

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 NOVEMBER 2019

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

COUNCIL PLAN - MID YEAR UPDATE REPORT 2019/20

SUMMARY

The report provides an update on the Council Plan.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/DECISION

To allow Members to receive information about the Council Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

DETAIL

1. The full report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

2. This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. The Council Plan, whilst covering all of the Council's services, does not include any policy changes and there are therefore no community impact implications as a direct result of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3. This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. This report is aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan although there are no financial implications as a direct result of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4. This report covers the Council Plan. The Council Plan summarises the Council's strategic position over the next 3 years and describes the Council's Policy Principles, Vision and Key Objectives. There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

5. The development of the Council Plan is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

6. There are no corporate parenting implications as a direct result of this report.

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Big Plans, Bright Future

COUNCIL PLAN

Mid Year Update Report 2019/20

OUR VISION

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

...is of an economically prosperous Borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills.

BIG PLANS FOR AN OUTSTANDING BOROUGH

ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

...is to make the Borough a better place to live and a more attractive place to do business with clean streets, carefully tended parks and open spaces, affordable and desirable housing.

BIG PLANS FOR OUR PLACES AND OPEN SPACES

COMMUNITY SAFETY

...is to make the Borough a place where levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

BIG PLANS FOR KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

.....is of a great place to grow up, where children and young people are protected from harm and supported to be the best they can be in life.

BIG PLANS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF OUR BOROUGH

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

...is for a place where people are supported to be healthy.

BIG PLANS FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

STRONG COMMUNITIES

...is for communities that are diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant.

BIG PLANS FOR HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES PROSPER

ADULTS

...is that people can get the right level and type of support at the right time to help, prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.

BIG PLANS FOR THE CARE WE PROVIDE

ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

...is of a Borough where our heritage, festivals, cultural activities and leisure facilities help us attract visitors and investment, and where sport and active leisure opportunities help people sustain healthier lifestyles.

BIG PLANS FOR GREAT EXPERIENCES

OUR COUNCIL

...is of a Council that prides itself on being open, honest and fair. On leading by example. On having big plans and the determination to see them through. We're facing difficult financial challenges and we can't do all we used to do so we're facing some tough decisions. Throughout this we'll stay focused on delivering genuine value for money, on setting the highest standards of public service, on communicating clearly and regularly with the community we serve and on being challenging, innovative and well organized.

AMBITIOUS, EFFECTIVE AND PROUD TO SERVE

OUR POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Council has to take decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered with the resources available. In doing this we have to take account of a number of factors such as reduced funding, changing demographics, increasing demand for services and new legislation and national policy direction. However under-pinning all our decisions are our four policy principles. We apply these principles to all our decision making. Wherever possible we will:

- **Protect the vulnerable**

- **Create economic prosperity**

- **Tackle inequality**

- **Help people to be healthier**

OUR CULTURE

We deliver services by drawing on our **workforce culture** – the values and behaviours we have agreed we want to encourage here at the Council.

We are an organisation where we all make a positive contribution at work for the whole Council. Where we never lose sight of the fact we are here to serve the people of the Borough.

This is a place where...

- We are valued, trusted and supported
- We are heard
- We take responsibility for our own development
- We work hard
- We are not afraid to try something new
- We belong

OUR RESOURCES

We've had to adapt to funding unprecedented funding reductions over the last eight years and are still confronted with having to find further savings. At the same time demand for services – particularly adult social care and children's services – continues to rise.

Finding additional savings by 2020/21 isn't going to be easy. Many difficult decisions will need to be made. We've made difficult decisions in the past which means we are as well placed as we can be in the future.

What we can be sure of is that we are in as good a position as we can be. We have a strong track record of sound financial management and we have been dealing with these problems successfully for many years. We have continued our programme of service reviews through our **Medium Term Financial Plan**:

- We have restructured and reduced the size of our senior management team to ensure it reflects the Council's changing shape and size
- We're continuing to focus on managing demand and reducing costs in our big areas of spend such as adult social care, children's social care, energy and waste
- We have received another extremely positive report from our Auditors, who said: "the Council manages its finances carefully to balance service needs and available resources in the short and medium term. The Council's most recent MTFP recognises the ongoing financial constraints and the need to continue to review services to identify cost efficiencies."
- We have made a long term commitment to continue to invest in our employees through the **Shaping a Brighter Future** programme
- We are challenging and changing the way we think about work, how we do it, our supporting infrastructure and how we can work smarter through our **Smarter Working** programme

OUR PEOPLE

Working closely with elected Members and with a close and constructive relationship with Trade Unions, the Council's workforce of 3,250 people strive to deliver the very best services across the Borough in the face of unprecedented challenges arising from reductions in funding and increased demand for services.

We pride ourselves that we value, care for and invest in our employees, we do this because we are ambitious and want to continue to deliver our services well. This investment in employees has been a long term commitment which is encapsulated in our **Shaping a Brighter Future** programme.

This programme is looking at who we are and how we do things, at staff support and development, at helping employees to make the very best of their existing skills and talents and develop their potential, to cope with stresses, and to be happy and well-motivated in the job that best suits them.

We continue to build on this and have maintained our Silver Investor in People award and the Gold Better Health at Work award accreditation.

The 2018 Employee Survey results provided a measure of the value of the investment in our employees from their perspective. The results showed that we continued to maintain a high survey response rate and that our staff strongly believe that the Council is a good place to work.

OUR WAYS OF WORKING

We are a successful organisation with a long and positive track record of continuous improvement.

We are challenging and changing the way we think about work, how we do it and how we can work smarter through our **Smarter Working** programme:

- Providing digital access to our services
- Using existing and new technologies to help us work differently
- Making optimum use of the places where we work
- Ensuring that our policies, processes and procedures are as efficient and productive as they can be
- Ensuring our infrastructure is fit for purpose for a modern organisation

OUR CUSTOMERS

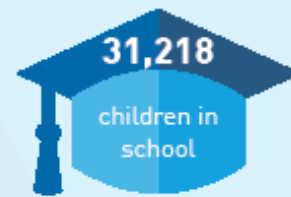
We are committed to developing the Council and ensuring we deliver high quality, customer focused services that meet the changing needs of our communities.

We have continued to implement improvements in direct response to the Ipsos MORI residents' survey undertaken across the Borough in 2015. The results showed:

- a general improvement from the last survey and help us to focus our work in areas that we think need improvement
- our results are very positive with almost 9 in 10 residents satisfied with the local area (just 7% are dissatisfied)
- over 7 in 10 are satisfied with how the Council runs things (just 12% are dissatisfied)
- 7 in 10 trust the Council a great deal/ fair amount (with only 7% saying "not at all")
- Almost 7 in 10 agree that the Council acts on residents' concerns a great deal/ fair amount (just 6% say "not at all")
- Almost 6 in 10 agree the Council provides value for money (19% disagree)

Last year we were ranked as best in the country by our residents in an annual public satisfaction survey carried out by independent market research specialist Ipsos MORI collecting local resident's perspectives on, and satisfaction with, Highway and Transport Services in Local Authority areas.

OUR PLACE



During the last year in Stockton-on-Tees



OUR PLACE

Stockton-on-Tees is a Borough of wide contrasts; a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages.

The principal settlements are Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Norton, and Yarm; whilst Wynyard is expected to grow into a substantial residential location.

The River Tees courses through the Borough and sustains a variety of uses; from a working river upstream; a leisure destination; and forming part of the tranquil green corridors.

The Borough is bounded by County Durham to the north; Darlington to the west; Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Hartlepool to the east; and Hambleton to the south.

Stockton-on-Tees benefits from good access to the strategic road network – A1M, A19, A66 and A67 – and a network of bus routes that provide frequent services to connect residents to work and leisure destinations predominantly across Tees Valley, and for the movement of goods and services.

There are six train stations in total providing frequent access to destinations in Tees Valley and across the North, and a direct link to London via the East Coast Mainline.

The south east of the Borough is home to Durham Tees Valley Airport.

The Borough covers approximately 20,000 Hectares with a population of about 195,700 people living in 85,700 households.

Using indices of multiple deprivation, the Borough is ranked 88th most deprived out of the 326 local authorities in England. However, whilst 28% of the population live within the top 20% of most deprived areas of England, 28% live in the 20% least deprived areas.

OUR REGION

Stockton-on-Tees is part of the wider Tees Valley region covered by five local unitary Councils (Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland, Hartlepool).

The five Councils have a long track record of public and private partnership working to address strategic economic development and transport matters and have, through Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU), pooled strategic economic functions – covering business engagement, economic strategy and intelligence, inward investment, marketing and promotions, strategic transport, and investment planning.

This success of this strong partnership working has been built upon and further formalised through the creation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority which came into effect in April 2016. The first Tees Valley Mayor was elected in May 2017.

The creation of the Combined Authority has given us the opportunity to negotiate a devolution deal with Government. The devolution deal, which was agreed in October 2015, included a commitment of £15m per annum additional investment funding for 30 years and was firmly focused on driving economic growth across a range of areas: transport; education and skills, housing and place; business growth; culture; and innovation and energy.

With opportunities for further funds to be added in future and the flexibilities to use funds between years it allows for much more ambitious investment planning in the Tees Valley than we have previously enjoyed.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

Have a successful business base where existing companies have experienced sustainable growth and new businesses have been created and attracted

We have continued to encourage children and young people to be enterprising through enterprise programmes in primary and secondary schools and the provision of young traders markets. We have supported young adults to set up their own businesses.

We have continued to enhance the provision of advice and guidance to support retail businesses and are now working with partners to extend the current offer and covering all town centres.

We have provided a package of support to existing retail businesses and those new retail businesses wanting to test trade their business idea, this is now being extended across all of the Borough's town centres.

We continue to work with strategic partners to influence and attract investment opportunities to the Borough and continued to raise the profile of the Borough as a place to do business with the use of social media (@sbcforbusiness) and strategic & specialist events that have focused on emerging technologies and innovations.

We continue to work with business support providers to ensure local businesses can access the maximum level of support available and have expanded this to include start up within sector specialist areas. We are working with partners to support and develop the ongoing operation of an effective market for business support services.

Work has continued with strategic partners and universities to enable businesses to benefit from innovation, enabling digital technologies to secure growth and improve productivity.

We have continued to work with strategic and growth businesses to support their plans in order to secure jobs and investment.

We have continued to work with partners to enable more local businesses to export and access new markets or new local supply opportunities within the setting of BREXIT and understanding impacts.

We have encouraged targeted recruitment and training and are also securing more benefit from public sector contract opportunities through the use of social value.

Provide sufficient sites and premises in vibrant, connected and distinctive places that businesses are attracted to

We continue to engage with key partners and developers to deliver high quality forms of development and ensure that attractive, vibrant, and distinctive places are developed.

We have an adopted Local Plan that includes policies for the long-term use of land that is sufficient and of a high quality to be attractive to new investment.

Works are ongoing to deliver place-based regeneration works across Town Centres including:

- The Globe refurbishment works continue on track in accordance with the revised profile and ATG have appointed the Globe General Manager, Jo Ager
- Acquisition of Wellington Square and Castlegate Centre complete as part of taking back control of key assets to influence future regeneration aspirations
- Public consultation launched on the future of Stockton Town Centre and planning started for public consultation across the Borough's five towns
- Hampton by Hilton hotel trading strongly across its first six months since opening
- Townscape Heritage bid successful, development work on-going
- Sale of land to secure Lidl supermarket development on Southern gateway to Stockton town centre
- Targeting the vacant premises in the town centre by working with property owners and agents to ensure their reoccupation and re-use
- Continued support to Stockton Town Centre BID in the delivery of its 5-year Business Plan. In Yarm and Norton, the maturing business forums
- We are working with partners in Thornaby Town Centre to support redevelopment opportunities and exploring the opportunity to develop a Towns Fund bid following the Governments funding announcement
- We continue engagement with Billingham Town Centre owners, St Modwen, to support their pursuit of redevelopment opportunities with the private sector
- Construction of the new Ingleby Barwick leisure facility continues on programme

We continue with our programmed investment in schools and academies to respond to increasing changes to pupil demographics.

Works have completed on the new crematorium with the facility opening in September 2019.

We continue to work with private sector partners to deliver Phase 3 of the residential development at North Shore and feasibility work on other land parcels.

We are on with the development of a River Tees Delivery and Management Framework.

We continue to work in partnership to explore District Heat and Power Networks.

We have completed the England Coastal Path Phases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

We have delivered enhanced Green Infrastructure at various sites across the Borough.

Ensure that people have the opportunity to learn/train and gain the appropriate level of skills to maximise the employment opportunities available in the economy

We are targeting recruitment and training approaches to maximise employment opportunities for local people.

We continue to encourage employers to invest in workforce skills development through the provision of funding and training support.

We are working with key further and higher education partners to facilitate pathways into employment for local people.

We have helped to increase overall skill levels by improving access to appropriate learning and training and are encouraging people to undertake higher level/degree apprenticeships.

We are working with partners to increase participation in the labour market by creating a range of opportunities for under-represented groups.

We continue to work with Stockton Learning and Skills Service to enable people to access learning opportunities and gain the skills and qualifications required to improve their economic and social wellbeing, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We engage with those most vulnerable and facing significant barriers to employment through the Routes to Work programme which provides personalised support to enable individuals to enter employment.

We provide apprenticeship opportunities in a wide range of industries to allow individuals to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to enter employment.

We work in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority to ensure people have access to training opportunities that provide the necessary skills and qualifications required to meet local business workforce demands and support economic growth.

ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Provide sufficient sites and premises in vibrant, connected and distinctive places that people choose to live, work, play and visit

We have continued the roll out of the Targeted Action Area initiative, working to support our local communities in North Thornaby and Central Stockton. Recent activities include:

- Continued partnership working between Council service teams, Registered Housing Providers and community members on the delivery of Community Clean Ups
- Piloting of the 'Alleyway Greening' initiative, supporting our local communities come together to develop clean and safe community alley ways for play and community activities
- Following this successful pilot, work is ongoing to roll out this initiative with a number of interested 'streets'
- Local businesses have also been engaged and are committed to supporting.
- Continued partnership working with the Police, external partners, Council service teams and local councillors to address 'hot spot' areas / concerns
- Following approval by Cabinet work is ongoing with PLuSS (Private Landlords Supporting Stockton) to roll out a landlord-led membership scheme across the two targeted action areas which is aimed at working collaboratively to drive up property and management standards of private sector housing, launch date is Oct 2019

Our Registered Housing providers are delivering new, much needed affordable housing at a range of locations across the Borough including West End Gardens and Alma Street central Stockton, Witham House in Eaglescliffe, Darlington Lane and Queensgate.

Our appointed partner, Keepmoat Homes, has secured planning approval to bring forward 143 in homes for sale and rent on the Victoria housing site.

A further 17 private sector residential properties have been returned to use/occupation and an additional 9 Houses of Multiple Occupation have been licensed.

We have adopted a Local Plan that includes policies for the long-term use of land that recognises commitments and housing allocations to meet housing need across the Borough.

We are dealing with a number of high profile planning applications for large scale housing developments in various areas within the Borough such as Stockton, Norton, Yarm and Wynyard.

We are working with partners, commercial organisations and the wider community to reduce Borough-wide CO2 emissions and the Council's greenhouse gas emissions performance continues to exceed reduction targets.

The Big Community Energy Switch scheme continues.

We continue to progress the Affordable Warmth Strategy Action Plan to deliver projects that make a difference to the most vulnerable residents.

Deliver effective environmental services

Satisfaction levels with our Refuse Collection service remain extremely high, running at around 94%, with high levels of customer compliments relating to what is a highly regarded service.

We continue to encourage greater levels of recycling participation and a reduction in waste placed in the wheeled bin. Resident satisfaction levels for recycling are 90% at present and positive comments have been received following the migration to a larger capacity recycling bag, allowing residents to place most items in the bag and continue to use a blue box for glass, reducing the need for a separate paper bag.

We have achieved high levels of performance in the national road cleanliness surveys which were conducted by the Tidy Britain Group.

Our operational resources are targeted specifically to areas of the greatest need which include an increased emphasis of mechanical sweeping on the access points into the Borough, main arterial routes and focal points. We also ensure that we maintain a level of commitment to our residential areas with regular litter picking visits and our grass cutting frequencies ensure that open spaces and verges are extremely well maintained throughout the year.

We have increased the number of wildflower areas that have been planted across the Borough and are looking at options to increase the biodiversity value in appropriate which will include the reduction of herbicide treatment and grass cutting in rural and semi-rural areas.

We continue to address statutory functions in compliance with national environmental health legislative requirements, standards and codes of practice.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Deliver effective community safety services

We continue to deliver effective and efficient community safety services in and around our local communities.

Our Civic Enforcement Service, with its 24 dedicated officers, have responded to 4693 requests for service so far this year. This team is vital to reducing concerns associated with environmental crime, nuisance parking and anti-social behaviour, which so far is showing a 15% reduction.

Our CCTV operators are responsible for ensuring our the 250 plus cameras are utilised to support community safety. So far this year the team have detected and responded to 2277 incidents, leading to 353 arrests. They have also supported our community safety partners in carrying out 574 retrospective reviews of footage, resulting in 359 positive leads in cases and investigations.

Youth Justice Plan agreed.

Deliver effective licensing services

We have worked with various organisations at national and local level during National Licensing Week in June to help to raise awareness of licensing and its impact on everyday lives.

The Setting The Bar scheme has been running for a year and is open to all on-licensed premises operating in the Borough, promoting the benefits of operating above the minimum requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 in order to provide a higher standard of premises. There are 30 premises participating in the scheme with 23 gold standard awards.

The Gambling Act 2005 statement of principles was reviewed and the revised policy will be in place for three years.

Since the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) regulations 2018, 70 applications for animal activities premises including pet shops, catteries, kennels, home boarders, doggy day care, riding establishments, dog breeders and performing/exhibition of animals, have been processed. Attention is now focusing on unlicensed animal activity, in particular unlicensed dog breeding.

We continue to work collaboratively with responsible authorities to enhance customer service, fulfil statutory duties, ensure licensed premises are acting in accordance with their licence, and tackle problem premises, contributing to reviews of premise licences when needed.

Due to the Deregulation Act 2015, considerations of the changing marketplace for the licensed private hire and hackney carriage trade is needed, we have listened to the trade and conducted formal consultation on our current transport policy. The proposed amendments will align driver and vehicle specification with the Tees Valley authorities, while the proposed national minimum standards are being finalised.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

All children and families get the best start in life

The 0-19 wellbeing model for health visiting, school nursing, family weight management and community outreach provision has moved into its second year of delivery, provided by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust and Family Action. Developments to date include:

- Building a 0-19 emotional wellbeing offer, for children, young people and families. This has included embedding the evidence-based approaches to emotional wellbeing and mental health across the service, perinatal mental health training for the 0-19 workforce and the recruitment of a 5-19 emotional health and resilience nurse
- Embedding a universal service offer which has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of 0-5 mandated contacts delivered by the service
- Development of a STEPS (Stockton Together Enhancing Positive Strengths) pathway to identify and deliver intensive interventions to families

We have worked with stakeholders and partners across the system to reshape the local approach to young people's substance misuse. A resilience model which offers early interventions that focus on building strengths and addressing the root cause of risk-taking behaviour has been developed and will be piloted from April 2020.

Partnership working with the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector has continued into its second year to support families with the aims of reducing levels of food insecurity and reduce social isolation during the school summer holiday period. During the summer period this year 162 sessions were delivered to over 1,300 children.

All people in the Borough live well and live longer

People in the Borough are supported to live well and longer through the universal offer of the NHS health checks for people aged 40-74 and lung health checks for current and ex-smokers. In the past year over 5000 people have received their NHS health checks and almost 500 people their lung health checks.

We continue to offer free and open access stop smoking services, drug and alcohol services, weight management and sexual health services and work with NHS partners and provider to support the full implementation of the NHS Diabetes prevention programme across the Borough. In addition to this we work with pharmacies to offer a range of public health programme including health campaigns, emergency contraception, chlamydia testing, c-card, stop smoking advice and needle exchange.

The Health and Wellbeing Board has adopted a new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2019-23 and is working on a programme of priorities.

The Interim Director of Public Health has published their annual report with a focus on loneliness which promotes systems wide working to improve mental and emotional health and wellbeing and improve social connectedness.

We continue to run a full programme of campaigns to promote public health messages and local services including alcohol, stop smoking, healthy eating, physical activity, mental health, cardio-vascular disease, cancer prevention and winter health.

A winter health campaign has started again and aims to further improve flu vaccinations across the Borough including staff flu vaccinations in commissioned services such as care homes and among Council staff.

All people in the Borough live in healthy places and utilise assets within their communities

We continue to provide support to adults to access community-based assets through the commissioning of Stockton Service Navigator.

Steps and First Steps provide specialist support for adults requiring additional support, including those with learning disabilities, autism and aspergers.

Participating in community-based activities encourages interaction with others and the development of social networks, as well as the benefits from the activity itself. Facilitating the maintenance or development of 'community connections' through community bridge building and social prescribing promotes mental wellbeing and can prevent loneliness.

We are working across directorates to share learning and opportunities to maximise the benefits of a healthy places approach to improving the health of our communities. This includes assets-based approaches to adult social care, contributing to assets mapping in targeted action areas, developing opportunities with green infrastructure to promote physical activity.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Giving children the best start in life

Take up of the existing free entitlement to 15 hours of education remains at 100%.

Take up of disadvantaged 2 year old offer is at 95%.

30 hours take up remains high.

The childcare sufficiency report was presented to Cabinet in October 2019.

Focusing on schools and learning outcomes

Our school performance improved across all key stages over last year and overall. Stockton is top or 2nd in almost all measures across the North East.

Implementation of a project working in seven primary schools focused on early language development funded by the national Strategic Schools Investment Fund. The schools serve some of our most disadvantaged communities. Since the start of the project, outcomes at the end of Reception year for the participating schools have improved by 20%: 64% pupils reached a good level of development across the seven schools in 2019. Since the end of the project (April 2019), another eight schools and five PVI settings have bought into the programme.

The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers is closing. Stockton is one of only 18 LAs of 135 narrowing the gap in all three key phases. In comparison with local authorities with a similar 2012 gap, Stockton rankings are:

- Early Years: Top 20 out of 135 LAs (ranked 16th)
- Primary: Top 50 out of 135 LAs (ranked 45th)
- Secondary: Top 30 out of 135 LAs (ranked 27th)

Admissions – 99.2% parents received one of top 3 choices for primary; 96.3% offered a place in top 3 schools in secondary.

Significant reduction on fixed term exclusion rates across secondary schools in academic year 2018/19, though an increase in permanent exclusions.

We were successful in a proposal to pilot primary mental health practitioners in the Billingham school cluster – adding capacity to enable schools to access emotional health and wellbeing support. Two schools piloted the development of a new set of tools and resources to work with children and young people with autism, learning difficulty and challenging behaviour as part of a regional programme, and this programme will be rolled out into 3 additional schools by March 2020.

Delivering effective early help – supporting families

Work continues with schools on the roll out of the restorative approach and, in particular, the development of restorative circles where schools bring issues for a group discussion and resolution.

We are working on developing an approach to use data to target, looking at data held on school outcomes and exclusion.

We are continuing to embed our approach to family support with volunteers working alongside professionals to increase community resilience and independence. Our commissioned service, Family Action, is working with 42 volunteers – two of whom have gone on to secure employment.

Emotional health and wellbeing – The pilot of the Footsteps One Stop Shop in Eaglescliffe is ongoing with an external evaluation to be completed during this financial year. We were successful in a partnership bid with CCG to become a Trailblazer site for Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges. A team will be established to work across Billingham schools and sixth form college as part of this DHSC/DfE pilot programme.

We have worked with the CCG to commission a specific family support service for children and young people who are on the neurodevelopmental pathway (including autism) – this service provides family support, support for individual young people and training for front line staff professionals.

Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children, backed by outstanding social work practice

We are exploring and implementing a range of options to support social workers, including the development of a support hub model, new approaches to administration and business support, consideration of workspaces.

Our Family Group Conferencing service is well regarded by social care teams and has seen some success in enabling young people to stay safely at home.

Rates of assessments have increased this year to date though remain below the regional average. Rates of children in need and children subject to child protection have also risen slightly but remain below the regional average.

The Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse is ongoing.

The outcome of the Ofsted ILACS inspection and associated action plan were reported to Cabinet in November 2019. External advice and learning from South Tyneside Partners in Practice (PiP) has been sought.

A new practice and learning forum is being developed to equip social workers with enhanced skills to deliver improved practice.

A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and leaving our care

We have seen a significant increase in the numbers of children in care, a pattern experienced across most north east Councils, an 11% increase since April.

Dartington Design Lab work has identified some gaps in our pattern of service provision for some families which we are building into our new service design proposals.

We continue to work with ARC and a social enterprise, Blue Cabin, on a range of proposals to develop cultural and creative opportunities for children in our care.

We are working with IMPOWER and 4 other Councils on an approach to assessing individual need called Valuing Care and using this to enable us to be more specific about the outcomes we are seeking for children in care and particularly from residential care providers.

We have remodelled our in-house residential care to add additional beds, and increase our ability to work more intensively with some young people where smaller or solo placements are needed.

We have developed proposals for a reunification team to work with those young people who are able to return home to their parents.

A new wraparound service is being developed to support families in maintaining children within their birth families or to return home.

Education outcomes for our children in care were recently presented to Corporate Parenting Board. Outcomes are above last year and above the national average. It is especially pleasing to see that 29 care leavers are in higher education.

Work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently

The first phase of regional sector led improvement activity has been completed, including a self-assessment, challenge and actions for improvement, which has in turn fed into a Regional Improvement Alliance plan.

ILACS inspection outcomes were reported to Cabinet in November 2019.

SEND inspection written statement of action was approved by Ofsted and CQC in October, and work is underway to deliver against the areas of improvement.

The new Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership was launched in April 2019

We are at the early stages of discussions with Tees Valley authorities on enhanced collaboration around specialist foster carers and residential homes.

STRONG COMMUNITIES

Deliver effective local democracy

The 2019 Annual Canvass is underway. Following initial write out, door to door enquires are being made to all non-responding properties. The response rate at the end of September was 77%.

Business processes have been reviewed and additional measures put in place to prepare for the possibility of a snap General Election during Canvass. In addition, the timescale for invitations to register have been reduced so new eligible electors added to the Canvass form are encouraged to make an application in time to be able to vote.

Work continues towards implementation of Canvass Reform in 2020. The new arrangements will utilise a data led approach matching the Electoral Register against Central Government records and focusing resource on properties where a match has not been achieved.

We have started planning the May 2020 Police and Crime Commissioner and Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayoral Elections. Project plans have been drafted and high level plans reviewed.

We will be sending a Household Notification Letter to all properties in February 2020 to ensure the Electoral Register is complete and accurate ahead of the statutory election period.

Positive feedback was received, both from elected members themselves and from independent assessment, following delivery of a comprehensive Member Induction Programme delivered post local elections.

The Council's approach to Member Development has also again been the subject of scrutiny by LGA/NERO as part of our Charter Plus Reaccreditation assessment. It was therefore pleasing for the assessors to confirm that the Council continued to meet the standards set down in the North East Charter for Member Development and had a genuine culture of learning and development amongst its elected members.

Delivery of the Mayoral Strategy has seen the Mayor host a number of civic events, including the Annual Council Meeting, Mayor's Sunday and Armed Forces Week; as well successful Mayoral events held on the Teesside Princess' & a Murder Mystery Night at Preston Hall.

Improvement has also been made in regards the Council's delivery of the pillars of the Armed Forces Covenant. Our progress against the majority of issues affecting armed forces community have been independently assessed as achieving the 'green' status.

Provide financial advice and support to our communities

We have carried out extensive work throughout the year through the Locality Forums, to provide support people through the introduction of Universal Credit and to support Foodbanks, Holiday Hunger programmes and prepare for the Get Winter Ready Campaign.

The Infinity Partnership work this year has focussed on support for people through the introduction of Universal Credit. The Partnership has produced support information, improved communication between organisations offering support and advice and has worked with local businesses to support their staff going onto UC.

We opened the latest Big Community Switch programme in August to provide access to cheaper fuel deals.

We have implemented changes required to support the roll out of Universal Credit.

We continue to provide financial advice and assistance through Welfare Support service, Back on Track etc.

We have reviewed and improved the use of Section 17 payments in social care and the links with welfare support.

Extensive work has been undertaken throughout the year by the Locality Forums, The Housing and Affordable Warmth Partnership and the Infinity Partnership to provide support people in line with the Brighter Borough for All Strategy. Work has focussed on supporting Foodbanks, Holiday Hunger programmes and the Warm Homes Healthy People programme.

The Infinity Partnership work this year has continued to support people through the introduction of Universal Credit. The Partnership has produced support information, improved communication between organisations offering support and advice and has worked with local businesses to support their staff going onto UC. The close partnership working with Tees Credit Union and Stockton District Advice and Information Service has continued.

Support the continued development of a strong and vibrant voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector

The Borough is fortunate to benefit from a strong and thriving VCSE sector. There are currently approximately 800 active VCSE organisations in the borough, delivering huge value and support across a wide range of areas to the residents of the borough. The Council continues to adopt a comprehensive approach to support for the VCSE sector which is built on a platform of support delivered through the charitable organisation - Catalyst and a small Community Engagement team within the Council. This model was reviewed over the summer and new 5-year partnership agreement with Catalyst was approved by Cabinet in October.

We have continued to support our Community Asset Transfer Strategy to provide a transparent framework to enable the transfer of building assets to the community, primarily through long-leasehold or in some circumstances freehold arrangements to voluntary or community organisations. The strategy supports local groups to own or manage community buildings, such as community centres or village halls, it can provide them a real asset base to support their development. It can also play a part in improving the skills of the people involved and encourage a stronger community spirit by bringing people together to work towards a shared goal. The Clarences Community Centre was transferred to BELP in July as part of this ongoing programme. The Old People's Welfare Hall in Thornaby is being transferred to a new Management Committee and will now be known as Victoria Park Community Centre.

We maintain strong links across all Directorates to ensure that all VCSE commissioning and joint development opportunities are identified. Senior Catalyst representatives are involved in early discussions to ensure that all VCSE opportunities are considered at the earliest stage of service development discussions. The VCSE sector delivered £13.8m of commissioned services in the borough on behalf of the Council in the last year through contracts across a wide range of services.

We have continued to provide useful data and statistics to VCSE organisations in the borough such as the ward profile data. This information helps inform local services and also provides valuable information for organisations when making funding bids. Work is underway to prepare new profiles using the updated IMD information available.

We continue to provide some direct financial support to VCSE organisations through the Stockton Borough Community Fund. The Fund which is administered by the Tees Valley Community Foundation makes award to voluntary and community sector organisations in the borough of up to £500.

The contribution of those working in the VCSE sector was once again recognised through the Mayors Civic Awards. The annual awards were made at the AGM, in particular, the Young Person Award, the Service to Community Award (Individuals) and the Service to Community Award (Groups & Organisations) provided an ideal opportunity to celebrate the success of those in the VCSE sector.

Support to many VCSE organisations across the borough has been maintained through the individual involvement of many Members and Officers who are involved as volunteers and trustees at a number of organisations.

Deliver effective consultation and engagement

The active engagement and consultation with the young people of the borough has continued through the Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) initiative. BMBF is committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of the future of the borough and through the initiative we aim to understand what young people want to make this happen. The programme has grown this year with the development of the Big Committee and the presentation of their Big Plan to Cabinet. The success of the project was recognised at the national British Youth Council Awards where the initiative was awarded the Best Youth Lead Project.

We have continued to consult widely on major policy proposals and service changes affecting the borough using the My Views online consultation portal, supported by more detailed consultation work with the Viewpoint panel and via drop in sessions. Consultations have been carried out on a wide range of issues, including:

- Stockton Town Centre proposals
- The new Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Care Home development
- Early Years and Childcare Services
- Drug and Alcohol Services

In July work also began on the borough wide Residents Survey. The door-to-door survey carried out by MORI is almost complete and results will be analysed and reported by the end of the year.

The Council has continued to support and facilitate active engagement in the life of the borough through the Local Strategic Partnership and particularly the four Locality Forums. The Forums have met regularly throughout the year and continue to work on delivery of the Brighter Borough for All - Tackling Poverty Framework.

ADULT SERVICES

Focus on prevention and early intervention

Based upon the principles of Prevent, Reduce, Delay we have embarked upon a change programme focussed on keeping people as independent as possible and engaged within their communities. As part of this programme an Early Intervention and Prevention Team has been established to receive referrals from First Contact. However, Delay, Reduce and Prevent is an ethos that spans the continuum of adult social care need and all teams are effecting small changes that ensure people remain as independent as possible.

Work in partnership

Work is taking place with HaST CCG, North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Trust and Tees Esk & Wear Valley Mental Health Trust. The aim of this is to ensure that organisations with a larger organisational footprint continue to work with the Council in a pro-active way for the benefit of the residents and continuing positive working relationships between staff members.

The Care Quality Commission has identified that leadership is key to ensuring good quality care. In the last year the Well Led leadership programme for Care Home Registered Managers has been co-produced with the Council, the NHS Leadership Academy and the Borough's Care Homes. The Care Quality Commission also contributed to the development of the programme. The programme's aim is to increase the number of homes rated as 'good.' The programme has been exceptionally well received by participants and monitoring is now taking place regarding CQC ratings of those homes that participated. Due to a number of initiatives taking place with Care Homes a gradual increase in homes rated as 'good' is occurring, alongside a decrease of those rated 'requires improvement.' An outcome of the Well Led programme has been the development of a peer group of registered managers to ensure shared learning across the Borough.

Work with individuals, their families and carers

The Time Out Service provides short-term respite. Carers can access up to 8 hours per month free of charge on a regular or ad hoc basis as required. Since November 2018 the capacity of the service has increased to 75 hours of respite per week.

Carers Personal Budgets can be used flexibly by the carer to meet their own wellbeing needs. This may include accessing carers breaks, social and leisure activities, pursuing a hobby or anything identified by the carer which will help them to maintain their own wellbeing and independence. Between 1 January 2018 and 31 March 2019, 748 Carers Personal Budgets were processed with a total value of nearly £280k.

We facilitate four Peer Support Groups which include a programme of relevant talks and activities. Funding is available to pump prime further peer support groups.

Assistive Technology is available via One Call, which supports the cared for person to live as independently as possible and supports the carer in carrying out their caring role.

Some initial work has been undertaken to support Carers in employment and to raise awareness of caring amongst local employers. This has included engagement through Better Health at Work and with the DWP and the local Job Centre, as well as with SBC's HR Team regarding the offer for carers who are employed by the Council.

The Carers Emergency Card, launched in June 2018, has seen 609 Carers Emergency Cards issued which, in the event of an emergency, identify a person as being a carer and ensure that plans are put in place for the looked after person to be cared for until the carer is able to resume their caring role, thus giving the carer peace of mind.

The Learning Disability Partnership Board has developed an action plan for the work ahead that has been informed through informal consultation with people with a learning disability. The board has established sub-groups to take specific actions forward in employment, housing, care and support/a good day and health and wellbeing.

Continue to work closely with the NHS

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a pooled budget between the Local Authority and the NHS. The vision for the Stockton-on-Tees Better Care Fund (BCF) is that by 2020 everyone is able to live at home longer, be healthier and get the right support where required, whether this be provided by health and/ or social care. The focus is on integrated health and social care, primary prevention, early diagnosis and

intervention and supported self-management, with the aim of closing the health and wellbeing gap and reducing health inequalities as well as driving transformation in services.

The Community Integrated Intermediate Care (CIIC) Project has been ongoing since 2018, and is now moving into the mobilisation phase of integrating health, eg, physiotherapists, and social care staff, eg, occupational therapists and reablement teams, across Stockton-on-Tees. This project aims to deliver a joined up approach to the delivery of intermediate care. The new service will aim to provide a smoother, more coordinated journey through intermediate care services for residents into a single, equitable and high quality offer of care within the Borough.

The adult Mental Health, Older Persons Mental Health and Learning Disability teams continue to be co-located with Tees Esk & Wear Valley NHS Mental Health Trust staff, ensuring that the needs of Stockton residents are co-ordinated between both health and social care.

Deliver our statutory duties

We continue to fulfil our statutory duties regarding Care Act Assessments and Carers Assessments.

We continue to provide Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP). AMHPs are a registered professional who has undertaken additional training approved by the Secretary of State (and regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council) to carry out specific duties under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Safeguarding adults

We continue to fulfil our statutory duties of undertaking safeguarding enquiries, in response to all concerns of abuse/neglect against Adults deemed at risk.

Maximise the use of scarce financial resources

In addition to service reviews that have been taking place regarding commissioned services, we are progressing a programme of change with all Adult Social Care Managers. Managers have been provided with information on the Adult Social Care budget in a manner that is understandable and related to the work of their teams.

Ensure the most effective and appropriate use of our own and our providers' workforces

There is a strong commitment to continuous professional development within the Council's adult social care workforce promoted within supervision and appraisal and supported by a comprehensive training programme. The recent provision of unlimited licenses to Community Care Inform, an online information and research resource, provides practitioners with access to up to date information about legislation and statutory guidance as well as detailed practice guidance. A high challenge, high support approach within the Council provides a healthy learning environment with sharing of skills and practice wisdom.

We are engaging with providers of commissioned services in a number of dynamic ways. We continue to promote provider forums, focusing the objectives around positive regular collaborative forums in which we discuss important national and local issues and developments.

We also engage monthly with Care Home leaders and staff through a new Leadership & Peer Support network and a Good To Outstanding Collaborative. The aim of these is to improve partnership relations, creating a strong network of managers that supports learning and sharing of best practice, and creating a source of information, co-developed by the network that helps the leaders move towards improvements of practice. This should also support with greater efficiencies within their homes, and developing new, innovative ways of providing outstanding outcomes for residents.

ARTS, LEISURE AND CULTURE

Deliver sustainable events and attractions that contribute to the delivery of vibrant and economically successful town centres and economic prosperity

Our 2019 annual programme of events has attracted strong audiences and generated valuable positive media coverage. Large scale events continue to play a significant part in our plans for Stockton's vitality and vibrancy, contributing to social and economic objectives.

We have continued our delivery of high-profile sporting events including the popular Duathlon, Cycling Festival and Great Tees 10k mass participation run. In addition, The Great North City Games event was hosted in Stockton High Street this year, showcasing world class athletes competing in a top class live athletics event.

The Council's signature event SIRF 2019, presented 164 shows, delivered by 46 companies from across the globe including France, Belgium, Catalonia and Korea.

SIRF Community Carnival continues to thrive as a highlight for many with 1300 participants welcoming 5 new diverse groups from across the Tees Valley as part of the Great Place TVCA project delivery.

Our event programme also included smaller scale events like Super Car Saturday, Stockton Stages, Records Fair, Kapow, and a number of specialised market e.g. Youth and Stockton Carers market. In addition, the Council's Events Service continues to support community events, providing advice, guidance, financial and practical support. Events including BIFF, Stockton Dragon Boat, Thornaby Show and Singing Christmas Tree on Tour.

Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) also continues to be supportive to community groups, Town/Parish Council and other external event leads in helping them standardise their health and safety arrangements to ensure public safety/welfare. We anticipate that ISAG will review over 40 events in 2019.

We have welcomed just over 100,000 visitors through the doors at Preston Hall museum since April. This has been a 16% increase on the previous year. PPMG continues to develop a vibrant and varied programme for its visitors to enjoy. This has included exhibitions such as The Globe, a well-attended outdoor theatre programme and our first ever "Together Fest" in partnership with the newly formed, Tees Valley Museum Group. Evidence is already showing that PPMGs work around strategic marketing has seen a growth in audiences and repeat visits.

Deliver an effective library service that supports literacy, access to knowledge and inspiring activities for everyone in safe accessible spaces across the Borough

This year's Summer Reading Challenge has proved popular, following the theme of Space Race as a tribute to the 50th anniversary of the moon landing in 1969. A total of 1615 children and young people took part in the challenges with 1107 completing the task of reading at least 6 books over the Summer Holidays.

The Crossing the Tees Book Festival took place in early June, 314 people attended events in Stockton and 1510 attended the Festival as a whole. Highlights from Stockton events include Crime Writer Stephen Booth (who also went into Holme House Prison and was very well received), Door-to-Door Poet Rowan McCabe and Poetry Masterclass with Poet-in-Residence Lisette Auton.

The Library Service has worked with the Bright Minds Big Futures group to help promote the library service. The group has also been working on an accreditation scheme for young people friendly organisations in Stockton and the Library Service has been the first organisation to be recognised.

Work on scanning negatives as part of the Head Wrightson Archive has been going ahead at a great pace with 11 volunteers now having worked around 360 hours since May. They have scanned, under the direction of the Reference and Local Studies Library team, around 3600 negatives.

Support all sectors of our communities to secure enjoyment, learning and achievement through sport and active leisure

The Sport and Active Leisure Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 22nd July 2019 and will focus on ensuring that more children, young people and those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable or at risk of exclusion have the opportunity to be more active:

- 331 children between the ages of 18-months to five years have participated in Funky Feet programmes across ten venues.
- 49 participants per week participating in Sporting Steps
- 741 women participated in the Sisters-R-Doing-It running programmes

Funky-4-Life is a programme that links schools/ nurseries with local care homes and involves young children and care home residents participating in Funky-Foot sessions together. We are currently operating within two care homes reaching 54 residents.

Voluntary Sector Sports Clubs – L&SD continue to support sports clubs including Billingham Boxing Club and Yarm Rugby Club who are both in the process of acquiring and developing premises/ sites with the support of the Council.

YOUR COUNCIL

Deliver a balanced and sustainable medium term financial plan

We have prepared responses to numerous consultations covering the National Fair Funding Review and Review of Business Rates retention scheme.

We continue to oversee the delivery of the savings programme and providing support to individual service reviews, particularly Children's and Adult Services

We have revised the investment strategy following the approval of the Treasury Management strategy in the budget report.

We have revised the budget monitoring procedures following a LEAN review, focussing on high risk areas of expenditure.

We have been assessing the financial implications of the pressures associated with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Maximise and safeguard income for the Council

Council Tax collection levels are in line with projections.

Business rate collection levels are in line with targets.

The new crematorium in the Borough, a much-needed community facility, is up and running and is expected to generate annual income of £0.3m.

We have established new claims handling arrangements within the Insurance section.

Ensure the Council uses its assets effectively

We have been working on reviewing and improving the information held on all Council assets.

We have progressed a review of office accommodation through a task and finish Scrutiny review.

Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services

We continue to implement the Smarter Working Programme.

We have completed and implemented service reviews across a range of services.

We have achieved Customer Service Excellence with 13 points of Compliance Plus.

We have established a Digital Transformation team and a Council-wide Digital Services Group to develop new models of service delivery incorporating digital options where appropriate.

We are continuing to implement more digital options for customers including assistance within our Customer Service centres to help customers gain access to our online services.

We are continuing with major system replacement projects for Children's and Adult Services.

Develop and ensure delivery of a robust governance framework

We prepared the Statement of Accounts in line with statutory timescales (shorter than previous years).

We received a very positive Audit opinion and value for money statement reported to Cabinet in September.

We have continued to develop Information Asset Registers having successfully managed the implementation of GDPR.

We have continued to support full compliance with all statutory and legal responsibilities through:

- The provision of pro-active legal, Monitoring Officer and Proper Officer advice and support
- The re-constituted Information Governance Group is working effectively
- A scheduled review of our use of RIPA has been undertaken and submitted to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office in September for audit
- The Annual review of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's report was completed and reported to Cabinet in September
- The revised Constitution was adopted at Full Council in May

Continue to attract, develop and support diverse, capable and resilient employees

We have continued to deliver the Shaping a Brighter Future (SBF) programme to continue to grow the capability, flexibility and capacity of employees. The programme has now been mainstreamed and adopted as a permanent feature of workforce development following the completion of the first 5-year project phase.

Work is now focussed on 3 areas:

- The “Valued, trusted and supported” team are focused on supporting employees to feel valued, trusted and supported, to ensure that they are heard and to help them to take responsibility for their own development. They are doing this by developing a new ‘We are heard’ employee engagement process. By supporting the delivery of the Employee Survey actions. By supporting the Staff Forums, Health Advocates and delivery of the Better Health at Work action plan. By providing a sounding board for the Workforce Development programme, providing input and challenge to HR policy development, reviewing our approach to coaching and mentoring and providing a sounding board to the Internal Comms work.
- The “A great place to work” team are focusing on the “We Belong” element of the culture statement. The team are leading on the ongoing development and dissemination of the Culture Statement, training and supporting the SBF advocates, taking part in the Corporate Induction process and leading on the Inspirational Speakers programme. They are also developing and delivering the Setting the Standard, developing a programme to support Directorate team days and providing a pool of people to take part in interviews during recruitment.
- The “More than just a job” team are focusing on supporting employees to make a positive contribution for the whole Council, to support them to try something new and to work hard. The team are focussing on delivering the Talent Network and supporting delivery of a new programme to support Children in our Care

We continue to work to enhance the diversity of the workforce through increased recruitment and retention of under-represented groups:

- The four equality staff forums continue to be active. The forums, which are led by employees, provide members with opportunities for networking, peer support and personal development. They also consult with the Council on a range of matters, and arrange annual events to support Council objectives, to raise awareness and celebrate diversity.
- The BME Forum is working on delivery of an action plan to support the recruitment and retention of BME employees

The main feature of recruitment this year has been the 2019 Apprenticeship Programme. Our approach to recruitment and selection was innovative and proved extremely successful with 910 application from 599 candidates leading to the appointment of 42 motivated and enthusiastic apprentices who started their employment in September in a wide range of services.

Deliver effective communication

We continue to focus our communication activity around the annual programme of key communication campaigns to support major activities and issues in the borough. The activity in 2019/20 focuses on eight external campaigns:

- Ambitious, effective and proud to serve - At Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – we're all ambitious, effective and proud to serve
- Creating economic prosperity - We're playing our part in creating an economically prosperous Borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills
- Improved health - Our vision is for the borough to be a place where people are supported to be healthy
- Exciting year-round programme of events - We offer an exciting year-round programme of world-class events that deliver amazing experiences for our residents and visitors and bring huge economic value to the Borough
- Protecting the vulnerable - One of the Council's key priorities is to protect the vulnerable, it's a policy principle which runs through everything we do
- Six thriving Towns - We have a beautiful and varied borough including six thriving towns – each with their own distinct character and history. We value and support them all
- Do it online - We're providing more of our services online. Visit www.stockton.gov.uk to carry out a wide range of Council business
- Local elections – Providing people with everything they need to know about how, where and when to vote

We continue to implement the programme to improve the eight websites for which the Council has responsibility and to further develop our 34 social media platforms. The reach and following on our main platforms has increased over the last six months. Data for the last month show that we now have 94,830 followers achieved total reach of 828,342 and total engagement of 153,215 in the last 28 days. We have continued the practice of releasing more news through films, picture and written social media posts to supplement our traditional media work which continues to be busy.

We continue to deliver effective communication across the borough through the distribution of Stockton on Tees News. The May and July editions have been distributed in the first half of 2019/20. We have recently completed market research which revealed that 64% of respondents read the magazine, 76% of whom read all 4 editions each year.