

Council Plan 2026-29



'We're approaching the future with more confidence and putting in place the foundations for lasting change. We're ambitious for Middlesbrough and believe our priorities will help us build on the progress we've made.'

Foreword

Welcome to our Council Plan for the 2026-29 period.

This document is an update on our priorities and how we'll judge our performance. Our vision is for Middlesbrough to be a thriving, healthier, safer and more ambitious place where people want to live, work, invest and visit. We believe we're heading in the right direction.

Middlesbrough is a town with a proud history, strong communities and enormous potential. In recent years, the Council and the town have faced significant financial, organisational and social challenges.

Meeting these challenges has required honesty, determination and difficult decisions. Thanks to the dedication of our staff, partners and residents, we are now in a much stronger position - financially, operationally and in how we govern ourselves.

This Council Plan sets out our shared priorities for the next three years. It is focused on improving outcomes for residents. The plan is designed to support thriving neighbourhoods and build a more inclusive and resilient local economy. It also aims to give children and young people the best possible start in life and improve the health and wellbeing for people of all ages.

Looking further ahead, we're approaching the future with more confidence and putting in place the foundations for lasting change. That means investing now in programmes that will

have benefits for years to come. We're investing in our children and young people so they're not left behind in the future, regardless of where they live in our town.

We're rethinking our town centre, so it becomes a more attractive place to live, work and visit, with the benefits felt right across Middlesbrough. And we're working with our partners on new approaches to help people live healthier and longer lives.

We're ambitious for Middlesbrough and believe our priorities will help us build on the progress we've made.

Chris Cooke
Elected Mayor of
Middlesbrough

Erik Scollay
Chief Executive



Chris Cooke, Elected
Mayor of Middlesbrough



Erik Scollay,
Chief Executive

Middlesbrough's challenges and opportunities



1. Middlesbrough is a lively and exciting place with a diverse population. Approximately 20% of our people are of an ethnic minority. We are proud that people from different backgrounds get on well together.



2. We're the heart of the Tees Valley with 800,000 people living within a 30-minute radius. We're a busy place with lots happening.



3. Our population of around 156,000 lives in an area of just 35 square miles. Roughly 19 people live on each football pitch size of land making it the most densely populated part of the North East.



4. Middlesbrough is a vibrant place with a strong sense of community.



5. Our population is younger than the regional and national averages.



6. We must ensure our future workforce has the right skills so we can attract investment.



7. Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for men and women are both lower than national averages.



8. We must build on the progress we have made financially and start to deliver improved services to our residents.



Our vision and priorities

We will thrive

Our 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.



1

A successful and ambitious town

Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.

2

A healthy place

Helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives.

3

Safe and resilient communities

Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.

4

Delivering best value

Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.



A successful and ambitious town



Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.

Outcomes we want to achieve

We will grow businesses and employment opportunities within the town

Middlesbrough is home to thriving companies in innovative industries who compete on the world stage. To ensure we continue to be an attractive place to start or build a business, we will work to grow the range of employment opportunities. We will attract new businesses and support existing ones to grow, increasing the links between employers and job seekers.

We will close attainment gaps and work with education providers to increase the number of students who achieve their expected grades

Our town boasts award-winning education institutions including Teesside University, Middlesbrough College and the Northern School of Art. We have dozens of wonderful schools led by inspirational teachers.

We will support these organisations to deliver better education outcomes for children and young people. This will include a focus on groups that have experienced poorer outcomes in recent years.

We will ensure housing supply meets local demand

Our population is growing and we need to have homes that meet all types of needs and aspirations. Housing provided through the Council must promote and support independent living.

Services for homeless people will be safe and dignified, supporting access into long-term sustainable accommodation.

Transport connectivity will improve

Our transport infrastructure will meet the needs of our residents and businesses.



How will we know we are having a positive impact?

- More new businesses will be created.
- We will help more young people to get an apprenticeship.
- Attainment levels for children in the town will increase. Not only that, attainment levels for children that have had poorer education outcomes in recent years will improve. We will make sure children get this help.
- There will be a reduction in the number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are excluded from schools.
- More new homes will be built.
- The number of empty properties in Middlesbrough will be reduced.
- We will work with owners and landlords to bring empty homes back into use to meet local housing demand.
- We will work with owners and landlords to address and respond to properties that have been neglected or have problem tenants.
- We will reduce demand for our homelessness service, by trying to stop people becoming homeless in the first place.
- We will work with Tees Valley Combined Authority to maintain and improve transport connectivity to major opportunities as they arise.

A healthy place



Helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives.

Outcomes we want to achieve

People will live healthier lives for longer, and health inequalities will be reduced

Using our Family Hub model, we will support families to secure the best start in life for children.

Early intervention and support for families will prevent issues escalating and build resilience.

Through our Public Health Strategy we will work with partners to increase the prevention and early detection of disease and act on the structural factors that drive ill health.

Adult Social Care Services will further develop early intervention and prevention services to reduce the need for social care assessment.

We will consistently promote the conditions for improved health and wellbeing to users of our services and their carers.

The look and feel of the physical space in Middlesbrough will improve

Through our Green Strategy we will continue to drive up recycling rates and encourage our residents to join with us in protecting our environment, green spaces and parks.

We will be closer to our communities and involve them in decision making

To ensure the principle of fairness is at the heart of everything we do, we will work together with communities and partners to develop solutions that improve outcomes for all.

We will always consider the impact our policies, strategies and decision making have on health inequalities.

We will reduce and alleviate the impact of poverty to improve lives and life chances for people in Middlesbrough

We will work with partners to support our residents out of poverty and improve community resilience to prevent people falling into poverty.

Meeting this challenge is central to all of the ambitions within the Council Plan.



How will we know we are having a positive impact?

- People will have access to healthy food as well as safe and tidy streets and green spaces.
- Health outcomes for those with multiple vulnerabilities will improve.
- Preventable illness and premature death will be reduced.
- More people will be satisfied with Middlesbrough as a place to live.
- People who commit environmental crimes will be fined and prosecuted.
- Equipment in play parks will be maintained to a high standard.
- More people will get involved in our community activities.
- People will get the opportunity to have their say on topics that matter most to them.
- More residents will agree that their local area is a place where people get on well together.
- More people will use our libraries and Community Hubs.
- The impact of school holiday hunger and inactivity will reduce.
- More children from low-income families will benefit from our 10 x 10 programme, which offers positive life-changing experiences.
- People will be able to access essential items when they are in financial crisis.
- The number of young people who stay in education, employment and training after 16 will increase.
- Less people will be homeless or living in extreme poverty.

Safe and resilient communities

Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.



Outcomes we want to achieve

All adults will be supported through strength-based practice to live the lives they choose

We will improve access to advice and information for adults and informal carers.

We will develop and expand our use of assistive technology and reablement to minimise the need for ongoing care.

We will develop the choice of accommodation and support options for vulnerable adults to promote independent living, reducing reliance on residential care.

We will support digital inclusion

We will work to improve digital inclusion, including by enabling residents to access our services in the most convenient way.

We will continue to work with voluntary and community groups and individuals to improve the resilience of our communities

We will develop an approach that will allow individuals and groups to benefit from volunteering opportunities.

We will improve our support to children and young people and increase their ability to access opportunities.

Residents will feel safer

We will work to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour across the town, allowing residents to live safer lives.

How will we know we are having a positive impact?

- Adults' rights, dignity and independence will be protected through our safeguarding process.
- The number of people who manage their own health and wellbeing through advice, guidance and initial support will increase.
- We will promote independence and reduce long-term dependency on care.
- We will increase the number of residents supported to improve their confidence in using digital technology.
- We will work effectively with the voluntary community to improve services and support to residents.
- We will work with Cleveland Police and other partners to continue to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.
- We will help more people to get support from domestic abuse services.



Delivering best value

Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.

Outcomes we want to achieve

We will be a well-run Council that provides Value for Money Services

We have continued to make progress in this area over the past two years and are now well placed to be able to deliver real improvements to the services we offer residents. We are embedding the principles of continuous improvement throughout our work to ensure we deliver, real, sustained change.

We will continue to provide auditors with assurances that we have robust and effective governance in place.

We will set a balanced budget and medium-term financial plan

We are required by law to set a balanced budget each year. We also have a duty to deliver a balanced Medium Term Financial Plan over a period of three to five years.

The 2026/27 Budget report of February 2026 highlighted a significant improvement in our financial position. The improved position includes increased levels of reserves.

We will continue to intervene when service areas are overspending. There needs to be a continued focus on our finances in the future so we can provide the best possible services.



How will we know we are having a positive impact?

- We will continue to deliver our Continuous Improvement Plan.
- We will regularly consult with our staff to find out what is going well and where we need to improve.
- Our staff and elected members will work positively with each other.
- Our external auditors will continue to progress towards a position where they are able to give an unqualified judgement on our Statement of Accounts.
- We will deliver our services within planned budgets.
- We will have enough money in our reserves to be able to effectively deal with challenges and continue to meet the needs of our residents.
- We will collect Council Tax and business rates to deliver the sums budgeted as income through the Collection Fund.




Middlesbrough
moving forward

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