

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD
28 January 2026
DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THE OSB TASK & FINISH
GROUP – COMMUNITY COHESION

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AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. At its meeting on 25 September 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Board established a three-Member Task and Finish Group (herein “the Group”) to examine the issue of ‘Community Cohesion’.
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.
3. The Group are keen to stress that “community cohesion” is a broad subject, and addressing all its facets is not the purpose of this report. Instead, the review’s focus is relatively narrow and compares its findings with some of the recommendations contained in the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel report approved in July 2021.
4. As part of its evidence gathering process, the group held discussions with key partners including representatives from the Council, Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner and voluntary sector.

COUNCIL PLAN – VISION AND PRIORITIES

5. 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.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

6. 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.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/SETTING THE SCENE

Community Cohesion Definition

7. Community cohesion refers to the ability of diverse communities to function and thrive harmoniously, valuing diversity, promoting equal opportunities, and fostering positive relationships between people from different backgrounds. Community cohesion is important because a cohesive community is better equipped to address challenges, support each other, and work towards a shared future.
8. The Local Government Association (LGA) states that Councils, and Councillors, have a role to play in contributing to the community cohesion agenda. They can provide tools and resources to:
 - Offer a common vision and a sense of belonging for all
 - Positively value diversity
 - Provide equal opportunities to people from different backgrounds; and
 - Provide an environment where strong and positive relationships can be developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.¹
9. The LGA offers a range of tools that can support Community Cohesion, and the group encourage all Members to review those tools on the LGA's webpages.
10. The group recognises that Community Cohesion encompasses a range of factors ranging from socioeconomic activity to race and ethnicity. As such, the review has approached Community Cohesion quite broadly.

National Context

11. Following the murders of three young children attending a summer dance class in Southport significant civil disorder broke out in London, Hartlepool, Aldershot, Sunderland, Hull, Liverpool, Blackpool, Stoke-on-Trent, Rotherham, Tamworth, Middlesbrough and Plymouth between 31 July and 5 August 2024.
12. In the immediate aftermath, significant coverage was paid to reactions to the disorder and how local police forces dealt with the perpetrators.
13. This report does not explore external influences on community cohesion. The group stress that national, and international factors may have had an impact on community tensions that ultimately led to the riots in summer of 2024. These factors include societal frustrations associated with economic decline and loss of traditional economic engines, such as the closure of SSI Steel Works in Redcar. International

¹ Local Government Association "Community cohesion, inclusion and equality" <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/equalities-hub/community-cohesion-inclusion-and-equality>

considerations may include foreign powers attempting to influence social cohesion and democracy in the UK, as debated by MPs in Parliament on 11 December 2025.²

14. During its investigation the Group found there was some correlation between the number of recorded hate crimes and the community tensions that were witnessed in the summer of 2024. While high-level data has been included here it should be viewed as indicative rather than prescriptive. It should also be noted the way hate crimes are recorded by the police changed in 2024. As such, precise data comparison is difficult.
15. Hate crimes are a subset of notifiable offences recorded by the police (categories for hate crimes being race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identify). In the year ending March 2025, 3% of offences recorded by the police were identified as being hate crimes.
16. Nationally, in the year ending March 2025 there was a 2% increase in recorded hate crimes from the previous year. Within the hate crime category, there was an increase of 6% and 3% for race and religious reasons respectively, while other hate crime categories saw slight decreases over the same period.
17. This increase is reflected locally with 1,475 hate crimes relating to race and religion being reported in the Cleveland Police Area in 2024/2025. This was an increase of 316 (or 27%) on the previous year, the highest numerical increase of other northern police force areas.³

Table 1 – Reported hate crime statistics for 2024/2025.

Police Area	Population (Est.)	Reported Hate Crimes 2024/25 (2023/24)	% of Pop.	Numeric Change	% Change
Cleveland	570,000	1475 (1159)	0.26%	316	27%
Cumbria	500,000	559 (387)	0.11%	172	44%
Durham	640,000	744 (558)	0.12%	186	33%
N. Yorkshire	830,000	702 (693)	0.08%	9	1%
Northumbria	1,500,000	2875 (2681)	0.19%	194	7%

Local Context

18. Riots took place in Middlesbrough on 4 August 2024, causing approximately £750,000 of damage and led to more than 100 arrests⁴. The disorder took place in central electoral wards, directly affected two wards, its impact prompted the Overview and

² Foreign Interference, Hansard, UK Parliament, [Foreign Interference - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

³ North police force areas are Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, North Yorks and Northumberland. The data used was extrapolated from government data at [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [More than 100 arrests as Cleveland Police continue hunt for suspects involved in violent disorder | Cleveland Police](#), <https://www.cleveland.police.uk/news/cleveland/news/2024/august/more-than-100-arrests-as-cleveland-police-continue-hunt-for-suspects-involved-in-violent-disorder/>

Scrutiny Board to establish a Community Cohesion Task and Finish Group to look at the broad issues around Community Cohesion to understand if the disorder was symptomatic of a wider problem.

19. Middlesbrough prides itself on inclusivity and a welcoming approach. It's diverse socio-economic and demographic makeup mean supporting communities is a high priority.
20. Middlesbrough is ranked as the fifth most deprived local authority area in England as of 2019. As of 2025 it was included in local authority areas whose districts had the highest proportion of neighbourhoods that were the most deprived in England. ⁵
21. Middlesbrough is the most ethnically diverse local authority area in the Tees Valley. According to the 2021 census, it has a British Minority Ethnic Population of 17.6%.
22. As a starting point, the Group considered the Scrutiny review into Community Cohesion of 2021 to understand if the issues and recommendations remained relevant and were being pursued.
23. The recommendations from that report were:
 - *That the Council develop a Community Cohesion Strategy for Middlesbrough that:*
 - *Ensures all aspects of community cohesion work is co-ordinated and monitored.*
 - *Informs the Council's existing social regeneration agenda and is monitored through existing performance reporting processes.*
 - *Is in place by the end of 2022/23.*
 - *Given recent staffing changes, as well as the discontinuation of funding for key projects after 2021 and the uncertainty brought about the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council should look to ensure the current Strategic Cohesion and Migration Manager is sufficiently supported via a robust staffing structure beyond 2021.*
 - *That the Executive consider including Middlesbrough in the Refugee Resettlement Scheme.*
 - *To assess progress against its objectives, the Panel should receive an update on the progress of Place Based Working no later than November 2021.*

⁵ English indices of deprivation 2025: statistical release, [English indices of deprivation 2025: statistical release - GOV.UK](#)

EVIDENCE GATHERED

Term of Reference A – Identify what measures are in place to promote community cohesion and integration.

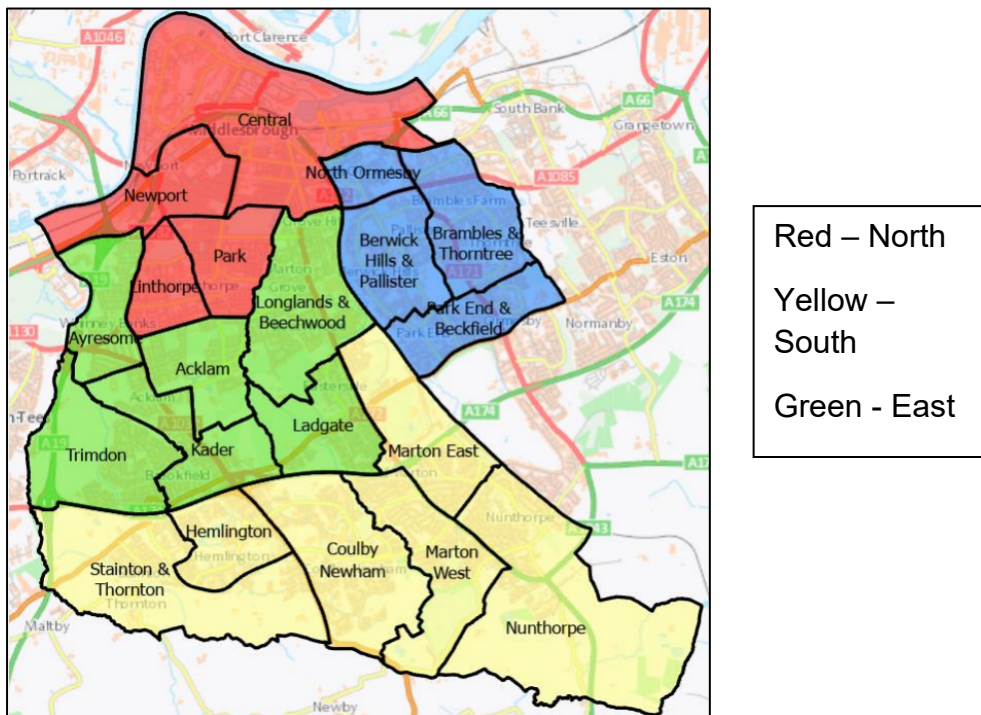
24. The group have separated this Term of Reference between the periods both before the riots, during the riots and after the riots.

Before the Riots

25. Community Cohesion has always been an important service within the Council and the group understands support for this service has always been provided nominally within the existing resources of the time. The riots of August 2024 provided a catalyst to expand those services.

26. For some time before the summer of 2024, the Council was aware it needed to enhance how it communicated with and supported Middlesbrough's communities. It had begun moving services from centralised locations to localities. Local area working, whereby key services are placed in the communities they serve had been piloted in 2023 with "Locality Working" and its successor "Neighbourhood Working" having been in place since early 2024. Neighbourhood working takes the form of Neighbourhood Hubs placed in the North (Newport Hub), South (Viewley Centre, Hemlington), East (LWE Berwick Hills) and West (Easterside Hub *Grove Hill Hub will replace it once it is redesigned) of the town.

Figure 1 – Neighbourhood Model Map



27. The need to engage with communities sits at the heart of this working model, and functions such as "Community Conversations", are a predominant feature. The group

recognises that the full aspirations of this model were not fully realised and embedded by the time of the riots in August 2024.

28. Prior to the riots, Community Cohesion work was undertaken within core budgets. From a staffing perspective each locality included a Community and Cohesion worker broken down in the following way (headcount):
- North – 2
 - East – 2
 - South – 1
 - West – 1
29. The group found that while a Community Cohesion Strategy was not in place by the time of the riots, the Council's approach to the Community Cohesion agenda was not lacking.
30. For example, the Council's Executive approved the content and priorities set out in the 'Community Safety Action Plan 2024-2026'⁶ on 24 July 2024. which had been developed through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP Action Plan's Mission Statement is as follows:

"... working with partners in our Neighbourhoods to ensure our residents "feel safe, be safe and stay safe". Middlesbrough's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together the responsible authorities of Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue, Health and Probation to work in collaboration with other statutory and voluntary services and local people to reduce crime and make people feel safer by dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, delivering the Prevent duty (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015) and ensuring specific obligations such as public engagement and delivery of an action plan are met. The priorities and key objectives set out in this plan are based upon an assessment of crime and disorder issues across the Borough and reflect the views of the community on matters that are important to them to collectively implement and deliver initiatives that will help all areas of Middlesbrough become a safe place to live, work and visit."

31. The CSP Action Plan sets out three headline priorities – each with a number of strands underneath – and is built around a robust outcome-based performance management framework in order to review and monitor progress:-

Priority 1 – Feel Safe (perceptions)

Objectives

- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (Inc. environmental crime)
- Improving community cohesion and resilience

⁶ Middlesbrough Community Safety Plan 2024-26 [mgConvert2PDF.aspx](#)

- Delivering the prevent agenda

Priority 2 – Be Safe (reducing violence)

Objectives

- Improve mental health
- Reduce exploitation
- Reduce substance misuse
- Reduce domestic violence
- Tackling serious violence

Priority 3 – Stay Safe (Neighbourhoods)

Objectives

- Working with communities (doing 'with' not 'to')
- Improving environmental cleanliness
- Addressing underlying community issues

The Riots

32. In Middlesbrough riots took place in the northern part of the town in areas with both relatively high levels of deprivation and BAME populations. The reasons behind why the riots broke out are well documented with differing viewpoints. This review does not attempt a root-cause analysis.
33. It is widely acknowledged that the riots took place in the immediate aftermath of the murder of three girls at a dance class in Southport on 29 July 2024. Following the tragedy, the false claim that the killer was a Muslim asylum seeker was spread on social media. This subsequently led to civil unrest at a Southport Mosque which turned to violence. Across the following week, there was unrest and disorder of some form across 27 towns and cities that targeted a wide range of places associated with asylum seekers and Muslim immigrants more generally. A particular focus was the hotels used by the UK Government to house asylum seekers, though mosques as well as streets and shops associated with racialised minorities were also targeted.⁷
34. From a Community Cohesion perspective, other factors may also have been at play. For example, the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in its publication "*Understanding the 2024 UK riots*" acknowledges that, relatively speaking, "little about the dynamics and nature of these events" is known. It points out that, "Although the protesters included activists from the far-right, subsequent arrests show the participants often

⁷ Royal Geographical Society "Understanding the 2024 UK riots" [The Geographical Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)

had few or no clear political connections and included delinquents, relishing the mayhem, who had opportunistically decided to participate”.⁸

35. Given the number of young people involved in the riots, the group found the Children’s Commissioner’s report “Children’s involvement in the 2024 riots” of interest. It found that many young people who had actively taken part in the riots were not motivated by far-right rhetoric but feelings of animosity towards the police, curiosity and the prospect of excitement.⁹
36. Regardless of the reasons, the riots demonstrated that the Community Cohesion agenda needed to be a high priority for the Council.

Response the Riots

37. Following the riots, the need for a joined-up, multi-agency, response was universally recognised. The Council and its partners established a multi-agency recovery structure with ‘Gold’ and ‘Silver’ Recovery Groups to plan how to support residents and return to a state of normality.
38. The group greatly appreciate Cleveland Police’s response to the riots and wanted to understand its position in a wider Community Cohesion context. The Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner stated that after the riots his top priority was to engage with affected communities and speak directly with them. He emphasised the need to “speak out together” and assure Middlesbrough’s diverse communities the Police were there to support people not just enforce the law. The Police and Crime Commissioner also stated that a previously dormant group, the “Strategic Hate Crime Group” had been reinvigorated with the intention of bringing partners together to tackle hate crime.
39. Operationally, the Police response to the riots has been the subject of a parliamentary report by the Home Affairs Select Committee, published on 14 April 2025. The report states that an estimated additional 40,000 Police Officer shifts were required to deal with the unrest over a 10-day period which resulted in more than 1,500 arrests.
40. The key findings of the report fall into the following areas:-
 - Social media and disinformation
 - Police response
 - The criminal justice system
 - Two-tier policing

⁸ Royal Geographical Society “Understanding the 2024 UK riots” [The Geographical Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)

⁹ Children’s Commissioner “Children’s involvement in the 2024 riots” [Childrens-involvement-in-the-2024-Riots-Report.pdf](#) p9

41. Several conclusions and recommendations were made in the report¹⁰ and the group have not repeated them here.
42. From a Council perspective, on 8 January 2025, the Executive approved recommendations on spending a total of £655,000 provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), via the Communities Recovery Fund (CRF).
43. The constituents of the Gold Recovery Group include senior representatives from Middlesbrough Council, Thirteen Group, Cleveland Police, Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner, Teesside University, Tees Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Trust, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency, Probation Service and Cleveland Fire Brigade. This group set the key objectives for Silver Group along with the three key areas of focus for grant funding:-
 - a) Engagement
 - b) Events within neighbourhoods
 - c) Youth Provision
44. Silver Group was tasked with developing key areas of work under each of the above grant funding focus areas.
45. The constituents of the Silver Group include representatives from the following organisations: Cleveland Police, Middlesbrough Council, Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner, BME Network, Thirteen Group, Fire Brigade, Teesside University, Local Resilience Forum, Mayors Office, Executive Member for Community Safety and the following voluntary and community organisations: MVDA, Streets Ahead, Amal Project, Investing in People and Cultures, Localmotion, Hindu Cultural Centre, Mosques, Caritas and Ubuntu.
46. Silver Group established the following multi-agency subgroups that have had an input into the proposals for spending the £655k grant funding. Each sub-group meets at least once a month and has developed an action plan which feeds directly into Silver Group:
 - Communications Group – partners monitor social media/press for arising issues, develop key messages to dispel disinformation and misinformation using trusted community voices to share messages. Developed a communications plan for emergency events and shared key details with community groups to advise their members.

¹⁰ House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee “Police Response to the 2024 Summer Disorder” published 14 April 2025. [Summer 2024 disorder](#)

- Young People and engagement – Develop a plan to engage with all young people in the community via schools, colleges, YJS, youth providers, NEET and VCS organisations, develop relationships and activities, challenge hate vocabulary and signpost to existing activities/newly developed activities.
 - Community Conversations – To employ an experienced hate crime rhetoric specialist to assist in developing and delivering appropriate conversation rhetoric, tools and methods to engage with the community. Develop a process that feeds back on actions to be taken, where appropriate.
 - Hate Crime and Community Tensions – Explore existing hate and community tension reporting process, further develop/publicise to ensure community awareness and access to report. Explore translation and reach out to vulnerable individuals/groups.
 - Community Engagement and Participation – Map existing community offer, engage with community, identify gaps/needs, develop and deliver activities/events to further engage with wider community, building cohesion.
 - Victims and Perpetrators – Ensure victims have access to support services, understand processes and expectations. Further develop restorative justice approach. Co-ordinate plan to manage release of those convicted of rioting. Produce a local film with real footage/audio from Middlesbrough riots to use as a tool within restorative justice approach.
47. It was agreed that a proportion of the funding would be distributed direct to community groups in the form of grants, to allow them to lead on activities.
48. The Community Riot Fund proposals are in line with the conditions of the grant. These grants support a range of projects that will help the town in respect of increasing its level of resilience and community cohesion.
49. The group heard that Silver Group provides the opportunity for each organisation to provide updates on recent activities, any issues arising (actioned as necessary), and to discuss upcoming events to be widely shared with partners. Silver Group also receives weekly feedback on Community events which, as at October 2024, include:-
- Newport Community Fun Day
 - Middlesbrough Mela (well attended by all communities)
 - BME Network Event (focusing on resilience work, with more than 40 attendees)
50. As might be expected, there are numerous performance measures associated with the grant funding. A full list of these measures and performance against them can be

found at Appendix 1. There is also extensive feedback from projects and events initiated as a result of the Community Recovery Fund which can be found at Appendix 2.

51. A Hate Crime Awareness Week took place between 12-19 October 2024. Posters were distributed to community groups and agencies for display, and information regarding Third Party Reporting for hate crimes was provided at Teesside University's Freshers Week for all students and remained ongoing. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland is leading on the Strategic Hate Crime Group and the Hate Crime Operations Group raises key issues with Silver Group for awareness and actions.
52. Work had commenced, in conjunction with the Local Resilience Fund (LRF) to develop Newport Hub as a pilot Resilience hub for any emergency event. Membership was being developed, together with appropriate training, facilitated by Middlesbrough Council, and delivered by community members.
53. In December 2024, CURV (Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence), under the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, announced the launch of a small grants fund, 'RISE'¹¹, aimed at building community resilience.
54. CURV provided Catalyst Stockton and Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) with £15,000 each to set up a small grants fund for the purpose of building community resilience as well as improve the perception, and fear of violent crime.
55. The MVDA will manage the funding on behalf of CURV's RISE programme in Middlesbrough and be provided with a management fee of 15% of the total grant. This adds a further £4,500 to the funding. The target area for this work is Newport Ward.
56. Suggestions on how RISE grant funds could be used included (but not exhaustive):
 - Increased provision for children and young people. This could include practical projects such as clearing/cleaning green spaces for children to play, or educational/awareness initiatives presenting risks of drugs and engagement in violent crime.
 - Focus on promoting healthier lifestyles for all.
 - Intergenerational community engagement – bringing residents together to create a stronger sense of community and safety.

¹¹ OPCC, CURV - [Small grants fund RISE launched to build community resilience - Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

57. Applicants needed to explain how their project would help reduce the impact of violent crime in the community and enhance the feeling of safety for residents, whilst improving community resilience and cohesion. All projects needed to capture baseline perceptions within the community then again following delivery of the project to measure impact.
58. Several other projects have, or are, in the process of being ran to support the community cohesion agenda. These include Deep Democracy Foundations course (Delivered Sept – Dec 2025) which delivered a valuable approach and provided tools to 30 frontline staff working with interpersonal, group, team, and community dynamics. Based on the foundation of Lewis Deep Democracy, this course provided the theoretical background and experiential learning opportunities needed for day-to-day work and personal environments. The course increased people's capacity to succeed in working in complex social systems by helping them understand relationship/group dynamics and by offering practical tools for working with differences in a group, making effective decisions and by increasing their conflict literacy to turn destructive conflict into creative tension.
59. The Community Bridgebuilders Project (Delivery January-March 2026) is a fresh initiative to increase the skills, competencies, and confidence of those wanting to build bridges in Middlesbrough, and to increase understanding across difference. It was identified that an area of significant work needed to be undertaken with frontline staff from statutory and voluntary organisations to increase their ability and confidence to have 'difficult' conversations with communities around sensitive issues.
60. The Educate & Unite: Schools Shaping the Future Supporting Schools in Middlesbrough (Delivery Jan-March 2026) project recognises that Middlesbrough's schools play a critical role in fostering understanding, combating hate, and rebuilding trust. Misinformation, socioeconomic inequalities, and unresolved tensions have fuelled division, making education a key tool for social cohesion. This project will equip students, educators, and community leaders with the tools to challenge misinformation, promote inclusivity, and create a sense of belonging. Working alongside key partners, including Middlesbrough Council, the BME Network, Nur Fitness, and the AMAL Project, it will ensure young people and local communities co-design elements of this programme.

Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership

61. While the Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership was created sometime before the riots, the Partnership's strategic role in assessing the changing landscape and threat was brought into sharper focus following the riots.
62. The Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership is a statutory body made up of key 'Responsible Authorities' with equal responsibility for reducing crime and anti-social

behaviour under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (and as amended by the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014 and the Police and Crime Act 2017). The Responsible authorities work alongside voluntary services and local people to reduce crime and make people feel safer by dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, reoffending and serious violence.

63. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) undertakes various functions in order to deliver its statutory requirements. One of those functions is to produce a strategic intelligence assessment that informs a Community Safety Plan setting out the CSP's priorities and how they would be addressed. The Plan is reviewed every two years.
64. The Active Intelligence Mapping (AIM) Group monitors patterns and trends in multi-agency data informing deployment of partnership resources to address emerging issues monthly.
65. In addition, multi-agency thematic groups are in place, with task and finish groups established as and when required. These groups also link into the Neighbourhood Action Partnership meetings (NAP) with the operating areas being aligned to the neighbourhood working model. As described above, the Neighbourhood Model ensures communities are at the heart of everything the CSP does.

Community Activity since the riots

66. On 4 August 2025, a Community Showcase event organised by Council staff with help from volunteers and community organisations was held in Middlesbrough Town Hall. The event marked one year from the response to the riots in Middlesbrough where staff and Middlesbrough people joined together to clean up the town.
67. The Council had allocated funding received from the Government's Community Recovery Fund for a range of events, activities and grassroots organisations/projects and was designed to reduce the risk of further disorder in the future and rebuild trust and cohesion within the community.
68. Attendees at the event included volunteers who had worked to strengthen ties between different cultures and also families who had been targeted by rioters. The event showcased a range of musical performances and foods from various cultures and those organisations that had received funding presented their progress to date.

Term of Reference B – Identify where there are significant gaps in the provision of Community Cohesion measures

69. Rather than "gaps" in Community Cohesion support, it was found that prior to the riots the support could be described as nominal. The group stress they do not think that

support was inferior. However, the riots did demonstrate how the Council needed to be more pro-active in its approach. As such, the expansion of Community Cohesion related activities should be seen as filling any gaps that a pre-riot approach left.

70. When considering the findings of the 2021 scrutiny report, the group found that a dedicated Community Cohesion Strategy was not in place but had been recommended. However, in this period a ‘Sustainable Community Strategy for Middlesbrough 2008-2023’¹² was in place and had been developed by the Middlesbrough Partnership (now Local Strategic Partnership). This provided a framework for partners to co-ordinate service development and delivery across the town which Community Cohesion activity could contribute to.
71. While the group is disappointed that a singular event, namely the riots, was the catalyst for the creation of the Community Cohesion Strategy, they are nevertheless encouraged to find that a Strategy is now being developed in conjunction with external stakeholders, namely Belong.
72. Belong are a cohesion and integration network who are “the UK’s leading membership organisation on social cohesion, offering academic research, consultancy, training, networking, thought leadership and events for members across sectors in the UK.” The strategy has completed the scoping stage and was now undergoing the co-production stage which is hoped to be completed by February 2026.
73. There has been staffing expansion to support Community Cohesion activities, such as the creation of Neighbourhood Navigators in localities. This role delivers intensive interventions that support individuals at the earliest opportunity. The role of the Neighbourhood navigator is to develop and deliver tailored programmes supporting adults and families with complex needs access mainstream and specialist services. Navigators will create bespoke programmes that engage individuals and families and improve outcomes, addressing short and long-term challenges. Applying a ‘whatever it takes’ attitude, and working with a range of stakeholders and partners, they will support individuals and families to engage at the earliest opportunity with services including, but not limited to, substance misuse, health, social care, education, training and employment services.
74. One of the key principles of the Neighbourhood Model is prevention and early intervention that helps to reduce escalations. The Navigators will work with partners and apply a ‘whatever it takes’ attitude to engage with and support people who need help as they present to the Neighbourhood teams.

¹² Sustainable Community Strategy for Middlesbrough 2008-2023 developed by the Middlesbrough Partnership : [Middlesbrough sustainable community strategy 2008-2023](#)

75. Neighbourhood Navigators will support individuals, adults and families with complex needs and deliver intensive interventions within a multi-agency environment to offer support at the earliest opportunity to prevent them from needing to use other services later. The Navigators will help to guide people through often complex systems and networks making it easier to access support and stay in touch with the right services first time.
76. The Neighbourhood Model also saw the appointment of eight Community Development Officers, four Neighbourhood Link Workers and 16 Neighbourhood Caretakers. All of these posts are based within each of the neighborhood areas.
77. It is important to stress that additional roles such as Neighbourhood Navigators complement existing roles based in the localities, such as Neighbourhood Safety Wardens, Neighbourhood Development Officers and Community Hub Officers. All of these roles contribute to the Community Cohesion agenda by facilitating, and engaging in, conversations with communities to ensure any tensions are identified and addressed before they become a problem.

CONCLUSIONS

1. 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.
2. A key component of the Community Cohesion agenda is communication and forging effective links between the Council and the communities it supports.
3. The Council's support of the Community Cohesion agenda seems to have received a boost because of the riots that occurred in August 2024.
4. 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 2024.¹³
5. 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.
6. 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

¹³ [New Cleveland-wide hate crime awareness campaign launched by PCC - Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

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

7. Many of the measures now in place to support Community Cohesion were reactive, specifically in response to the riots.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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 largescale 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Based on the evidence gathered, the Task and Finish Group submit the following recommendations:
 1. To ensure Scrutiny contributes to Community Cohesion agenda: - Develop a Community Strategy as quickly as possible with quarterly progress updates brought to scrutiny.
 2. A draft of the Community Strategy should be brought to Scrutiny as the earliest opportunity before it is finalised.
 3. To mitigate the risk of future unrest: - An early warning system, such as a Community Cohesion dashboard, should be developed to alert the Council and relevant partners of community tensions.
 4. To ensure a robust Community Cohesion offer: - that the Council embeds initiatives created because of Home Office funding as part of its business-as-usual operations. An update should be brought back to Scrutiny on this during the 2027/2028 budget setting process.
 5. As part of the Council's approach to improved youth participation: - a specific plan be created that includes demonstrable, and quantifiable, actions to engage young people about the dangers of misinformation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

12. The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the course of their investigation:-

- M Walker – Head of Neighbourhoods
- J Pearce – Neighbourhood Manager (South)
- J Mace – Strategic Cohesion & Migration Manager (South)
- M Storey – Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland
- A McDonald MP – MP for Middlesbrough & Thornaby East
- M Davies – Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA)

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – MHCLG CCRF returns Jan - June 2025
- Appendix 2 - MHCLG Community Recovery Fund (CRF) performance feedback November 2025

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Bonnett, A and Hopkins P, “Understanding the 2024 UK riots” The Geographical Journal, [The Geographical Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)
- Final Report of Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel + Service Area Action Plan to Exec 13 July 2021.
- Executive Report “Community Recovery Fund”, 08 Jan 2025.
- Executive Report “Neighbourhoods Model, 30 April 2025.
- Guardian Newspaper, “Hatred of police not racism motivated children in English riots, report finds”, [Hatred of police not racism motivated children in English riots, report finds | Young people | The Guardian](#)
- Home Office, Ted Cante, 2001. “Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team”
- House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee “Police Response to the 2024 Summer Disorder” published 14 April 2025, <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/47476/documents/246718/default/>
- Middlesbrough Council “Togetherness and community at special Event marking one year since riot” [Togetherness and community at special event marking one year since riot | Middlesbrough Council](#)
- The Children’s Commissioner “Children’s Involvement in the 2024 riots” <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2025/01/Childrens-involvement-in-the-2024-Riots-Report.pdf>

**COUNCILLORS DAVID BRANSON, DAVID COUPE AND JOHN KABUYE
TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON BEHALF OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

Overview and Scrutiny Board Membership: Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe J Kabuye, L Lewis, T Mohan, I Morrish, J Platt, M Saunders, Z Uddin, G Wilson J Young.

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