

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Erik Scollay - Chief Executive
Relevant Executive Member:	Chris Cooke - Mayor
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	3 December 2025
Title:	Council Plan 2026/27-29: Outcomes Refresh
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	No
Why:	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
Subject to call in?	Yes
Why:	Non-urgent Report

Proposed decision(s)

That Executive:

- approves the proposed approach and revisions to refresh the Council Plan workplan, specifically its outcomes and the changes to be effected as a result, as part of its 2026/27 refresh.
- notes that a further report will be brought forward for Executive approval, detailing the supporting Council Plan workplan (including measures and initiatives), in February 2026.
- Notes that following approval of the Council Plan workplan, supporting Service Plans and associated delivery plans will be developed and presented to Executive for approval, in March 2026

Executive summary

This report seeks Executive approval of the proposed approach and revisions to the Council Plan, as part of its 2026/27 refresh.

The Council Plan is the organisation's overarching business plan for the medium-term and is typically refreshed on an annual basis. This refresh follows a review of performance in the previous year and consideration of an outcome-driven approach to demonstrate progress and impact.

The Council Plan is part of the Council's Policy Framework and so requires the approval of Full Council, as set out in the Constitution. The Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules provide for the Executive to draw up firm proposals on the Strategic Plan (Change Strategy) for submission to Full Council. Full Council approved the Council Plan for the period 2024-27 on 28 February 2024, which was structured around the following vision and priorities:

The vision for Middlesbrough is ***a thriving, healthier, safer and more ambitious place where people want to live, work, invest, and visit. We will support our residents to live fulfilling lives, to ensure that our communities thrive***, with the four priorities remaining, as follows:

- **A Successful and Ambitious Town:** Maximising economic growth, employment, and prosperity, in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.
- **A Healthy Place:** Helping our residents to live longer and healthier lives, improving life chances and opportunities to thrive.
- **Safe and Resilient Communities:** Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.
- **Delivering Best Value:** Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.

The vision and priorities will remain, though consideration has been given to ensure strategic cohesion and planning for effective and successful delivery of the Council Plan priorities through articulation of what it is we want to achieve, impact and change (the outcomes) and how we then deliver that change, through an enabling Council Plan workplan.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan priorities

1.1 The purpose of this report in relation to its contribution to the Council Plan Priorities, is to outline a workplan of activities designed to deliver improved outcomes against these priorities. It also seeks to review and refine the performance indicators required to ensure that the Council can effectively monitor and measure progress.

Our Priorities	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	The aims within this Priority, remain to: - attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities - Improve attainment in education and skills - Ensure housing provision meets local demand
A healthy place	Aims within this Priority, remain to: - improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities - protect and improve our environment - promote inclusivity for all - reduce poverty
Safe and resilient communities	Aims within this Priority, remain to: - support adults to be independent for longer - improve transport and digital connectivity - promote new ideas and community initiatives - reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
Delivering best value	Aims within this Priority, remain to: - ensure robust and effective corporate governance - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability

2. Recommendations

2.3 That the Executive

- approves the proposed approach and revisions to refresh the Council Plan workplan, specifically its outcomes and the changes to be affected as a result, as part of its 2026/27 refresh.
- notes that a further report will be brought forward for Executive approval, detailing the supporting Council Plan workplan (including measures and initiatives), in February 2026.
- notes that following approval of the Council Plan workplan, supporting Service Plans and associated delivery plans will be developed and presented to Executive for approval, in March 2026

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.3 To enable the Executive to approve the refresh and outcome-driven approach to the Council Plan workplan 2026/27-29 ensuring that it is reflective of major developments of the past year, and those anticipated in the coming three years whilst retaining its focus on the four priorities and existing aims.

4. Background and relevant information

- 4.1 The Council Plan is the organisation's overarching business plan for the medium-term, and is generally refreshed on an annual basis, setting out the priorities of the Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, the ambitions for our communities and the ways in which we seek to achieve them.
- 4.2 This report proposes a refreshed Council Plan for the 2026/27-29 period articulating not only the priorities and aims of Mayor Cooke elected in May 2023, which are informed by, and responsive to the views of residents and which will need to be delivered within available resources, with a stronger focus on the outcomes which represent the measurable results or impacts of contributing initiatives and activities.
- 4.3 Becoming outcome-focused ensures that everything the organisation does is directed towards making a measurable and lasting difference for residents, communities and businesses. An outcome-based approach provides a clear line of sight between strategic priorities, service delivery, and the changes we aim to achieve across the town. It allows us to set clear goals, measure progress and make evidence-based decisions about where to target resources and for the greater benefit. This approach supports effective performance management and continuous improvement, ensuring value for money, as well as meeting the needs of its communities.
- 4.4 Residents, partners and elected members will not only understand what the Council is doing, but what differences those actions make. By defining the results we want to see, we can better communicate success and identify where further effort or collaboration is required.
- 4.5 Additionally, an outcome-focused plan encourages innovation and partnership working. Many of the challenges facing our communities - health inequalities, inclusivity, climate change, poverty, etc. - cannot be tackled by Middlesbrough Council alone. By aligning our efforts and shared outcomes, we can work more effectively with partners to achieve collective impact and deliver lasting change.
- 4.6 As a key example, a Poverty Sprint was undertaken in November 2024, which resulted in the development of an action plan, the key principles of which will be woven into the measures and metrics and activities across the Council Plan in its entirety in a report to be brought for Executive approval in February 2026.
- 4.7 One of the themes identified within the Poverty Sprint was that there were opportunities that could and should be taken to help residents access support they were entitled to but might not know about. One of the first actions that have been delivered as a result is joint with Northumbrian Water to share data that will enable residents in low-income households to be awarded a discount on their water bill where eligibility is identified, this can reduce the yearly bill by up to 40%. Sharing this information will ensure more people who are entitled to this support get access to it.
- 4.8 To that end, it is proposed that the outcomes we will focus on as a Council are:
- We will grow businesses and employment opportunities within the town
 - Attainment gaps close and increasing numbers of children and young people are working at their expected level / grade

- We will take a strategic approach to the provision of housing across the town.
- People will live healthier lives for longer, and health inequalities are reduced.
- The look and feel of the physical space in Middlesbrough will improve.
- We will be closer to our communities and involve them in decision making.
- We will reduce and alleviate the impact of poverty to improve lives and life chances for people in Middlesbrough.
- All adults will be supported through strength-based practice to live the lives they choose.
- Transport connectivity will improve, and we will promote digital inclusion.
- We will enable and support our voluntary sector and community groups.
- Residents will feel safer.
- We will be a well-run Council.
- We will set a balanced budget and medium-term financial plan.

4.9 For ease of reference, an Appendix 2 lists the current outcomes measured against national data sets, versus the proposed outcomes which will use local measures to demonstrate local progress and impact.

4.10 The element of Council Plan refresh seeking approval relates specifically to the outcomes within the Council Plan workplan. With the existing Priorities and Aims remaining in place, the revised elements will be considered by Executive for approval, rather than full Council.

4.11 The measures, metrics and initiatives to demonstrate assurance of delivery against the Council Plan, will be brought to a further meeting of the Executive in February 2026.

4.12 Supporting Service Plans and associated delivery plans will be developed and presented to Executive for approval in March 2026.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

5.1 Not applicable

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

6.1 It is imperative that the Council effectively articulates and communicates an overarching plan to direct activity across Directorates and services, towards the achievement of its priorities and ambitions.

6.2 The only other realistic potential decision would be to leave the Council's strategic activities unchanged on the assumption that they are sufficiently robust to address and achieve previously identified outcome measures. This, however, is not correct and neither would it represent an appropriate response to the needs of the town, it would detrimentally impact local communities and the business of the Council for some years ahead.

6.3 The only other feasible decisions therefore relate to the structure of the document, and its horizon (i.e., reverting to an annual plan). It is strongly in the Council's interest to plan over the medium-term, (between 3-5 years) in line with the indicative budgets over this period outlined by the Government. The proposed document achieves this whilst also providing an appropriate level of detail for all audiences on the Council's planned activity over this period.

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

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	The Council Plan 2026-27 and the Council's annual revenue and capital budgets are developed in parallel, to ensure full alignment between the Council's ambitions and spending plans. In outlining an achievable programme of work that delivers performance improvement within reduced resources, the Council Plan and its supporting Service Plans therefore demonstrate how the Council will deliver value for money in the medium-term.
Legal	Delivery of the Social Value Charter plays a key role in achieving the <i>Reducing Poverty</i> Aim, as part of the <i>Healthy Place</i> Priority. Implementation of the refreshed Council Plan 2026-27 will enable the Council to operate within the resources available to it, and continue to meet its various statutory duties, including the overarching Duty of Best Value.
Risk	The proposed Council Plan sets out a range of activity to address the key risks within the Council's Strategic Risk Register which have the ability to impact on the Council's ability to achieve the ambitions set out in the Council Plan. Once the refreshed Council Plan is agreed by full Council, a review of the current content will be completed, with any changes reported to Executive, as part of the quarterly performance management reports.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	The Council Plan 2026-27 will have a positive impact on individuals and communities. It contains within it, plans to ensure that the Council has an inclusive approach for all its residents.
Reducing Poverty	The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on reducing poverty, subsuming actions from the recent Poverty Sprint are woven throughout the activities and measures.
Climate Change / Environmental	The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on climate change and the environment, with a specific priority to 'protect and improve our environment' which will focus Council activity on these areas. The Plan will set a series of measurable outcomes to be achieved against this theme.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on children and young people, with a proposed priority to 'improve education and attainment' with focused activity directed at these areas. The Plan will set a series of measurable outcomes to be achieved against this theme.
Data Protection	There are no concerns that the proposed plan could impact adversely on data protection or GDPR.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Subject to Executive approval of Council Plan 2024-27 Refresh, the Council Plan workplan (including measures and initiatives) will be presented to Executive for approval.	Head of Strategy, Business and Customer	4 Feb 2026
Supporting Service Plans and associated delivery plans will be developed and presented to Executive for approval.	Head of Strategy, Business and Customer	11 Mar 2026

Appendices

1	Refreshed Council Plan Outcomes against existing Priorities and Aims
2	Existing and proposed Council Plan outcomes
3	Impact Assessment Level 1 (Initial screening assessment)

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Council Plan 2024-27	28 Feb 2024

Contact: Gemma Cooper, Head of Strategy, Business and Customer
Email: gemma_cooper@middlesbrough.gov.uk