

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Chief Executive - Erik Scollay
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Mayor - Chris Cooke
<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive
<b>Date:</b>	8 July 2026
<b>Title:</b>	Making Middlesbrough Thrive
<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	All
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
<b>Subject to call in?</b>	Yes
<b>Why:</b>	Non-Urgent Report

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>	
That Executive:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>APPROVES</b> that Directorate Service Plans for 2026/7 explicitly set out the key evidence of need relevant to the Directorate’s responsibilities, including reference to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation</li> <li>▪ <b>APPROVES</b> that Directors will identify and record specific commitments within their Directorate Service Plans which demonstrate how their activity will contribute to reducing inequality and addressing deprivation in Middlesbrough.</li> <li>▪ <b>APPROVES</b> that Directorate commitments arising from this work will be drawn together into a single, consolidated report and brought back to Executive, setting out the Council’s collective and intentional approach to responding to deprivation and areas of greatest need.</li> <li>▪ <b>APPROVES</b> that alongside the development of the Council’s consolidated position, a structured process will be established to engage key partners — including those involved in the Town Strategy and wider system leadership arrangements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ set out their planned contributions to addressing the inequalities identified through the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- align these contributions with the Council's own commitments in order to support a coordinated, place-based response.
- **NOTES** that a separate report setting out the Council's formal response to the Overview and Scrutiny Board Short Review on Poverty will be brought to Executive in September 2026.

## Executive summary

This report is being brought to Executive in accordance with the executive functions as set out in the constitution at para 10.20, specifically (b) which provides that for Executive to make key decisions not otherwise delegated by the Mayor.

The Council Plan 2026–29 sets out a clear commitment to improving outcomes for residents, reducing inequality and alleviating the impact of poverty, particularly through the ambition of 'a healthy place'. Delivering these priorities requires clarity about how activity across the organisation responds to evidence of need at neighbourhood level.

This report proposes a focused and proportionate approach to capture the Council's evidence-based activities, which will be its contribution to tackling deprivation. The report requests that each Director ensures their Directorate Service Plan for 2026/27 clearly sets out how planned actions, priorities, investment and commissioning decisions respond to what the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows about deprivation and areas of greatest need in Middlesbrough.

The plans are not intended to influence IMD rankings directly. Instead, they will demonstrate how directorate activity is informed by deprivation evidence and aligned to the Council Plan priorities. Bringing this work together through the service planning process will enable Executive to consider the collective response, provide challenge where appropriate, and gain assurance that resources and activity are aligned to need, and that evidence-based decisions are being taken.

In addition to embedding this work within Directorate Service Plans, the approach includes a further step to ensure visibility and transparency. Directors' commitments will be drawn together into a single report to Executive, providing a clear and accessible account of how the Council's planned activity collectively responds to deprivation and areas of greatest need. This will ensure the Council's approach is not only embedded, but visibly intentional.

While this report focuses on strengthening how the Council identifies, aligns and articulates its own contribution, it is recognised that the inequalities highlighted by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation are longstanding and systemic. They cannot be addressed by the Council acting alone. Sustained improvement will require coordinated and complementary action across public services, anchor institutions, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.

The report sets out how the Council will engage with partners through the Place Leaders Partnership and other key partnerships to create a town level document that sets out the

commitments of all key partners to addressing deprivation and its impacts on the town's residents.

The report also sits alongside the Overview and Scrutiny Board Short Review on Poverty, which highlighted the need for clearer corporate alignment and understanding of impact. A fuller response to those recommendations will be brought to Executive in September 2026.

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

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to embed consideration of deprivation evidence within Directorate Service Plans for 2026/27. This will support delivery of the Council Plan by:

- strengthening alignment between strategic priorities and operational planning;
- ensuring that planned activity, investment and commissioning decisions are informed by areas of greatest need;
- ensuring that, alongside embedded service planning, there is a clear, visible and accessible statement of the Council's intended response to deprivation, supporting transparency, Member oversight and external confidence; and
- supporting a more consistent, whole-Council approach to reducing inequality and alleviating poverty.

1.2 The report also seeks to work with partners to maximise the impact that a focus on addressing deprivation can have on the Council Plan ambitions.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
<b>A successful and ambitious town</b>	Ensures that service planning for growth, skills, employment and housing is informed by evidence about deprivation and opportunity gaps.
<b>A healthy Place</b>	Directly supports the Council Plan commitment to reduce health inequalities and alleviate the impact of poverty by aligning service plans with deprivation evidence.
<b>Safe and resilient communities</b>	Encourages directorates to demonstrate how planned activity contributes to resilience, safety and independence in the most deprived neighbourhoods.
<b>Delivering best value</b>	Improves assurance that resources are targeted where they can make the greatest difference, supporting prevention and reducing avoidable demand.

## 2. Recommendations

### 2.1 That the Executive:

- **APPROVES** that Directorate Service Plans for 2026/7 explicitly set out the key evidence of need relevant to the Directorate's responsibilities, including reference to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation
- **APPROVES** that Directors will identify and record specific commitments within their Directorate Service Plans which demonstrate how their activity will contribute to reducing inequality and addressing deprivation in Middlesbrough
- **APPROVES** that Directorate commitments arising from this work will be drawn together into a single, consolidated report and brought back to Executive, setting out the Council's collective and intentional approach to responding to deprivation and areas of greatest need.
- **APPROVES** that alongside the development of the Council's consolidated position, a structured process will be established to engage key partners — including those involved in the Town Strategy and wider system leadership arrangements to:
  - set out their planned contributions to addressing the inequalities identified through the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; and
  - align these contributions with the Council's own commitments in order to support a coordinated, place-based response.
- **NOTES** that a separate report setting out the Council's formal response to the Overview and Scrutiny Board Short Review on Poverty will be brought to Executive in September 2026.

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

- 3.1 The Council Plan already establishes the Council's strategic priorities, including a clear commitment to reducing inequality and alleviating the impact of poverty. The recommended decision does not introduce new priorities or a standalone strategy. Instead, it provides a clear mechanism for implementation and assurance, by:
- using the existing Directorate Service Planning process;
  - requiring Directors to articulate how their plans respond to deprivation evidence; and
  - enabling Executive to consider the collective response across the organisation.
- 3.2 This approach responds directly to the Overview and Scrutiny Board's findings on the need for clearer corporate alignment, while allowing time for fuller consideration of its recommendations through a separate report.
- 3.3 Widening the approach to convene a whole town response by key stakeholders reflects that many of the entrenched issues which drive deprivation levels will require a concerted, focussed effort on the part of key partners from across the town in order to drive real change.

## 4. Background and relevant information

- 4.1 The Council Plan recognises that Middlesbrough faces persistent challenges associated with deprivation, including health inequalities, educational attainment gaps and concentrations of poverty. Addressing these challenges is central to the ambition of 'a healthy place', and fundamental to the delivery of all Council Plan priorities.
- 4.2 The updated Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2025) highlight that Middlesbrough has the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived nationally, unchanged since 2019. This highlights that the challenges facing the town are deeply embedded and unlikely to improve without sustained, coordinated long-term intervention. Appendix One of this report sets out the domains and indicators that comprise the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- 4.3 During 2025/26, the Overview and Scrutiny Board undertook a Short Review of the Council's approach to poverty. While recognising effective work already underway, the Board highlighted the need for clearer corporate alignment and greater understanding of how activity contributes to tackling poverty and its wider impacts.
- 4.4 Embedding responses to deprivation evidence within Directorate Service Plans provides a practical and proportionate approach to address these issues, in advance of the Council's formal response to the OSB recommendations, due to be presented to Executive in September 2026.
- 4.5 While this report focuses on strengthening how the Council identifies, aligns and articulates its own contribution, it is recognised that the inequalities highlighted by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation are longstanding and systemic. They cannot be addressed by the Council acting alone. Sustained improvement will require coordinated and complementary action across public services, anchor institutions, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.
- 4.6 The Council will engage with partners through the Place Leaders Partnership and other key partnerships to create a town level document that sets out the commitments of all key partners to addressing deprivation and its impacts on the town's residents.
- 4.7 Following completion, a consolidated report will be brought back to Executive, outlining the Council's collective approach to tackling deprivation and targeting areas of greatest need. This document will articulate the Council's commitment to '**Making Middlesbrough Thrive**'.
- 4.8 Implementation of this approach aligns with reforms being driven nationally around a shift toward a focus on prevention rather than delivery of services when people are in crisis, as demonstrated by the neighbourhood health services reforms. These reforms aim to create community-based centres for delivery of patient focussed care that aims to proactively deliver early intervention to reduce the need for hospital admissions.

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

5.1 Not applicable. This report amends the Council’s corporate service planning requirements and will support clearer, more consistent planning and reporting to Members on how Council activity responds to areas of greatest need.

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

6.1 An alternative would be to develop a standalone poverty or deprivation strategy, or a separate action plan for directorate prioritisation. This has not been recommended at this stage, as the Council Plan already sets the overarching strategic framework and priorities. The supporting performance management framework enables the Council to monitor performance and take corrective action where necessary.

6.2 Another alternative would be to continue existing arrangements without requiring explicit consideration of deprivation evidence within directorate service plans. This has not been recommended, as it risks continued inconsistency in how evidence of need is reflected across Directorates and would miss the opportunity to bring together all planned actions into a single collective statement.

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

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Financial (including Social Value)	No direct financial implications or additional MTFP support required. Improving alignment of resources with need may support better outcomes over time.
Procurement	Supports clearer alignment of commissioning decisions with deprivation evidence and social value objectives.
Legal	Supports compliance with Best Value duties through clearer strategic alignment and assurance.
Risk	Reduces strategic risk associated with poorly targeted investment and unmanaged inequality. The proposals will positively impact on the Best Value Strategic Risk by explicitly strengthening the link between evidence of need and directorate actions.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	Strengthens consideration of inequality and differential impacts on communities.
Reducing Poverty	Directly supports delivery of Council Plan commitments to reduce and alleviate the impact of poverty.
Climate Change / Environmental	Encourages place-based consideration of environmental conditions in deprived neighbourhoods.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Supports better alignment of service planning with the needs of vulnerable children and young people.
Data Protection	No direct data protection implications arise from approval of the report.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Amend Directorate Service Plans templates to explicitly capture a section on evidence of need within the remits of Directorates and their planned responses to them.	Head of Chief Executive's Department	Within 1 month of approval
Populate revised Directorate Plan templates with the additional information.	Leadership Team	30 September 2026
Complete a service response to the OSB scrutiny review of the Council's approach to poverty.	Head of Chief Executive's Department	2 September 2026
Engage with the Place Leaders Partnership to discuss deprivation in Middlesbrough and seek commitments from them on actions they will take to address the challenges demonstrated by the IMD data.	Corporate Director for Regeneration and Housing	September 2026
Set out, distribute and discuss the IMD and the framework and KPIs needed to improve outcomes at key partnership meetings with the shared aim of Making Middlesbrough Thrive.	Partnership leads of key partnerships as identified in the Partnership Governance Register	September 2026
Prepare and submit a consolidated report to Executive setting out Partner contributions to Making Middlesbrough thrive and the Council's collective, intentional response to deprivation and the next steps that will be taken.	Head of Chief Executive's Department	9 December 2026

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Indices of Multiple Deprivation domains and indicators

## Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Council Plan 2026-29	11 March 2026
Executive	Performance and financial Management Policy and Programme and Project Management Policy Review	8 April 2026

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