural strengths and hosting major events
- Urban living and housing stock in central Middlesbrough – Gresham / Middlehaven

A discussion took place regarding potential ways in which the Barriers to Regeneration in Middlesbrough could be overcome and what Members envisaged for the future of the town; these included:

- Possibility of free car parking, however it was noted that this had been tried and tested previously and had not had a significant impact. Free parking was instead implemented during large events.
- New entertainment venue to bring people to Middlesbrough – the Riverside Stadium could only be used for a small proportion of the year when the football season had ended.
- Artwork to improve the look of public spaces – it was advised that Middlesbrough Council was already working with local artists to improve the appearance of local areas through the Creative Factory.
- The potential to split large retail units into smaller units for independent businesses / SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises).
- Encourage residents to talk well about the town rather than talk down – young people in schools/working with social media influencers. It was highlighted that many positive things were happening in the town but they were often overlooked and overshadowed by the negative.
- The significance of the need for largescale investment into the power supply of the town was acknowledged as a major risk and it was confirmed that the Council were working to build an investment case to tackle this. The result of the case would be known in approximately 18 months' time.

A Member asked several questions regarding the consultation that was sent to stakeholders, as follows:

- How were respondents contacted?
- Which Councillors did it go to?
- Were reminders sent/how many?
- Can a copy of the survey and full results be circulated?

It was confirmed that the survey was sent to several stakeholders via email; the survey was not hugely representative but rather a small informal survey to kickstart research and get a flavour of opinions. It was confirmed that the full results would be circulated to Members following the meeting and reminders were not sent.

The Chair thanked the Head of Growth and Town Centre Manager for their presentation and further information provided.

AGREED as follows:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. The results of the consultation survey would be circulated to Panel members.

25/19

BARRIERS TO REGENERATION SCRUTINY REVIEW - TERMS OF REFERENCE

By way of a starting point and to facilitate discussion, the Democratic Services Officers presented some potential Terms of Reference for the Barriers to Regeneration scrutiny review. The Chair invited Members to discuss the proposals and to consider any revisions or additions.

Following discussion, the panel agreed the terms of reference as follows:

1. To establish what the Barriers to Regeneration are
2. To identify good practice from other local authorities in relation to attracting businesses to the area
3. To investigate what measures are in place to make people feel safer in our town centre and neighbourhoods
4. To gain an understanding of current legislation available to local authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour

25/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

The Chair provided an update on items discussed at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 30 July 2025 which included:

- Executive Member Update – The Mayor
- Delivery against the Continuous Improvement Plan - Progress update
- Overview and Scrutiny Board - Work Programme 2025/26
- Scrutiny - Work Planning 2025/26
- Pre-Decision Scrutiny Protocol

The Chair also advised that there had been a further meeting held on 17 September 2025 which he was unable to attend but the Board had received updates on the following:

- Executive Member Update - Education and Culture
- Executive Forward Work Programme
- Forward Plan Actions Progress
- Draft Terms of Reference - Poverty, its impact, and efforts to tackle it.
- Scrutiny Chairs Update

25/21 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for Monday 27 October 2025 at 1.30 pm.

25/22 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.