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PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 6 July 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors D Jackson (Vice-Chair), B Hubbard, A Romaine, D Coupe, J Ewan, J Kabuye, P Storey & P Gavigan

OFFICERS: R Horniman, R Johansson & T Frankland

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Branson (Chair) & T Mohan

26/1 **WELCOME, FIRE EVACUATION AND RECORDING OF MEETINGS**

In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.

26/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

26/3 **MINUTES - PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - 27 APRIL 2026**

The minutes of the Place Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 27 April 2026 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

26/4 **OVERVIEW PRESENTATION - REGENERATION AND HOUSING**

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing was in attendance to present an overview of the Regeneration and Housing directorate. The Service Areas within the Directorate and a brief description of the work each area carried out were discussed. The Service Areas were as follows:

- Growth and Assets
- Housing
- Public Protection
- Community Learning

The Corporate Director also advised Members of the directorate's current priorities which included:

- Transforming the Town Centre
- Development of a new community at Middlehaven
- Addressing Council accommodation issues
- Accelerating housing growth
- Aligning housing demands and housing supply

Members received an update on the projects currently being delivered by the Regeneration and Housing directorate:

- Middlehaven
- Town Plan / Town Centre Strategy / Investment Prospectus
- Employment & Skills Hub
- Old Town Hall
- Southlands
- Nunthorpe Community Centre
- Newham Hall
- Hemlington Grange (multiple)

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The Panel was advised of the challenges that the directorate faced as listed below and retail decline was highlighted as one of the biggest barriers. The amount of retail space needed within Middlesbrough town centre had dramatically reduced compared with pre-Covid-19 levels. Other challenges included:

- Town Centre ASB
- Mayoral Development Corporation
- Difficult office market
- Retail decline
- Empty properties
- Construction costs vs property values
- Nutrient neutrality and Biodiversity Net Gain
- Dwindling resources – capital & revenue
- Commercialising cultural venues
- Aging property portfolio with increasing risk

A Member sought clarification around the number of empty properties in the borough and why tackling this issue was not a priority for the Council. The Corporate Director advised the Panel that the priorities included within the presentation were not intended to be exhaustive. It was clarified that there were approximately 2500 empty domestic properties in Middlesbrough and tackling empty properties remained a priority, although it was acknowledged that doing so was a costly and complex challenge. The Council was currently undertaking a project to address the issue on a street-by-street basis, working in partnership with relevant stakeholders to identify the actions required to achieve meaningful improvements. Details of the streets currently being targeted as part of this work would be circulated following the meeting.

Another Member referred to reports in the media indicating that central government was considering measures to increase the provision of council housing across the country and queried whether Middlesbrough Council had the financial capacity to deliver additional council homes and the locations of any new developments. The Corporate Director advised that larger local authorities may be better placed to deliver additional council housing. However, Middlesbrough Council's current focus was on bringing empty properties back into use to help meet housing needs.

The issue of anti-social behaviour was discussed further and Members heard that it remained a concern frequently raised by stakeholders. However, it was noted that perceptions of the problem were often greater than the reality, with incidents appearing more prominent due to the number of vacant properties and the relative emptiness of the town centre. Members were advised that there were plans to significantly increase the number of Town Centre staff. Their primary role would be to provide support and services aimed at addressing underlying social issues, such as drug and alcohol dependency, rather than relying solely on enforcement measures which could simply result in the displacement of issues to other areas. There was funding available to run this project for two years currently.

The Panel also discussed concerns that councils, particularly those in London and the South East, were increasingly placing homeless families and vulnerable residents in northern areas such as Teesside due to acute housing shortages and the high cost of temporary accommodation in the south of the country. This often resulted in families being moved away from their support networks, while receiving councils were not always notified of arrivals. As a result, the true scale of the issue was likely to be considerably greater than official figures suggested. The Executive Member for Culture and Education suggested that consideration be given to submitting a letter or petition to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the matter.

AGREED that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. The full list of streets being targeted as part of the multi-agency initiative to address empty properties would be circulated to Members following the meeting.
3. Officers would write a letter on behalf of the Chair to send to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government highlighting Member's concerns regarding the impact of southern councils relocating residents to northern regions like Teesside due to cheaper private rents.

26/5

OVERVIEW PRESENTATION - ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE

In the absence of the Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture, the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Housing provided an overview on matters relating to the Environment, Communities and Culture directorate.

The directorate was responsible for the following areas:

- Environment Services
- Highways and Infrastructure
- Neighbourhoods
- Cultural Services
- North East Migration Partnership

Further detail was provided as to what each service area covered and the following priorities for the upcoming year were discussed:

- Roll out new Waste Management arrangements
- Improve environment conditions
- Neighborhood working - further roll out
- Keeping people safe and help communities
- Maintain and develop highways infrastructure - Highways Capital including Transporter Bridge
- Community Safety Plan and partnership implementation to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- City of Culture bid
- Investment in cultural services
- Expand events including community events in each ward

During discussion, Members sought an update on the progress of the City of Culture bid and were advised that the submission was progressing well. The Executive Member for Education and Culture explained that, irrespective of the outcome, the bid process itself would help strengthen partnerships, raise Middlesbrough's profile and support future investment opportunities. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that the bid aligned with the Council's wider regeneration ambitions and reflected Middlesbrough's assets and ongoing investment.

Members raised concerns regarding environmental issues affecting the town centre, including fly-tipping and overflowing commercial waste bins. The Panel also discussed the implementation of the new waste management arrangements. Members were advised that whilst some operational issues had arisen during the initial rollout, the service continued to improve as it became established, including the introduction of food waste collections. Members were encouraged to raise any specific operational concerns directly with the service to assist ongoing improvements.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

26/6

SETTING THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2026/2027

The Vice-Chair presented a report of the Democratic Services Officer, the purpose of which was to assist Members of the Panel to consider and agree its work programme for the 2026-2027 Municipal Year. A list of suggestions received in respect of the Scrutiny Panel's remit were contained at Appendix Two in the reports pack. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Panel should select two topics to review from each directorate. Members discussed the suggestions received from Councillors, Council Officers and members of the public. The Vice-Chair invited Panel Members to suggest topics at the meeting.

Following discussion, Panel Members agreed the following topics for review:

1. Middlesbrough's Bicentenary (ongoing review)

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2. The Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme/Licensing of Private Rented Properties (formal title to be agreed)
3. Future Plans for Transforming the Town Centre
4. Flytipping

The regular Statutory Updates will also be included in the programme as follows:

5. Flood Risk Management
6. RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers) (annual update)
7. Community Safety Partnership (annual update)
8. Prevent and Channel (annual update)

In relation to Topic Three, Members agreed that, to prevent duplication of the Panel's recent *Barriers to Regeneration* review, the scope of the review would focus on future plans for the town rather than identifying regeneration barriers.

In relation to topic four, it was agreed that a short review may be more suitable.

AGREED that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. The topics listed at 1 to 4 above, would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval.

26/7

CHAIR'S OSB UPDATE

The Vice-Chair provided a verbal update on agenda items discussed at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15 April 2026.

- Scrutiny Chairs Update
- Executive Forward Work Programme
- Forward Plan Actions Progress
- Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (Short Review) – The Council's Approach to Poverty
- Draft Terms of Reference – OSB Short Review – What role do Faith and Belief Groups play in Civic Life in Middlesbrough
- Continuous Improvement Plan – Progress Update
- Executive Member Update – The Mayor
- Executive Member Update – Neighbourhoods

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

26/8

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Place Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for Tuesday 28 July at 1.30 pm.

26/9

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

None.