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## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 18 March 2026.

**PRESENT:** Councillors L Young (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Branson, E Clynch, D Coupe, J Kabuye, T Mohan, J Platt, Z Uddin, G Wilson and J Young

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors P Gavigan

**OFFICERS:** C Benjamin, S Bonner, E Scollay, G Field and R Johansson

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors L Lewis, I Morrish, M Saunders and B Hubbard

### 25/70 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### 25/71 **MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - 25 FEBRUARY 2026**

A Member identified several typographical amendments to the minutes, and it was agreed the Democratic Services Officer would amend them as described.

Notwithstanding the changes identified, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 25 February 2026 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### 25/72 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board received an update on the Executive Forward Work Programme. Members were advised that the system used to publish the Executive Forward Work Programme was currently being updated and, as a result, an up-to-date version was not available. It was noted that the version available online contained outdated information and would be republished once the system update was complete.

Members discussed the current version for the Forward Plan and commented on the timing of items within the programme, including the rolling nature of updates and the lack of confirmed dates for some Executive decisions. It was noted that items were added as they were agreed, which limited the ability of the Board to plan its work effectively.

Members emphasised the importance of forward visibility to support the Board's overview and scrutiny function, particularly in relation to key areas such as budget setting. It was suggested that earlier engagement with senior officers, including the Chief Executive, would assist Members in understanding forthcoming issues.

Members quired if any further information was available relating to the Forward Plan item 'Update on the Neighborhoods model'.

**ORDERED** that OSB be provided with an update on the following items listed on the Forward Plan:

- Update on the Neighborhoods Model.

### 25/73 **SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair invited Scrutiny Panel Chairs to provide an update.

The Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Panel provided an update following the Panel's meeting held on 9 March 2026. The update included information on recent Ofsted focused visits and forthcoming Ofsted inspection. Members were advised that Children's Services was preparing

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for inspection, including work relating to children missing in education. It was noted that the schools bill was up to date and that several working groups had been established, including those relating to social care and placements. The next meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to take place on 20 April 2026.

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel provided an update following the Panel's meeting held on 23 February 2026. The update included work relating to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Members received a presentation from the Policy, Partnership and Delivery Manager of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the perpetrator strategy. Council's Domestic Abuse Strategic Lead also provided an update on work to acquire White Ribbon accreditation, with further evidence being gathered. It was noted that the Director of Public Health would present the annual public health report at the next Panel meeting. The next meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to take place on 13 April 2026.

The Chair of the Place Scrutiny Panel provided an update following the Panel's meeting held on 16 February 2026. The update included consideration of flood risk management issues and changes to national flood risk arrangements. Members also received information relating to investigatory powers. It was noted that the Panel's final report on Barriers to Regeneration had been completed and recommendations proposed in the report. Discussion also took place regarding potential areas for future topics, including housing provision and Middlesbrough's bicentenary in 2030.

#### **NOTED.**

#### **CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 4.8.25 the Chair proposed a motion without notice, which was seconded and agreed, to change the order of business. The motion proposed that Agenda Item 8 Final Report of the Place Scrutiny Panel – Barriers to Regeneration be heard next. It was agreed that the order of business for the remainder of the meeting be items 8, 9, 6a, 7 and 10.

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#### **FINAL REPORT OF PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - BARRIERS TO REGENERATION**

The Board received the final report of the Place Scrutiny Panel on Barriers to Regeneration.

The report outlined the findings of the scrutiny review, which sought to identify the key barriers to regeneration in Middlesbrough and explore how the town could attract more businesses and investment.

Members were advised that the review had considered a range of factors impacting regeneration, including changes to retail environment, vacancy rates, transport and accessibility, crime and perceptions of safety, and wider economic conditions. The report also highlighted examples of good practice from other local authorities, and the importance of diversifying town centre uses to support long-term sustainability.

The Board heard that key issues affecting regeneration included the perception of anti-social behaviour and crime, levels of vacant properties, reduced footfall, and broader economic pressures. It was also noted that stakeholders had identified the need to improve the physical environment, increase safety and security, and support a more diverse and vibrant town centre offer.

Members were advised that the Panel had made several recommendations to the Executive, including proposals to promote Middlesbrough more positively, increase events and cultural activity, improve safety and security, enhance the physical environment, strengthen transport links, and work in partnerships with key stakeholders.

During discussion, Members noted the importance of attracting more businesses and increasing activity within Middlesbrough town centre. The need to diversify the use of town centre spaces was highlighted, including encouraging leisure, entertainment and cultural uses to increase footfall. Members also discussed the role of events and seasonal activities in drawing people into the town centre and improving perceptions of safety.

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In addition, Members emphasised the importance of improving perceptions of the town, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour, cleanliness and the general environment, and noted the need for a more proactive approach to addressing the visible signs of decline. The potential for areas such as Linthorpe Road to be better utilised to support a more concentrated and vibrant town centre offer was also discussed, alongside opportunities to encourage healthier and more active uses of the town centre, including walking and cycling initiatives.

Members welcomed the report and noted its findings.

**AGREED:**

1. The final report and its recommendations be endorsed.
2. The report be referred to the Executive for consideration.

25/75

**FINAL REPORT OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL - HEALTHY PLACE MAKING**

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Panel presented the final report on Healthy Placemaking, which focused on addressing childhood obesity in Middlesbrough.

The report outlined that childhood obesity remains a significant public health challenge in Middlesbrough, with rates above regional and national averages and strongly linked to deprivation. It highlighted the importance of adopting a whole-system approach, recognising the role of the built environment, planning, transport, education and public health in shaping health outcomes.

The Panel's findings emphasised the need for strong partnership working Council services and with external organisations, alongside embedding health considerations into policy, planning and decision-making processes. The report also highlighted the role of initiatives such as active travel, access to green space, and the management of the hot food takeaway environment in supporting healthier lifestyles.

Members were advised that the Panel had made several recommendations to the Executive, including proposals to strengthen governance arrangements, embed health considerations within planning and policy development, increase the use of Health Impact Assessments, promote active travel and access to green space, and address environmental factors such as the concentration of hot food takeaway premises.

Members highlighted the importance of encouraging physical activity among children and young people, including through schools and opportunities before and after the school day, with examples of informal activity such as children playing football.

Members queried the presentation of data within the report, including ward-level information, and confirmed that this did not affect the overall findings or recommendations, and that the report could progress to the Executive. It was agreed that clarification from the service area would be sought and circulated to the Board.

Barriers to active travel were also raised, including the condition of pavements, environmental factors such as litter and dog fouling, and school travel patterns. It was noted that where children do not attend the nearest school, there may be increased reliance on car travel.

Wider transport considerations were also highlighted, including limited bus provision and the impact this may have on travel choices, as well as the need to support walking and cycling as viable alternatives.

Members welcomed the report and noted its findings.

**AGREED:**

1. The final report and its recommendations be endorsed.
2. The report be referred to the Executive for consideration.

25/76

**FORWARD PLAN ACTIONS PROGRESS**

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The Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture provided an update on outstanding forward plan actions, specifically in relation to Pest Control Services and Bereavement Services.

In respect of Pest Control Services, Members were advised that the work had been undertaken to implement a revised pest control service. It was noted that appropriate systems and staffing arrangements were being delivered to support delivery of the service.

In respect of Bereavement Services, Members were advised that a strategy was in development, with some actions currently outstanding. It was noted that the service operates across several sites, including those affected by flooding, and that improvements to existing systems were required. Officers also highlighted capacity challenges and confirmed that work was ongoing within existing budgets to progress the service. Reference was made to current cremator provision and the need to consider future requirements.

**NOTED.**

25/77

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability was in attendance and provided an update on the service areas.

In respect of Bereavement Services, Members were advised that work on the extension to Thorntree Cemetery would commence shortly. As part of this, the existing drainage system was being assessed, and any required works would be undertaken. Burials would continue as normal during that period, with appropriate communications issued to families and Members. Longer-term options for burial provision continued to be explored, and feasibility study at Acklam Cemetery regarding cremators and land use was due to commence.

In relation to Waste Services, it was reported that deliveries of food waste bins, caddies and recycling bins had begun and had generally been positively received by residents. The delivery programme was progressing in line with the published timeline, supported by communications including emails, bin tagging and online information. Residents were also able to sign up for collection reminders.

Members discussed several operational aspects of the service, including the distribution and use of food waste caddies, communication with residents, and arrangements for collection. Clarification was provided regarding the phased rollout of the service, current collection arrangements, and ongoing work to support resident understanding and participation, including engagement activity and educational communications. It was also noted that recruitment and resourcing arrangements were in progress to support the service.

In respect of Alleyway Maintenance and Environmental Services, Members were advised that a programme of works was in place including regular baiting, cleansing, and periodic deep cleans. It was noted that enforcement action was taken where issues such as fly tipping occurred. Members discussed the effectiveness of current arrangements, including cleansing schedules, resource levels, and opportunities to strengthen enforcement activity.

The Board also received an update on transport and infrastructure projects, including schemes within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. This included updates on cycleway proposals, bus and pedestrian improvements, and ongoing design and consultation activity. Members raised queries regarding specific schemes, including their impact on traffic, consultation processes, and future planning considerations. It was noted that further reports would be brought forward in due course.

An update was also provided on the Transporter Bridge, including progress on structural assessment, design work, and funding considerations. Members discussed the future use of the bridge, associated constraints, and indicative timelines for delivery. It was noted that further details would be presented as proposals progressed.

In respect of Highways, Members were advised of progress within the Council's capital programme, including footway and carriageway works, crossing improvements, and drainage

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activity. Discussion included maintenance approaches, prioritisation of works, and resource considerations, including the balance between reactive and planned maintenance. Members also raised issues relating to flooding, gullies and general infrastructure maintenance within their wards, and Officers advised that works were being prioritised based on need and available resources.

**NOTED.**

25/78

**ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

The Chair advised the Board that a survey was due to be circulated to all Members seeking their views on how scrutiny was operating and encouraged all Members to complete the survey when it was available.

The Chair reminded the Board that consultation was open for the 2026/27 scrutiny work programme and encouraged all Members to submit any recommendations they may have.

In pursuance of the Board's short review into poverty, the Board was encouraged to consider recommendations following the evidence received.