

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Theo Furness - Executive Member for Development

DATE OF MEETING: 09 September 2026

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on areas of activity within my portfolio including performance against strategic priorities.

COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES

Place & People

1. HIGHLIGHTS

Update:

1.1 Place Strategy

- 1.1.1 To determine a cohesive strategic direction for Middlesbrough, the Council convened a number of 'anchor institutions' and key businesses to form a Place Leaders Partnership in 2025. Members of the partnership include organisations such as AV Dawson, Behaviour UK, Teesside University, Middlesbrough College, TVCA, Cleveland Police, the NHS – Integrated Care Board, NECC, the Creative Factory, Network Rail and Middlesbrough Council.
- 1.1.2 The Middlesbrough Place Leaders Partnership has brought together a range of independent organisations from public, private and voluntary sectors to develop an overarching strategy to improve the town. This is known as the Middlesbrough Place Strategy.
- 1.1.3 The objectives of Middlesbrough's Place Strategy are co-designed and co-owned with stakeholders across the Town. Middlesbrough Council is one, amongst many, stakeholders who are encouraged to adopt the objectives of the strategy and embed the principles into the working practices and strategic priorities for the long term.
- 1.1.4 Through research and consultation, and having reviewed previous strategies, the group debated how best to influence the future direction of the town. The Place Leaders Partnership agreed that the best way to drive real change was to focus on younger people and the ambition that:

Middlesbrough be the UK's most creative place for young people to live, learn, and realise their future.

- 1.1.5 The definition of young people is intentionally abstract and is not prescriptive to any specific age boundaries – it could mean children in some contexts, young digital

professionals or people at the beginning of their journey in business. The vision is also not designed to exclude any others, but to consider critical growth issues through the eyes of younger people, and to use the perspectives of younger people to drive better outcomes for everyone and shape Middlesbrough for the future.

1.1.6 To inform the direction of the strategy in relation to young people a significant engagement exercise was conducted with over 1,300 younger people, young professionals, parents and carers. Shaped by consultation, six themes provide the focus for decision making, investment, and delivery:

- a) *Developing New Neighbourhoods* - Creating new homes, mixed-use development and future-focused communities in areas with the capacity to support growth. *Neighbourhood Renewal* - Investing in established communities, improving housing, public spaces, local facilities and connectivity, while capitalising on the powerful strengths and identities that already exist.
- b) *Celebrating Digital and Innovation* - Our ambition is for Middlesbrough to be a place where talent is developed, new ideas are tested and innovation creates high-value opportunities for our businesses and residents.
- c) *Driving Investment and Connectivity* - Improving transport, digital networks, grid infrastructure and wayfinding, linking people to opportunities to support the needs of businesses, residents, tech-savvy young people, students and start-ups.
- d) *Reshaping the Town Centre* - The town centre should be a place of possibility. A place where a young person can meet friends, discover something new, study, start a business, experience culture, access services and imagine a future.
- e) *Creating Safe, Green and Vibrant Spaces* - Middlesbrough is a place with safe, green and vibrant spaces, where people feel welcome, confident and connected.
- f) *Prioritising Skills, Education and Employment* - Education is one of Middlesbrough's greatest strengths. Our ambition is to turn that strength into a lasting advantage for the town. Talent should not have to leave Middlesbrough to find opportunity.

1.2 Investment Prospectus

1.2.1 The strategic direction provided by the Place Strategy is supported by the development of the Investment Prospectus. This will act as a strategic funding and lobbying tool in relation to resources but also gives specific detail to both the Town Centre Strategy and the Place Strategy itself. It is a more dynamic document of the ambitions presented, as projects will inevitably evolve as they are either funded or superseded by others.

1.2.2 Early publications of the Investment Prospectus will be limited to how specific it can be with respect to commercial assets. There is a need within the strategy to acquire, demolish or remodel certain types of floorspace but the balance will need to be

found within the Investment Prospectus between providing clarity and unduly influencing the values of targeted properties.

1.2.3 The key projects featured in the Investment Prospectus include:

- a) The development of a new community with over 2,000 new homes at Middlehaven
- b) The development of a new community at Gresham
- c) Removing redundant retail floorspace and focusing premium retail activity around the Hillstreet Centre
- d) Removing significant amounts of end-of-life office floorspace
- e) Providing 'Out of Town' retail opportunities within the town centre
- f) Development of a major new theatre venue on the Civic Centre site
- g) Development of a new hotel in Gurney House to bolster the existing cluster
- h) Making the town centre a creative canvas to be 'playable' for young people
- i) Creation of major urban spaces to replace redundant retail/office floorspace and improve connectivity
- j) Development of high-quality bus Super Stops to change how people use public transport
- k) Creation of a major Taxi Hub to provide taxi users with a better experience
- l) Development of a cultural department store concept known as 'House of Art'
- m) Establishment of an Academic Centre of Excellence for Surgery at JCUH
- n) Provision of major new housing site opportunities at Newham Hall
- o) Supporting the commercial purchase of existing residential empty properties