

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Democratic Services Officer
Relevant Executive Member:	N/A
Submitted to:	Children's Scrutiny Panel
Date:	27 July 2026
Title:	Setting the Work Programme 2026-2027, for the Children's Scrutiny Panel
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	A healthy place
Key decision:	No
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?	No
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
That the Children's Scrutiny Panel: • NOTES the draft work programme for the 2026–2027 municipal year, as set out at Appendix 1. • SELECTS two Scrutiny Investigation Topics for inclusion in the work programme, taking into consideration the suggested topics at Appendix 2, Member proposals, and the information presented during the overview presentations at the meeting; and, • AGREES any additional overview presentations (internal or external) to be incorporated into the work programme.

Executive summary
The Children's Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider its work programme for the 2026/2027 municipal year.

At the meeting, Members will receive an overview presentation from the Corporate Director of Children's Services. The presentation is intended to provide context on key priorities, challenges, and emerging issues to help inform the Panel's work.

A draft work programme is provided at Appendix 1, alongside a list of suggested scrutiny topics identified through consultation at Appendix 2.

Members are asked to:

- Select two Scrutiny Investigation Topics, taking into account the suggested topics and the information presented at the meeting;
- Note the proposed work programme and scheduled updates; and
- Identify any additional overview presentations they wish to include.

An effective work programme ensures that scrutiny activity is focused, proportionate, and aligned to areas where it can have the greatest impact on outcomes for residents and delivery of the Council Plan.

The Panel is asked to select two scrutiny investigation topics and note the standard agenda items for updates throughout the Municipal Year.

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to ensure that topics agreed for inclusion:

- Affect a group of people living within the Middlesbrough area
- Relate to a service, event, or issue in which the Council has an influence
- Are not issues which the Overview and Scrutiny Board or Scrutiny Panels have considered during the last 12 months
- Do not relate to an individual service complaint
- Do not replicate matters dealt with by another Council Committee unless the issue deals with procedure.

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

- 1.1 Managing an effective work programme is essential to the success of scrutiny panels, ensuring activity is focused on the Council's ambitions and maximises impact on performance and outcomes.
- 1.2 Scrutiny provides an open and transparent mechanism for Members to review, challenge, and influence decisions, policies, and performance.
- 1.3 Scrutiny investigations are carried out over a series of meetings, drawing on evidence to examine current practice and produce recommendations.
- 1.4 This report supports the Panel in establishing its work programme for 2026–2027, including selecting investigation topics, considering the draft programme, and identifying any additional overview requirements.

Our ambitions	Aims
A successful and ambitious town	• We will grow businesses and employment opportunities within the town. • We will close attainment gaps and work with education providers to increase the number of students who achieve their expected grades Ensure housing supply meets local demand. • We will ensure housing supply meets local demand. • sustainable accommodation. • Transport connectivity will improve
A healthy place	• People will live healthier lives for longer, and health inequalities will be reduced • The look and feel of the physical space in Middlesbrough will improve promote inclusivity for all. • We will be closer to our communities and involve them in decision making. • We will reduce and alleviate the impact of poverty to improve lives and life chances for people in Middlesbrough
Safe and resilient communities	• All adults will be supported through strength-based practice to live the lives they choose • We will support digital inclusion • We will continue to work with voluntary and community groups and individuals to improve the resilience of our communities. • Residents will feel safer
Delivering best value	• We will be a well-run Council that provides Value for Money Services. • We will set a balanced budget and medium-term financial plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Children's Scrutiny Panel:

- Note the draft work programme for 2026–2027, including standard updates and presentations;
- Select two Scrutiny Investigation Topics, informed by consultation, Member suggestions, and overview presentations; and
- Identify any additional overview presentations to be incorporated into the work programme.
- The final work programme will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval.

3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Scrutiny panels play a key role in supporting community leadership and improving outcomes for residents through reviewing services, influencing policy, and holding decision-makers to account.

- 3.2 Agreeing a focused and deliverable work programme ensures that the Panel's activity is prioritised and aligned to areas of greatest impact.

4. Background and relevant information

- 4.1 Topics considered during 2025–2026 are set out below for Members' information

Scrutiny Investigation Topics	
Achieved:	Ongoing:
Out of Area Specialist Provision	

Updates / Presentations
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report – 2025/26
Corporate Director's Update (standing item on any issues pertinent to the Panel)
Update on outstanding items from previous review – Children Missing Education
Update on previous review - Out of Area Specialist Provision
Ofsted Update

- 4.2 At the start of each municipal year, Scrutiny Panels are required to establish a work programme for the forthcoming year. This includes selecting topics for in-depth scrutiny investigations and noting standing updates and presentations that will be scheduled throughout the year.
- 4.3 As part of the process for developing the Panel's work programme, Democratic Services has undertaken a consultation exercise between 4 March 2026 and 8 May 2026. A number of scrutiny topic suggestions were received from Councillors, residents, officers, and other stakeholders. These are set out at **Appendix 2**. Members are advised that this list is not exhaustive and that additional topics may be proposed at the meeting.
- 4.4 In addition, at this meeting Members will receive an overview presentation from the Corporate Director of Children's Services. This presentation is intended to provide Members with an overview of key priorities, challenges, and areas of activity to help inform the selection of Scrutiny Investigation Topics and identify any areas where further overview presentations may be beneficial.
- 4.5 When considering topics for inclusion within the work programme, Members are asked to consider the following criteria to ensure that scrutiny activity is focused on areas where it can add value and have the greatest impact:
- Does the issue affect a large proportion of the Middlesbrough population or a specific area of concern?
 - Is the issue strategic and significant?
 - Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's overall performance?
 - Is it likely to lead to effective and achievable outcomes?
 - Does it avoid duplication of work undertaken elsewhere?
 - Is it of concern to partners and stakeholders?
 - Is it an issue of community concern?
 - Are there adequate resources available to deliver the scrutiny activity effectively?

- Is the timing of the scrutiny activity appropriate?

- 4.6 A draft work programme for the 2026/2027 municipal year has been developed and is provided at **Appendix 1** for Members' consideration. The draft programme outlines the proposed meeting schedule, including standing updates, key reports, and indicative timing for scrutiny investigations. This is a working document which can be updated throughout the year. This has been informed by previous work, statutory requirements, and service priorities.
- 4.7 Members are asked to consider the draft work programme alongside the suggested scrutiny topics at **Appendix 2**, the information provided through the overview presentation, and any additional areas where further overview sessions may be required, in order to agree a finalised work programme.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

Ward Members were invited to submit topic suggestions as part of the consultation.

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

No other alternatives are put forward as part of the report.

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

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	Details of Financial impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Legal	Details of Legal impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Risk	Details of Risk impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	Details of Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Reducing Poverty	Details of Reducing Poverty impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Climate Change / Environmental	Details of Climate Change / Environmental impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	Details of Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.
Data Protection	Details of Data Protection impact (if any) will be dependent on recommendations made as part of a chosen review.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Approved recommendations to be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board	Democratic Services Officer	

Appendices

1	Draft Work Programme for 2026/27
2	Suggested Scrutiny Topics for 2026/27

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

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