

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Chief Executive, Erik Scollay
Relevant Executive Member:	Mayor, Chris Cooke
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	2 September 2026
Title:	Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) Short Review into the Council's Approach to Poverty.
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	A healthy place
Key decision:	No
Why:	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
Subject to call in?	Yes
Why:	Non-Urgent Decision

Proposed decision(s)	
That Executive: • APPROVES the formal response to the recommendations arising from the OSB short review to the Council's approach to poverty, set out at Appendix 2 of this report. • APPROVES the accompanying Action Plan setting out how each agreed recommendation will be implemented. • NOTES the Final Report of the OSB Short Review into the Council's Approach to Poverty. • NOTES the progress already made through Making Middlesbrough Thrive initiative and that this work forms the foundation of the Council's corporate approach to reducing deprivation and inequality.	

Executive summary

Executive approval is required in accordance with paragraph 10.20.1(e) of the Council's Constitution, which provides that the Mayor has delegated authority to the Executive to consider reports referred to it by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and its Scrutiny Panels.

This report seeks approval for the response and actions proposed following receipt of four recommendations referred to Executive by the OSB following its review of the Council's approach to poverty.

The review recognised the significant work already being undertaken by the Council whilst identifying opportunities to strengthen the Council's overarching approach, improve corporate alignment and enhance performance monitoring.

Since completion of the review, Executive has approved Making Middlesbrough Thrive, which establishes a corporate approach to embedding deprivation and inequality within strategic planning, Directorate Service Plans and corporate performance arrangements. The proposed response builds upon those commitments and sets out how each scrutiny recommendation will be implemented through the Council's existing governance framework.

The proposed responses to each recommendation have been thoroughly assessed by relevant Council officers and are outlined in detail within the Action Plan at Appendix 2.

Approval of this report will provide the Council's formal response to the OSB's recommendations and provide assurance that they will be delivered through existing strategic planning, performance management and partnership arrangements, with progress monitored through the Council's established governance framework.

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 present the Council's formal response to the recommendations arising from the OSB's Short Review into the Council's Approach to Poverty and to seek Executive approval of the proposed response and associated action plan.
- 1.2 The report supports delivery of the Council Plan by strengthening the Council's approach to reducing deprivation, inequality and poverty through a coordinated programme of actions arising from the review.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<i>Supports evidence-led planning and decision making, ensuring that investment, regeneration, employment and skills activity are informed by identified need and contribute towards reducing deprivation.</i>
A healthy Place	<i>Strengthens the Council's corporate approach to reducing inequality and alleviating poverty by embedding consideration of deprivation within strategic planning, service delivery and partnership working.</i>
Safe and resilient communities	<i>Supports a coordinated, place-based approach that enables services and partners to target activity towards communities experiencing the greatest levels of disadvantage.</i>
Delivering best value	<i>Strengthens corporate governance, performance management and accountability by ensuring that agreed actions are embedded within existing planning and reporting arrangements and monitored through established governance processes.</i>

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Executive

- **APPROVES** the formal response to the recommendations arising from the OSB short review to the Council's approach to poverty, set out at Appendix 2 of this report.
- **APPROVES** the accompanying Action Plan setting out how each agreed recommendation will be implemented.
- **NOTES** the Final Report of the OSB Short Review into the Council's Approach to Poverty.
- **NOTES** the progress already made through Making Middlesbrough Thrive initiative and that this work forms the foundation of the Council's corporate approach to reducing deprivation and inequality.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

- 3.1 The proposed response builds upon the commitments approved by Executive through the Making Middlesbrough Thrive commitments agreed in July 2026, embedding consideration of deprivation and inequality within the Council's existing strategic planning, performance management and partnership arrangements.
- 3.2 This approach strengthens corporate alignment, supports evidence-led decision making through the use of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and provides a clear line of sight from the Council Plan through to operational delivery. This will ensure that actions to reduce deprivation are embedded within business-as-usual activity rather than operating as a standalone programme of work. Progress will be monitored through the Council's corporate performance management arrangements, providing Executive and the OSB with assurance that agreed actions are being delivered and are contributing to improved outcomes for residents.

4. Background and relevant information

- 4.1 During 2025/26, the OSB undertook a short review into the Council's Approach to Poverty to consider whether the Council's existing strategies, plans and policies provide an effective framework for addressing deprivation and alleviating poverty across Middlesbrough. The review resulted in four recommendations aimed at strengthening the Council's corporate approach, improving coordination, and enhancing performance monitoring:
 1. The Council should develop a clearer overarching approach to addressing poverty, including consideration of how this is best defined and framed (for example, as *poverty* or more broadly as *social inclusion*), supported by a strategy or shared corporate ambition.
 2. If the Council chooses to adopt a mission statement, it should improve coordination and alignment across existing policies, strategies, and service areas to develop a consistent approach to tackling poverty and its wider impacts, such as social exclusion.
 3. The Council should review its performance management arrangements in relation to tackling poverty, including whether clear benchmarks are needed to understand and demonstrate the impact of its efforts.
 4. As part of Recommendation 3, an annual progress report should be presented to the OSB.
- 4.2 Since completion of the review, Executive has approved Making Middlesbrough Thrive, establishing the Council's strategic approach to reducing deprivation and inequality. The report committed to embedding evidence of need within Directorate Service Plans, identifying directorate commitments to reducing deprivation and inequality, developing a consolidated corporate response and strengthening partnership working to support a coordinated, place-based approach.

- 4.3 Having considered OSB's recommendations alongside the commitments approved through Making Middlesbrough Thrive, officers consider that the Council's existing strategic framework provides the shared corporate ambition envisaged by the review. The proposed response therefore focuses on embedding the recommendations within existing strategic planning, performance management and partnership arrangements, ensuring that activity to address deprivation and inequality becomes part of the Council's core business rather than operating as a separate programme of work.
- 4.4 In considering Recommendation 1, officers also considered whether a single corporate definition of poverty should be adopted. It is recognised that poverty is a complex, cross-cutting issue that is closely linked to deprivation, inequality and social inclusion. Rather than adopting a single corporate definition, the proposed approach enables services and partners to respond flexibly to local need whilst maintaining a consistent corporate focus on improving outcomes for residents.
- 4.5 In addition to strengthening the Council's internal arrangements, work is progressing to develop a Partnership Strategy. Recognising that reducing deprivation and inequality requires coordinated action across the wider system, the Strategy will provide a consistent framework for partnership governance, accountability and performance, enabling partners to align activity with shared priorities and maximise collective impact in improving outcomes for Middlesbrough's residents.
- 4.6 The accompanying implementation plan (Appendix 2) sets out the actions that will be taken in response to each recommendation, together with the responsible officers and delivery timescales. Progress will be monitored through the Council's corporate performance management arrangements, with an annual progress report presented to the OSB in accordance with Recommendation 4.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

- 5.1 Not applicable.

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

- 6.1 An alternative option would have been to develop a standalone Poverty Strategy to respond to the OSB's recommendations. This has not been recommended as officers consider that the Council's existing strategic framework, strengthened through the commitments approved within Making Middlesbrough Thrive, already provides the shared corporate ambition envisaged by Recommendation 1 of the review. Embedding actions within existing strategic planning, performance management and partnership arrangements will provide a more sustainable approach, ensuring that reducing deprivation and inequality becomes integral to service delivery and corporate decision making.
- 6.2 A further alternative would have been to continue with existing arrangements without implementing the additional actions set out in Appendix 2. This has not been recommended as it would fail to fully respond to the OSB's recommendations and would miss the opportunity to strengthen corporate alignment, partnership working and performance monitoring.

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

Topic	Impact
Financial (including Social Value)	Implementation will be delivered through existing resources. Any future resource implications arising from individual actions will be considered through the Council's normal budget setting and decision-making processes. Strengthening the Council's approach to reducing deprivation and inequality will support more informed targeting of resources and maximise the impact of existing investment.
Procurement	No direct procurement implications arise from this report. Future commissioning activity will continue to be informed by evidence of local need, including consideration of social value where appropriate.
Legal	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The proposed approach supports the Council's Best Value duty through improved strategic planning, governance and performance management.
Risk	The proposed approach strengthens corporate oversight of activity by embedding actions within existing planning and performance arrangements. This will improve assurance and reduce the risk of fragmented or inconsistent delivery across the organisation.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	This supports the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty by strengthening consideration of deprivation, inequality and inclusion within strategic planning and decision making. The proposed actions are expected to have a positive impact on community cohesion through improved targeting of activity and partnership working.
Reducing Poverty	This directly supports the Council Plan commitment to reduce inequality and alleviate the impact of poverty by embedding the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and associated deprivation measures within corporate planning, service planning and performance management.
Climate Change / Environmental	There are no direct climate change implications.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	This will support improved consideration of the needs of vulnerable children and young people by ensuring services are informed by evidence.

Data Protection	There are no direct data protection implications.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Deliver the response plan detailed at Appendix 2	Head of Chief Executive's Office / Corporate Director for Regeneration and Housing	July 2027

Appendices

1	Final Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Short Review on the Council's Approach to Poverty
2	Council's Approach to Poverty Action Plan

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Board	Final Report of the OSB Short Review into the Council's Approach to Poverty	15 April 2026
Executive	Making Middlesbrough Thrive	8 July 2026

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