

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture - Geoff Field
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<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Executive Member for Neighbourhoods - Cllr Ian Blades
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
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<b>Date:</b>	8 April 2026
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<b>Title:</b>	Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) Task and Finish Group – Community Cohesion (Service Response)
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<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Safe and resilient communities
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<b>Key decision:</b>	No
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<b>Why:</b>	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
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<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Non-urgent decision
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<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
<p>That Executive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the report of the OSB Task and Finish Group into Community Cohesion and the accompanying recommendations; and</li> <li>2. Approves the Action Plan prepared by the service in response to the recommendations.</li> </ol>

<b>Executive summary</b>
<p>This report is for information and is intended to provide a response to the OSB report on Community Cohesion.</p> <p>The rational for the proposed decisions set out above is that the action plan sets out how the service area will meet the recommendations made by OSB within a reasonable timeframe.</p>

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

### Safe and resilient communities

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the recommendations within the OSB report and the proposed actions that the service area have put forward in order to meet the recommendations.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	Aims within this ambition are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities</li> </ul>
A healthy Place	Aims within this ambition are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promote inclusivity for all</li> <li>- reduce poverty</li> </ul>
Safe and resilient communities	Aims within this ambition are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support adults to be independent for longer</li> <li>- promote new ideas and community initiatives</li> <li>- reduce crime and anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive

- a) notes the response to the report; and
- b) agrees the proposed actions and adopts the action plan.

## 3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

- 3.1 The rationale for the proposed decisions set out above is that the action plan sets out how the service area will meet the recommendations made by OSB within a reasonable timeframe.

## 4. Background and relevant information

- 4.1 At its meeting on 25 September 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Board established a three-Member Task and Finish Group to examine the issue of 'Community Cohesion'.
- 4.2 The aim of the investigation was to examine measures used to promote and strengthen community cohesion in Middlesbrough and identify whether any gaps existed. While the riots of 2024 prompted this review, the group want to stress that community cohesion remains a salient, constantly moving, issue. It should not be viewed through single issue events.

4.3 The scrutiny of this topic fits within the following vision and priorities of the Council Plan:

- Safe and Resilient Communities – Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.

4.4 The terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group's investigation were as follows:

- a) Identify what measures are in place to promote community cohesion and integration and assess the extent to which the measures implemented have been effective.
- b) Identify any gaps in measures to promote community cohesion.

4.5 Full report is attached as **Appendix A**.

4.6 Conclusions of the report are set out below:

- a) Community Cohesion is a broad subject encompassing a multitude of issues. The remit of the Group was not to address any one issue but rather to examine the Council's position around the general Community Cohesion agenda.
- b) A key component of the Community Cohesion agenda is communication and forging effective links between the Council and the communities it supports.
- c) The Council's support of the Community Cohesion agenda seems to have received a boost because of the riots that occurred in August 2024.
- d) There has been a noted increase in reported hate crime across the Cleveland Police area between 2012/13 to 2022/23 from 359 to 1,562. There was a further increase of 11% in the period 2024/2025 which was influenced by the riots of 2024.<sup>1</sup>
- e) While the reasons for the riots are largely seen as the result of right-wing rhetoric following the deaths in Southport, it is important to note that other factors may have contributed to them.
- f) The Council recognises the need to effectively communicate and support its communities through a Community Cohesion lens. However, prior to the riots this support did not always receive the attention it perhaps deserved. As

such, the resources allocated to supporting the Community Cohesion agenda could have been stronger in this period.

- g) Many of the measures now in place to support Community Cohesion were reactive, specifically in response to the riots.
- h) The establishment of the Gold and Silver Groups, as well as a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling hate crime and enhancing existing communications with communities is welcome, as are the various projects and initiatives created by those groups.
- i) The effectiveness of those projects and initiatives is monitored, however, that monitoring is only recently becoming available due to the relatively limited time they have been in place.
- j) The Council has supported events that promote community cohesion, namely the Mela and Diwali celebrations. However, before the riots there is limited evidence of any other large-scale events of this nature. The group are aware that investment in cultural events forms part of the proposed budget for 2026/27 and it hopes that events promoting community cohesion will benefit from this.

4.7 Recommendations are set in the action plan at **Appendix B** with proposed service area actions in response to them with timescales and named officers as lead.

**5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate**

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny Board will be consulted throughout the progress of the action plan.

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

6.1 Do not support the action plan. This approach is not recommended as the plan has set out how the service area will meet the recommendations made by OSB within a reasonable timeframe.

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

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Costs associated with implementing the actions will be absorbed within the existing budgets as part of the Neighbourhood work.
Legal	Legal team will be consulted during the delivery of the action plan and any legal issues will be addressed as they arise. There are no legal issues identified at this moment in time

Risk	Failure to implement the action plan increases the risk of fragmented communities, and reduced resilience in responding to incidents.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	The action plan aims to support community cohesion and equality across Middlesbrough.
Reducing Poverty	Improving poverty is a key aspect of the neighbourhood agenda and it is embedded in the work that the teams do. It will also be threaded throughout the community cohesion strategy.
Climate Change / Environmental	N/A
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	The community cohesion strategy will involve all elements of the community including young people and care leavers
Data Protection	All information will be held and stored in line with data protection policies and procedures.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Deliver the action plan	Marion Walker	December 2026

### Appendices

1	Appendix A - Full report
2	Appendix B - Action Plan

### Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

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