

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Chief Executive, Erik Scollay
Relevant Executive Member:	The Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, Chris Cooke
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	11 March 2026
Title:	Council Plan 2026-29
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:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVES the refreshed Council Plan which sets out how the Council will measure success, following previous agreement of the outcomes in December 2025 By Executive. • APPROVES further minor amendments to the outcomes agreed by Executive in December 2025 to create separate outcomes for digital and transport connectivity and minor, non-material changes to sentence structure to enhance readability and do not change the nature of the agreed outcomes. • APPROVES the cessation of the Council's Transformation Programme and transition into a Continuous Improvement model. • APPROVES the transition of the Customer Strategy and the Neighbourhoods Model into business-as-usual delivery. • APPROVES the Council's engagement in the Place Leaders Partnership, its membership on that Partnership. • ENDORSES the planned development of a Place Strategy for the Town, to be led by the Place Leaders Partnership. 	

Executive summary

This report seeks Executive approval of the refreshed Council Plan, setting out the refreshed Outcomes that were agreed by Executive in December 2025, alongside the indicators that will measure the impact of that activity, as set out in the refreshed Council Plan appended to this report at Appendix 1.

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, which was agreed as the direction of travel at Executive in December 2025.

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 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; this report seeks to refresh the underpinning activity to deliver the vision. The activity set to deliver the Council Plan will be embedded within Directorate Plans to ensure effective delivery. The Directorate Plans will form a key part of the Council's approach to performance management and continuous improvement.

The report also sets out the planned development of a Place Strategy by the Place Leaders Partnership and proposes that Executive endorses the Council working with the partnership to develop that Strategy.

The Strategy, once developed, will provide a blueprint that the Council and its partners can all use to work together, to tackle Middlesbrough's economic and social challenges.

The draft Place Strategy will go through the Council's decision-making processes to ensure that all Members have the opportunity to consider and agree the Council's contribution to that strategy.

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

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the completed refresh of the Council Plan 2026 – 29, appended to this report at Appendix 1 which reflects the amended outcomes and the proposed key measures of success that will measure the impact of the Council Plan. Details of activities to deliver the plan will be embedded within Directorate Plans for 2026/7.

Our Priorities	Summary of how this report will support delivery the Council Plan
A successful and ambitious town	The refreshed Plan sets out the outcomes that will be achieved by the Council Plan to deliver its vision and the measures we will track to understand impact of planned actions.
A healthy place	
Safe and resilient communities	
Delivering best value	

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Executive:

- **APPROVES** the refreshed Council Plan which sets out how the Council will measure success, following previous agreement of the outcomes in December 2025 By Executive.
- **APPROVES** further minor amendments to the outcomes agreed by Executive in December 2025 to create separate outcomes for digital and transport connectivity and minor, non-material changes to sentence structure to enhance readability and do not change the nature of the agreed outcomes.
- **APPROVES** the cessation of the Council’s Transformation Programme and transition into a Continuous Improvement model.
- **APPROVES** the transition of the Customer Strategy and the Neighbourhoods Model into business-as-usual delivery.
- **APPROVES** the Council’s engagement in the Place Leaders Partnership, its membership on that Partnership.
- **ENDORSES** the planned development of a Place Strategy for the Town, to be led by the Place Leaders Partnership.

3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Refreshing the Council Plan enables the Council to continue to plan over the medium term. Updating outcomes and measures of success ensures that the Council Plan reflects current progress against the Council’s vision and priorities. Under the Local Government Act 1999, local authorities must legally deliver what is termed ‘Best Value’ – a council must be able to show that it has arrangements to secure continuous improvement in how it carries out its work. The proposals in this report set out how the Council is embedding continuous improvement within its strategic planning.

4. Background and relevant Information

Council Plan 2026–29

4.1 The Council Plan is the organisation's overarching medium-term business plan and is typically refreshed annually. This refresh follows a review of performance in the previous year and introduces an outcome-driven approach to demonstrating progress and impact, as agreed by Executive in December 2025.

4.2 The Council Plan is part of the Council's Policy Framework and therefore requires approval by Full Council, as set out in the Constitution. The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules allow the Executive to draw up firm proposals for submission to Full Council where a new Plan is proposed. Changes to outcomes can be approved by Executive. This report proposes no changes to the vision or priorities; it reflects the revised outcomes agreed in December 2025 and updates the measures used to assess impact.

Transition from Transformation to Continuous Improvement

4.3 In 2024, the Council established a time-limited Transformation Programme in response to significant financial pressures. This programme was reviewed in 2025 to ensure better alignment with the Council Plan. Its purpose was to stabilise the organisation, deliver agreed savings, improve outcomes for residents and maintain statutory service delivery during a period of financial constraint.

4.4 The programme has achieved many of its financial objectives, and the time is now right for the Council to move into the next phase. It is no longer proportionate or sustainable to operate transformation as a standalone initiative. The conditions that required exceptional programme governance have shifted, and improvement capability is now better embedded within day-to-day operations.

4.5 This transition represents a deliberate shift in emphasis:

- From discrete projects to continuous improvement owned by Directorates, with a clear golden thread connecting the Council Plan, the performance management framework, and individual appraisal objectives.
- From a dominant focus on cost reduction to a balanced approach covering financial sustainability, service quality, and resident outcomes.
- From centralised transformation activity to local accountability within Directorates, supported by enabling functions.

4.6 While the Transformation Programme successfully delivered savings, sustained improvement in outcomes for residents cannot be achieved through short-term programmes alone. Lasting change requires empowered frontline teams, routine use of data, and improvement embedded into everyday operations. The strong delivery of the Transformation Programme now enables continuous improvement to become central to business-as-usual performance management.

4.7 This transition is not the end of transformation but a maturing of it. The Council remains committed to improving outcomes for residents, and this shift provides a more sustainable and accountable operating model. This is in line with the Mayor's 'Recover, Reset and Deliver' priorities for the Council, and the Council is now ready to move into the 'Deliver' phase.

4.8 The implementation of a new performance management cycle, embedding the principles of continuous improvement, will enhance the Council's ability to deliver the

Council Plan vision. A revised Performance Management Policy will be brought forward for Executive consideration.

- 4.9 The Customer Strategy and the Neighbourhoods Model, previously agreed by Executive and currently in delivery, will continue within business-as-usual arrangements. Housing and digital activity from the former Transformation Programme will be embedded within the Council's performance management framework. A refreshed Programme and Project Management Policy will also be brought forward, simplifying governance and reflecting the transition to Continuous Improvement.
- 4.10 The table below sets out the arrangements that are being put in place to ensure the ongoing delivery of these key pieces of work within the continuous improvement approach:

Theme	Remit	Inter-dependencies and interactions
Customer	<p>Delivery of the Customer Strategy will continue.</p> <p>Following delivery of the Strategy to date and the movement of resources to centralise corporate customer resources to enable delivery, future work will be overseen with in the Finance Directorate Plan and supporting performance management cycle, and if necessary, the project management framework, where new project activity is identified.</p>	<p>Organisational Development – the Council's People Strategy will deliver a programme of activity around customer good practice to ensure the organisation's leadership, culture, systems and capabilities are aligned with resident needs and the principles of good customer engagement, as set out in the Customer Strategy.</p> <p>Digital Strategy (in development) – The Digital Strategy will provide the clear, ethical and practical direction on the technical solutions the Council will implement to meet its needs. The Customer Strategy work will ensure these solutions are utilised to improve outcomes for residents.</p> <p>Customer facing functions within other Directorates -work collaboratively with services to identify high volume customer engagement processes that would me most likely to benefit from use of digital tools identified and implemented by the Digital Strategy, to improve customer experience and reduce processing costs.</p> <p>Neighbourhoods model – there is ongoing model that continues to be developed that will ensure that both customer and neighbourhoods provide one tiered support offer with Customer services focussing on universal access services and the neighbourhoods model providing place-based locality services for more complex support needs, with a focus on prevention.</p> <p>This will ensure both elements deliver one support offer, with no overlap to provide the right door, at the right depth.</p>
Digital	<p>The Digital Strategy will set the strategic direction of the organisation in relation to digital. It will identify and deliver implementation of new technical solutions to meet needs of business within the Council's suite of digital solutions that comprise its digital estate.</p>	<p>Customer Strategy – the Customer Strategy will deliver changes to Council processes, to exploit the technical solutions that are identified and put in place by the Digital Strategy to reduce costs of customer interactions and improve outcomes.</p> <p>Corporate Asset Management Plan – Where the strategy plans work on Council assets, there will need to be ongoing alignment between it and the Asset Management Strategy to ensure that</p>

Theme	Remit	Inter-dependencies and interactions
	<p>It will ensure that the Council has a digital estate that has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear visibility and control of its digital products and platforms - A coherent estate with reduced complexity and duplication - Robust governance and accountability for the lifecycle of digital systems - Secure, resilience and compliant technology. - A sustainable funding model, including realignment of budgets to reflect ongoing ownership, maintenance and support costs for digital products - Clear identification of functional owners responsible for defining business requirements, processes, data quality and operational change. <p>There will be project activity once written — requiring project oversight and project governance to deliver implementation.</p> <p>ICT will support services to deliver digitally-aligned processes, where technology can enhance, extend or streamline service delivery, improve efficiency, strengthen compliance and produce better customer outcomes. Successful implementation is dependent on services completing preparatory work, requirements definition, demand analysis, and data readiness.</p> <p>The draft strategy will be presented to Executive for consideration in June 2026. It will set out in more detail, the content of the strategy, project activity that may be required to deliver it, resources and a timeline for implementation.</p>	<p>planned investment considers the Council's planned medium- and long-term use of its assets.</p> <p>All Directorates – the Strategy, and its implementation, will need to be regularly reviewed to ensure ongoing alignment between it and the strategic direction of the organisation and its directorates. Implementation of Directorate Plans will support visibility of future direction of travel on key responsibilities of departments.</p> <p>Capital Programme – the emerging Strategy will identify its Capital support needs. There will need to be consideration of this within the Capital programme, which has already earmarked an indicative amount to support investment in the Council's digital estate.</p>
Housing	<p>The Council will ensure that a Housing Strategy is brought forward, underpinned by a robust housing needs assessment.</p> <p>The Strategy will set out how the Council will meet current and future housing needs, using its powers and partnerships to improve housing supply, quality and support.</p> <p>It will provide a framework that focusses on preventing and reducing homelessness, improving the quality and management of existing homes</p>	<p>Adults and Children's directorates – understanding current and future volumes and needs of the most vulnerable residents. If the strategy is successful, it should ensure there is a housing market that can meet the needs of all residents, reducing the number who are homeless or having to be housed in unsuitable temporary accommodation.</p>

Theme	Remit	Inter-dependencies and interactions
	and shaping a balanced market that attracts investment while protecting vulnerable residents.	
Neighbourhoods	<p>The Council will continue to implement the Neighbourhoods model that was agreed by Executive in April 2025.</p> <p>The model sets out a vision for Neighbourhoods to deliver an approach, working with partners and communities ‘to make Middlesbrough a cleaner, safer, stronger, and healthier place to live through proactive, intelligence led partnership working and by building community resilience’.</p> <p>The Head of Neighbourhoods will continue work to implement the model with all stakeholders, which will involve reconfiguring relationships between statutory organisations, voluntary sector, private sector, residents and businesses to achieve change by developing collaborative approaches that address underlying causes of community problems.</p> <p>This programme of work will align with the Pride in Place to ensure the community has an opportunity to shape their community and strengthen them.</p> <p>Actions to implement the model fully will be embedded within Directorate Plans, including action to put in place Neighbourhood Plans for the North, South, East and West of the Town.</p> <p>It will also capture key actions to deliver a Community Engagement Strategy to deliver the second part of the model’s vision.</p> <p>Where there is ongoing project management activity required to deliver the model, this will be continued and oversight maintained through the emerging performance and budget management framework.</p>	<p>Customer Strategy - ensuring ongoing alignment between the customer and neighbourhoods model and adherence to the principles set out in the Customer Strategy.</p> <p>Capital Programme – Ongoing funding required to maintain to deliver the building works to establish the physical footprint of the locality working model as agreed at Executive in February 2026.</p> <p>Regeneration - dependent on delivery of building works required.</p> <p>Pride in Place – this programme will have to have consideration of the community driven priorities for investment in pride in place designated areas and identify opportunities to work with those areas to further enhance the impact of the Neighbourhoods model alongside Pride in Place investment. A report will be brought forward on Pride in Place for Executive consideration in April 2026.</p> <p>All Directorates – Collaboration to implement the staffing model to ensure the locality hubs contain staff with the right skill sets to be able to provide an integrated, prevention focused support service that improves outcomes for our residents and reduces the number of residents that need to seek Council support in crisis by helping them at an earlier stage.</p> <p>Partners – again, by focussing on resident needs rather than Council remit, the locality working model will collocate those partners that most commonly support residents who are also being supported by the Council. This will reduce overlap in provision of public sector intervention, reduce costs to the public sector, remove barriers between organisations and most importantly improve outcomes for residents.</p>

Developing a Place Strategy

4.11 The report also sets out the planned development of a Place Strategy by the Place Leaders Partnership and proposes that Executive endorses the Council working with the partnership to develop that Strategy. The Strategy will enable the Council to identify key priorities, in partnership with our public, private and voluntary sector partners.

4.12 It will provide a blueprint that the Council and its partners can all use to work together, to tackle Middlesbrough’s economic and social challenges. Once drafted, the draft Place Strategy will go through the Council’s decision-making processes to ensure that all Members can consider and agree the Council’s contribution to that strategy.

4.13 The next step will be that public consultation by the partnership will be undertaken in the spring. The consultation will seek views on the emerging vision and priorities for a Place Strategy. Following completion of this, a draft strategy is planned to be ready for adoption by all partners within the partnership in early Autumn 2026. Full Council will be asked to approve the Council’s participation in the strategy at this point.

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 Members could choose to not refresh the activity within the plan or the measures that assess impact. This is not recommended because the Plan would not then provide a blueprint against which the organisation can set its supporting plans, strategies and policies against, with any confidence that the Plan reflects the priorities and needs of the town’s residents.

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

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	The Council Plan 2026-29 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.
Legal	Implementation of the refreshed Council Plan 2026-29 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 refresh sets out a range of outcomes, which when delivered would address key risks within the Council’s Strategic Risk Register
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	The impact assessment found that the Council Plan 2026-29 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 plan will have a positive impact on reducing poverty, it sets out how poverty will be at the heart of everything we do.
Climate Change / Environmental	The plan will have a positive impact on climate change and the environment, with relevant priorities including supporting people to live healthier lives for longer, improving the look and feel of physical spaces in the town and reducing poverty.
Children and Young People Cared for by the	The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on children and young people, proposed outcomes around improving educational attainment included.

Authority and Care Leavers	
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
Publish the refreshed Council Plan in the Council's website and communicate it to staff.	Head of Chief Executive's Department	31 March 2026
Submit a report to Executive on the Pride in Place National Programme and its delivery in Middlesbrough	Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing	8 April 2026
Amend the Council's Performance Management Policy to ensure the Council maximises its ability to achieve the Council Plan and submit it for consideration by Executive.	Head of Chief Executive's Department	30 April 2026
Amend the Council's Programme and Project Management Policy to ensure the Council has a proportionate and sustainable approach to the identification and delivery of project activity.	Head of Chief Executive's Department	30 April 2026
Submit a draft Place Strategy to Full Council.	Director of Regeneration and Housing	30 September 2026

Appendices

1	Refreshed Council Plan
2	Impact Assessment Level 1 (Initial screening assessment)

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Council Plan 2024-27	28 February 2024
Executive	Council Plan 2026-29	3 December 2025

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