

**COUNCIL**

A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 26 November 2025.

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Banks (Chair), D Branson, E Lynch, C Cooke - Elected Mayor, C Cooper, D Coupe, D Davison, J Ewan, T Furness, P Gavigan, TA Grainge, L Henman, S Hill, B Hubbard, L Hurst, D Jackson, L Lewis, T Livingstone, L Mason, D McCabe, J McConnell, J McTigue, T Mohan, I Morrish, M Nugent, J Platt, S Platt, A Romaine, J Rostron, M Smiles, P Storey, J Thompson, Z Uddin, N Walker, J Young and L Young

**OFFICERS:** C Benjamin, S Bonner, S Lightwing, B Carr, G Field, A Humble, E Scollay, K Whitmore, R Williams, A Wilson and A Hoy

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors J Kabuye, I Blades, J Cooke, N Hussain, D Jones, J Nicholson, J Ryles, M Saunders, S Tranter and G Wilson

**25/72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**25/73 MINUTES - COUNCIL - 15 OCTOBER 2025**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 October 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**25/74 WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure.

**25/75 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Announcements for this meeting.

**25/76 MAYOR'S REPORT**

The Mayor moved his report as written.

*Questions in relation to the Mayor's Report*

Councillor L Young on Bring It On Boro

The Mayor explained that "Bring It on Boro" ran during October half term thanks to £250K of investment from the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund. Over 20 organisations had taken part in activities and over 2000 places had been taken up by children aged 5 to 16. The Mayor was pleased that the project would be extended, enabling children to access free food and activities during Easter, Summer, Christmas and Half Term holidays.

Councillor Lynch on 10 x 10

The Mayor confirmed that the Newport Primary Residential Experience had been a pilot scheme as part of the 10 x 10 project funded through the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund.

The project would be reviewed in January 2026 with a gap analysis undertaken in schools. One such gap in provision that had been identified was music-related experiences. The Mayor invited all Councillors to nominate any schools that would benefit from the project. New funding would be allocated following the budget settlement.

**25/77 EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORTS**

*Question in relation to the update of the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture – Councillor Storey.*

Councillor Hubbard on Inclusion.

The Deputy Mayor stated that there was a good range of specialist provision across Middlesbrough which included: early years, outreach, inclusion and assessment provision, a number of special schools, resource and registered alternate provision. The Council had applied to the Department for Education (DFE) for approval to open a new special school at Stainsby Road. The Deputy Mayor acknowledged that SEND was a national issue and explained that the Council was awaiting the publication of the Government's School White Paper and the SEND Reforms which had been due in the autumn but had now been delayed until spring 2026.

*Questions in relation to the update of the Executive Member for Adult Social Care – Councillor Rostron.*

Councillor Morrish on Homelessness.

The Executive Member agreed with the Councillor's comments in relation to the Council's caring, committed and hard working Homelessness Team. In relation to the accuracy of the recent count of homeless in Middlesbrough, the Executive Member commented that the Team often picked up information on rough sleepers from other people who were sleeping rough. The Executive Member stated that it was not possible to say whether the numbers were properly accurate and that she would ask the Team whether they had any information on people who were sofa surfing rather than rough sleeping. With regard to providing accommodation for all those who were homeless in Middlesbrough, the Executive Member confirmed that this was possible. However, some people did not want to be accommodated and refused to engage or accept support. The Homelessness Team were persistent and visited rough sleepers weekly to continue to offer help and support.

The Mayor added that annual rough sleepers count did not include anyone who was on the waiting list for accommodation or sofa surfing. The Government Definition for was the count was those people that were bedded down. Therefore, in the Mayor's opinion, the numbers could not be relied upon to be wholly accurate, although thankfully they were decreasing. The Mayor commented that it was difficult to say that the Council could house everyone every time as people had different needs and for example, some homes might require adaptations to make them suitable. There were however, approximately 2000 empty properties in Middlesbrough that needed to be brought back into use to ensure that everyone had a home.

Councillor Morrish on Veterans Community Initiative.

The Executive Member agreed with Councillor Morrish that the Veterans and Armed Forces Community Club set up by Linda Ford and others was very important. The Executive Member added that whilst she was not aware how many Councillors had helped with this initiative, the Council's Armed Forces Champion had been involved. The Executive Member commented that when leaving the Armed Forces, veterans returning to their home town often found that people they knew previously were no longer there or they had lost touch with them. It was important that there was a supportive community available to them. The Executive Member noted the suggestion by Councillor Morrish that the Clubs should be rolled out to other areas of the town in addition to central Middlesbrough.

*Questions in relation to the update of the Executive Member for Children's Services – Councillor Henman.*

Councillor Uddin on School Attendance for Children in Care.

The Executive Member agreed that the 78.5% attendance figure for children in care, who were Key Stage 4 pupils, attending school since the start of the school year was too low. This was an important issue for the Virtual School Head, the Virtual School Governing Body, and at the top of the Executive Member's Update. A lot of work was taking place to support young people to stay in school including an Engagement Hub for Key Stage 4 pupils. Education, Social Care and Health were working together to provide support as well as emotionally available adults in schools who built relationships with young people who were at risk of poor attendance. The Council endeavoured to wrap support around young people to ensure they received the education they deserved.

Councillor Lynch on Giving Young People the Best Start

The Executive Member stated that the lifting of the two child benefit cap would have a huge impact in Middlesbrough and he was thrilled to hear the Chancellor's announcement today. The Executive Member went on to comment that under the cap, 70,000 children in the region had been driven into poverty. The lifting of the cap would have a massive impact on children and on some of the work that Middlesbrough Council was doing in relation to issues such as safeguarding, early help and the Mayor's 10 x 10 initiative.

*Question in relation to the update of the Executive Member for Development – Councillor Furness.*

Councillor Morrish on Nunthorpe Community Centre.

The Executive Member explained that the issues raised by Councillor Morrish did not fall within his remit and were being dealt with by Officers which was the appropriate route for them at the current time. The Executive Member invited Councillor Morrish to email him with the details that he wished to discuss about the Nunthorpe Community Centre and he would be willing to meet with him. The Executive Member also stated that the new Community Centre was long overdue and he was looking forward to the building being available for Nunthorpe residents. Councillor Morrish agreed with the Executive Member's comments in respect of the Community Centre being long overdue and undertook to email him as suggested.

Councillor Branson on Coulby Newham Neighbourhood Plan Referendum.

The Executive Member was unable to confirm the date of the Referendum. The Executive Member added his thanks to Councillor Branson and Council Officers who had contributed to the Neighbourhood Plan. Middlesbrough Council was proud to be facilitating the development of new homes for the residents of the town.

It was highlighted that during his response, the Executive Member had referred to Newham Hall being in Coulby Newham Ward which was incorrect as Newham Hall was in Marton West Ward. The Executive Member clarified that he was referring to the Newham Hall Development, rather than the Hall itself.

*Question in relation to the update of the Executive Member for Environment – Councillor Gavigan.*

Councillor Morrish on Marton Interchange Overbridge.

The Executive Member explained that the main contractor for the project had been selected and was due to commence work in March 2026. Works to be carried out included installation of a vehicle restraint system, installation of suicide prevention structures, renewal of waterproofing, re-surfacing and lining. The duration of works was expected to be 26 weeks. Residents would be informed of forthcoming activity via letters, advance notice boards, variable message boards and press releases. Unfortunately the project had taken longer to arrange than would have been preferred due to contractual issues.

25/78

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY).**

The following question for the Mayor had been submitted by a Member of the Public in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.8.15:

*How can you all as Corporate Parents increase your understanding of Middlesbrough cared for and care experienced young people?*

The Mayor responded that the Council Plan and its performance measures were being reviewed. Currently there was no formal process in place for consulting with those in the Local Authority's care or for care leavers. The Mayor extended an invitation to young people to meet with him and the Participation Team to discuss ideas and suggestions that could be woven into the Plan, with clear descriptors, so that young people would be at the heart of everything the Council delivers.

25/79 **PETITIONS (IF ANY)**

No valid petitions had been submitted for this meeting.

25/80 **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) presented a report, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the current position regarding progress made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the individual Scrutiny Panels.

The Chair informed Council that there had been two meetings of the OSB since the last Council meeting, both with substantial agendas. The Mayor, and the Executive Members for Children's and Finance and Officers were thanked for their attendance and input at those meetings. The Executive Member for Adult Social Care was scheduled to attend the December meeting.

The Chair reminded all Members that a Scrutiny Workshop had been arranged at 4.30 pm on Tuesday 9 December 2025 . All Members were invited to attend.

The Chair invited Members to note the report.

**ORDERED** that the report was noted.

25/81 **MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES**

The Director of Legal and Governance Services, on behalf of the Independent Panel on Members' Remuneration, presented a report in respect of the Members' Scheme of Allowances.

This report was previously considered by Council on 10 September 2025 and the debate on the report was adjourned and the matter was deferred for decision.

Following its 2025 review of Members' allowances, the Independent Panel on Members' Remuneration recommended an increase to the Basic Allowance from £7,608 to £8,999 (the Teesside Average). The Panel also recommended freezing Special Responsibility Allowances, and all other allowances, at their current levels. Neither Basic nor Special Responsibility Allowances should reflect Staff Pay Awards.

Council was asked to consider the Panel's recommendations and either accept or reject them. If, after having due regard of the Panel's recommendations, Council rejected the Panel's proposals, it would need to create its own Scheme of allowances.

On a vote being taken, the recommendations proposed by the Independent Panel on Members' Remuneration, detailed at paragraph 2 of the submitted report, were **REJECTED**.

25/82 **APPROVAL OF THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY 2026-2029**

A report of the Director of Environment and Community Services was presented by the Mayor. The report sought Council approval of the Statement of Gambling Policy 2026-2029, a copy of which was attached to the submitted report.

The Council was required to have a three-year policy statement setting out the principles that it proposed to apply in exercising its functions under the Gambling Act 2005 (section 349). In preparing the Statement of Gambling Policy, the Council was required to consult the Police and those persons who represent the interests of those carrying on gambling businesses and those who were likely to be affected by gambling activities in its area.

The draft policy was approved by Council on 9 July 2025 and an 8 week long consultation was undertaken from 11 August until 6 October 2025. Responses to the consultation were included in the submitted report along with background and other relevant information.

**ORDERED** that Council approved the Statement of Gambling Policy 2026-2029

25/83 **UPDATE ON URGENT DECISIONS**

The Director of Legal and Governance Services submitted a report which provided an update with regard to one urgent decision that had been taken under the urgency rules since last reported to Council on 9 July 2025.

**ORDERED** that the report be noted.

25/84 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (IF ANY)**

No Members' Questions on Notice had been submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

25/85 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE (IF ANY)**

No Motions on Notice had been submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

25/86 **URGENT MOTIONS ON NOTICE (IF ANY)**

No Urgent Motions on Notice had been submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.