

COUNCIL PLAN – MID YEAR UPDATE REPORT 2016/17

SUMMARY

This report provides a mid-year update on the key objectives in the Council Plan 2016/17.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report be noted.

DETAIL

1. The full report is attached at Appendix 1.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

2. There are no community impact implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3. There are no financial implications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4. There are no financial implications.

RISK ASSESSMENT

5. The reporting of updates on the key objectives in the Council Plan is categorised as low. 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.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

Policy Principles:

- **Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention**

- **Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention**
- **Developing strong and healthy communities**
- **Creating economic prosperity**

This report covers all of the Council's services and therefore covers all aspects of the policy principles.

Name of Contact Officer: Ian Coxon
Post Title: Assistant Director (Business Support and Information)
Telephone No. 01642 527019
Email Address: ian.coxon@stockton.gov.uk

COUNCIL PLAN

MID YEAR

UPDATE REPORT

2016-17

OUR VISION

The Council's vision is of a Borough that is more confident, more vibrant and more successful than ever before. A place where people prosper and grow, where they feel happy, safe and healthy. A place where people can see that our drive, integrity and imagination have delivered genuine improvements and exceptional value for money. A place that every single one of us is proud of.



OUR POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Council has to take decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as reduced budget allocation, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction. The following four policy principles support our decision-making:

- **Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention**, particularly those people in our communities who are subject to, or at risk of harm, people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and those who are financially excluded or whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- **Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention**, specifically in relation to tackling health inequalities, meeting the skills gap and improving access to job opportunities, tackling fuel poverty, improving education and training opportunities, access to affordable housing and financial and digital inclusion.
- **Developing strong and healthy communities** through the provision of mainstream and preventive services that are available to all those who choose to access them.
- **Creating economic prosperity** across the Borough.

OUR CULTURE

We deliver services by drawing on our organisational culture – the values and behaviours and resilience we will need to demonstrate in facing significant financial and capacity challenges. Our organisational culture statement:

“We are an organisation where all staff are trusted, supported and valued to make a positive contribution at work. Where we never lose sight of the fact that we’re here to serve the people of the borough. This is a place where:

- **Everyone’s views and opinions are encouraged, heard and properly considered**
- **We share responsibility for our own learning and development and are encouraged and supported to do so by others**
- **We work hard and feel comfortable to suggest new ideas, ways of working and to take managed risks**
- **We all feel a strong sense of belonging to the whole Council and our skills, knowledge and experience are used to benefit the organisation as a whole”**

LOOKING BACK

As a Council we continue to face huge challenges with the continuous sustained reductions to local authority and other public sector budgets. Alongside this we are experiencing increased demand for our services particularly in the areas of children's and adults social care and a reliance on council and council-commissioned services.

We have continued, through everything we've done over the last year, to maintain our absolute focus on our policy principles. In spite of the financial challenges we have:

- Continued with our review of services to deliver savings of £73m
- Received another positive report from our Auditors "The Council continues to have a strong approach in considering a range of options, regularly updating and agreeing its plans well ahead of the relevant financial year"
- Maintained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the fifth year
- Been shortlisted for "Council of the Year" for the seventh year running in the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards 2016, as well as being named finalists in six further award categories, with the Council's Multi-Disciplinary Service winning the award for the Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative in the UK
- Won awards this year at the National Constructing Excellence awards, the Local Authority Building Control's Northern Region awards, the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Robert Stephenson awards, and the Urban Design awards
- Maintained our Silver Investor in People award and also achieved the Silver Better Health at Work award accreditation
- Achieved an overall judgement of "Good" in the Ofsted inspection of services to children undertaken in May-June 2016
- Been shortlisted in the third annual Great British High Street competition with Stockton Town Centre named as one of the country's best high streets

Most importantly we've been pleased to receive the feedback about our services from the MORI residents' survey undertaken across the borough in 2015. The results show a general improvement from the last survey and help us to focus our work in areas that we think need improvement:

- Overall, 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)

In order to deliver the further reductions required by Central Government and meet the medium and long-term challenges facing us we still need to think and act differently. We need to transform and target our services still further, reduce demand and increase inward investment.

OUR RESOURCES

We've had to adapt to funding reductions of £52million over the last six 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.

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.

Finding additional savings of over £20million by 2019/20 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.

We can't pretend that we can continue to do all the things we currently do and we won't be able to work in the same way. The more savings we have to make, the harder it gets. We'll have to stop doing some things and this will affect employees and the levels of service we provide to the public, including:

- We are reviewing and streamlining our business processes
- We are exploring how we can use existing and new technologies to help us be even more efficient
- We are challenging and changing the way we think about work, how we do it and how we can work smarter
- We have restructured and reduced the size of our senior management team to ensure it reflects the council's changing shape and size
- We have been successful in delivering high quality services which also reflect value for money, as recognised recently by the Council's external auditors.
- 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 and energy and waste

We're beginning a new series of detailed service reviews of front line services. These reviews, agreed by Council in September 2015, will assess our statutory responsibilities, service specifications, levels and standards. In all of the reviews we'll be guided by the principle that we will target services to the areas or people in most need.

Reviews completed in 2015/16:

- Senior Management
- Personal Assistants
- Finance, Governance & Assets
- Economic Strategy & Spatial Planning

Reviews completed in 2016/17 to date:

- Democratic Support
- Environmental Health
- Civic Services
- VCSE Support
- Housing
- Trading Standards & Licensing
- HR, Legal and Comms
- ICT Services
- Revenues and Benefits – Phase 1

Further reviews scheduled:

- Care for Your Area
- Administration
- Youth Services
- Children's Centres
- Libraries
- Business Support
- Transport/Highways projects
- Community Safety/Security Services
- SEN and Learning & Engagement
- Museums and Leisure
- Community Transport
- Revenues and Benefits - Phase 2
- Facilities Management
- Senior Management – Phase 3

OUR PEOPLE

Our employees are at the heart of our achievements over a number of years and they will continue to be fundamental in enabling the Council to maintain its position as one of the best performing local authorities in the country.

We currently employ about 2,500 full time equivalent employees. This is a reduction of over 700 over the past four years and we expect to see further significant reductions over the next three years.

In the current financial climate we recognise the continuing need for:

- high quality leaders and managers
- a high quality workforce who are fully valued and committed to the Council's vision and culture
- an environment of shared knowledge and learning across all services
- a flexible approach to work which takes advantage of new and innovative ways of working
- proper succession planning and organisational development

We are taking on the challenge of doing more with fewer resources. This challenge of building greater capacity and resilience in the organisation is being delivered through a five year programme called "Shaping a Brighter Future". The programme is designed to build more capacity in the organisation by investing in our own people and growing our own talent to increase capability through personal and team development.

OUR PLACE

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

The Borough covers approximately 20,000 Hectares with a population of about 194,000 people living in 84,000 dwellings.

The Borough's population has increased by 5.6% since the 2001 Census, whilst the North East region has also increased over the same period.

Using indices of multiple deprivation (IMD 2015), the Borough is ranked 88 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.

The Borough's population is projected to increase by 4.7% by 2022, then by another 3.4% by 2030 and a further 2.2% by 2037, equating to an additional 22,000 residents in 2037 compared with 2015.

The numbers of residents aged 65-79 and over 80 are projected to increase dramatically by 2037 whereas the number of people aged 45-64 is projected to decrease.

OUR CUSTOMERS

Ipsos/MORI carried out a residents' survey across the borough in 2015. The survey covered the following seven themes and included 56 questions:

- Satisfaction with the Council
- Perceptions of the local area and homes
- Satisfaction with local services
- Community safety
- Health and lifestyle
- The Economy
- The festivals, events and specialist markets brought to the Borough by the Council

Face to face interviews were undertaken with a randomly selected sample of 2,102 individuals aged 16+ from across the whole of the Borough. The number of households interviewed in each Ward ensured that survey results are statistically representative at borough, locality and ward levels.

The results show a general improvement from the last survey and help us to focus our work in areas that we think need improvement:

- Overall, 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)

OUR SERVICES

Due to the financial challenges we face we can't pretend that we can continue to do all the things we currently do and we won't be able to work in the same way.

The more savings we have to make, the harder it gets. We'll have to stop doing some things and this will affect the levels of service we provide to the public.

We have to carefully measure how well we deliver our services with emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. This means we have to increase our focus on our key objectives and how we measure our success.

The following pages provide an update on progress against our objectives by theme.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

Our Vision

We have big plans for an outstanding borough

The Borough of Stockton-on-Tees deserves ambitious thinking to deliver our vision 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. With new, vibrant and animated town centres that are at the heart of our community.

Our Objectives

Deliver key infrastructure including enhancing the transport network

Development of key infrastructure proposals continues in partnership with the Tees Valley Combined Authority to ensure our assets are enhanced and maintained to facilitate further growth in our economy and housing needs. Continued engagement with key providers to deliver superfast broadband to employment and locations across the Borough and delivery of improved services in residential areas across the Borough, in particular rural areas.

Work continues on a pan northern and national basis to support improved rails services including the operation of a Thornaby to London train service from 2020.

Deliver vibrant and economically successful town centres

The re-occupation of vacant floorspace is one of our key priorities. Continued targeting vacant premises across Stockton Town Centre and, where possible, are working with owners to facilitate re-occupation of these premises.

We have plans to diversify Town Centre uses, focus and expand the evening economy in Stockton and provide improved living opportunities. This includes the continued development of Northshore mixed use development and the Gateway site where the Hampton by Hilton hotel is proposed with a view to opening in 2018.

We are actively supporting the regeneration of town centre sites. The refurbishment and reoccupation of the Globe Theatre continues along with the renovation and expansion of the Georgian Theatre in partnership with Tees Music Alliance.

We are reviewing and understanding the flexibility and capacity of Stockton Town Centre business units; understanding the scale and format of units and the needs of potential occupiers.

We worked hard to support the successful Stockton Town Centre Business Improvement District and continue to support the Healthy High Streets programme.

We are also working hard to promote and support our culture, heritage, specialist markets and events programme.

Improve economic prosperity for residents across the borough

We are investing £361K to secure £1.4M of ESF/YEI funding to support 261 15-29 year olds to move closer to the labour market.

We are also helping to increase higher level skills by improving access to appropriate learning and training and are promoting and encouraging people to undertake higher level/degree apprenticeships.

We aim to increase participation in the labour market by creating a range of flexible jobs to enable under-represented groups to access employment, for example job carving and flexible working.

Improve economic prosperity for new and existing businesses across the borough

We are seeking to develop an understanding of growth and growing sectors not currently based in the Borough.

We want to influence the quality of the services and quality of information to ensure Stockton-on-Tees businesses receive the maximum level of support available. Supporting the operation of an effective market for business support services and finance is a real priority.

We continue to identify and support additional key sectors within the Borough's economy should they fall outside the key areas of focus within the wider Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan.

We are working with strategic partners to increase the number of Stockton-on-Tees businesses exporting and support those that already export to increase their presence in key international markets

Effectively promote Stockton-on-Tees as a place to invest trade and visit, highlighting its distinct strengths within the Tees Valley is vital.

Building economic resilience to the effects of the slowdown in global economies sets is a real challenge, as are the high numbers of energy intensive businesses and energy cost.

Create a culture that encourages and sustains enterprise and start-up businesses

We are working hard to increase new business start rates by inspiring the next generation of young entrepreneurs to start and build new business ventures. We are highlighting self-employment as an alternative route to success

We continue to identify growth opportunities under-represented in the Stockton-on-Tees and wider Tees Valley economy and support the realisation of new enterprises and innovation activity in high potential sectors

We also continue to provide a package of support to prospective retail businesses to support the sustainability and diversity of the Borough's town centre offer.

Learning and skills; high quality, targeted apprenticeships, learning and training opportunities

The Stockton Learning and Skills service aim to be the first choice provider for adult education and apprenticeships in Stockton-on-Tees providing high quality learning and training experiences across the borough with targeted provision to maximize the potential of learners from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

Half year figures reveal strong performance:

- 340 education and training learning aims started by 16-18 year olds – 75% of learning aims retained with 91% pass rate
- 5825 education and training learning aims started by 19+ year olds - 95% of learning aims retained with 97% pass rate
- 228 new Apprenticeship starts of which 101 were at Intermediate Level, 55 at Advanced Level and 72 were Higher Level Apprenticeships

In July the Service was subject to the 3 yearly MATRIX assessment which measures the Service against a quality kitemark for the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance. It was successful in retaining its MATIRIX accreditation with the assessor commenting in his report: "Learning & Skills has much to be pleased about having maintained its IAG service since last being assessed particularly over the last six months during which a much stronger and clearer focus has emerged." In his verbal feedback, the assessor went on to say that out of 160 providers he works with across the country, he would rank Stockton Learning and Skills in the top 3.

ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Our Vision

We have big plans for our places and open spaces

We aim to target our resources carefully 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.

We want people to be proud of our borough. We want them to feel that this is a place where strong leadership and genuine care are making a real difference. We take our responsibility to the environment seriously and will do what we can to protect it for future generations.

Our Objectives

Address housing requirements and further expand and regenerate the borough's housing needs

The development of a new Local Plan for 2017 continues with a major new evidence base being developed that will support the allocation of land for housing, industrial, commercial and retail uses with absolute regard for the impact on the built and natural environment. In addition, work to support the devolution agenda continues with the development of potential new housing regeneration opportunities.

Our work to deliver high-quality homes for the local population by influencing decisions affecting the location and quality of private sector housing provision continues, working in partnership with housing providers. Working in partnership with North Star Housing, two new housing developments were occupied during the summer (Willow Court in Hardwick and Churchland Gardens in Norton), providing family housing and accommodation for the elderly and residents with learning disabilities who want to live independently.

In urban areas we are identifying a major new urban extension at West Stockton involving the build out of 2,500 homes over a 20 year period.

It is recognised that Wynyard area is a sustainable settlement which is identified as a location for further homes.

We are also promoting homes in Strategic Employment Locations.

By 2019 Victoria housing regeneration project will have delivered a new model of urban living. Our private sector partners are expected to have completed the Meadow Rise development (in Hardwick) by early 2017 and the first handovers of new housing at West End Gardens (Parkfield) are expected to commence in November 2016. And Developers will have built close to 2,000 homes to meet the housing needs of the local economy.

The planning process continues to evolve at national level and development led policies are influencing landscape of determination.

Returning long-term empty residential properties to use also remains a priority, with the direct involvement of the Council 38 long-term empties were returned to use in the first 6 months of this year (providing 47 units of accommodation).

Development and delivery of the Council's environmental policy and improve resilience to extreme weather events

Environmental Policy

Currently we are delivering key community facilities in line with the Council's Capital Programme. We are committed to supporting the low carbon economy and promoting and delivering the Council's Environmental Policy.

We develop and successfully manage our open spaces and green infrastructure. And we are continuing to promote and work with partners and private developers to enhance the quality of our built environment and quality of place.

We continue to manage and review the Council's responsibilities with respect to flood risk and other extreme weather events.

Street Lighting

The £14million street lighting replacement programme has now been ongoing for two years and continues to progress. Lighting works have been completed in eleven ward areas and are currently ongoing in a further seven others. Once complete, almost 28,000 lanterns will be replaced with modern LED lighting units and around 8,500 street lighting columns 25-years-old will also have been replaced. The project will generate projected savings of approximately £1.8million per year from reduced energy and maintenance costs.

Waste and Recycling

The contract that we currently have in place for the disposal of Household Waste allows us to divert the majority of household waste from landfill to an Energy From Waste (EFW) alternative. This allows waste to be used as the main source of fuel in a process which generates a significant amount of electricity which is then sold to the energy market.

The landfill rate can fluctuate depending on planned and unplanned maintenance shutdowns as well as other factors; fortunately the facility has been operating fully during this quarter and, although exact rates are not available at the moment, it is expected that in excess of 90% of all residual household waste was sent to the EFW facility with recycling rates currently stand at around 25.6% which is an improvement on last year.

Kerbside recycling been reviewed this year within the Place Committee work plan and Members were given information on current waste and recycling performance in Stockton-on-Tees, regionally and across the UK as well as factors which influence habits towards recycling. Members were also given details of waste composition in wheeled bins, including how much of the waste deposited in bins can be recycled.

Work is ongoing at present on the six Place Committee recommendations, which includes work to seek residents views in relation to Kerbside Recycling. Other areas that are being considered include current service delivery costs on waste and recycling, a review of the receptacles that we use as well as options for increased waste and recycling awareness campaigns and initiatives. Further updates on progress against the recommendations will be fed through to Members in December 2016.

Street Cleansing

Performance on street cleansing has always been aligned closely with grounds maintenance services as these two clearly influence how residents perceive environmental quality in their neighbourhoods e.g. based on levels of litter, dog fouling and how long the grass is.

We have been fortunate in Stockton-on-Tees in well over a decade that performance in both areas has been either on par with or exceeded that of any other area in the country; our regional, national and international success in a range of 'in bloom' competitions is testimony to this as well as these awards acting as a significant driver in residents caring for their own area through the creation of gardening clubs and local litter picking groups.

Inevitably, the reduction in resources associated with significant financial pressures that the Council is facing has seen a reduction in the level of service that we are able to offer, and this will become even more challenging in the years ahead with more reductions planned. That being said, we will be diverting core resources away from areas of the borough that don't require the same level of service as some other areas as the priority is to deal with the areas which generate the greatest level of problems. We will still deliver a high quality service despite these challenges and a weekly visit to all residential areas will still be supported.

Highways Maintenance

Highways maintenance continues to provide key services in maintaining the roads across the Borough. Improvement in the inspection regime has improved the process of identifying areas for repair. This initially increased the amount of repair notifications being recorded. This was managed with a short term increase in resources to ensure the risk of road faults was managed in a timely way.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Our Vision

We have big plans for keeping our community safe

Tackling crime and the fear of crime remains one of our most important aspirations, recognising that people are concerned about crime and the effect that fear of crime can have on the quality of their lives. We want Stockton-on-Tees to be a place where levels of crime and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

Our Objectives

Reducing crime and the fear of crime

Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP)

As part of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, 1998 the local authority has a statutory duty to co-ordinate a Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The Safer Stockton Partnership deals with crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse related issues and aims to reduce the fear of crime. The Partnership sets out its current ambitions in the Community Safety Plan 2014-17. The priorities in the Community Safety Plan have been set based on the results of borough-wide resident consultation. It is not the intention to replicate the content of that plan in this document but to focus on what the Council's role is in terms of delivering the outcomes and objectives contained within it.

Community Safety

Community Safety remains a key priority for residents of the borough of Stockton and there has always been a high regard for the need to maintain uniformed and frontline officers within the Community Safety Service.

The Community Safety Service will continue to operate under the statutory requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to reduce crime, disorder and the fear of for residents of the borough of Stockton. This remains one of the biggest challenges within Community Safety because it cannot be completed in isolation of other key agencies. An essential prerequisite to achieve this is for collaborative working and joined up approaches to tackle the changing demands of crime.

The current priorities are anti-social behaviour, violent crime and robbery, drug related offending, criminal damage, alcohol related crime and domestic abuse. Stockton-on-Tees continues to have the lowest level of anti-social behaviour across the Tees Valley.

Improve and develop more cohesive communities in the Borough

We will continue to work across the authority to develop awareness and understanding around the development of stronger and cohesive communities. This will include work around addressing the issues of under reporting for incidents of Hate, and to dispel myths around asylum and migration within Stockton-on-Tees. We will also undertake the lead role for raising the profile and awareness of the delivery of the Prevent Agenda. We will continue to raise awareness to both

individuals and businesses around licensing legislation and compliance with legal responsibilities.

To provide regulatory advice and assistance to businesses and to shape the provision of effective support services to them

Clear local policies were developed in line with legislation and agreed in January 2016 following consultation with users, all policies are currently under review. There is strong evidence that this policy foundation is leading to positive outcomes for example The Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy has removed 41 accident damaged vehicles from the fleet, trained 500 drivers in safeguarding, encouraged an additional 49 new vehicles to be registered that comply to Euro 5 emissions, and following intelligence and complaints 19 drivers have been revoked or refused licenses.

We have undertaken a review of the fees for Taxi licensing and the formal process of consultation with Members of the Licensing Committee and the trade will now commence.

Work continues to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of managing the issue of all licenses, permits and registrations, with work now underway on improving the website as a proactive pre-application advice channel, and on-line application / payment portal.

In order to support the vibrant night time economy in the Town Centre targeted compliance activity based on intelligence is supporting our move to enable the consideration of developing a purple flag scheme for licensed premises within the Stockton Town Centre area.

We are progressing the delivery of educational initiatives and awareness campaigns with respect of the night time economy and taxi trade with regards to vulnerability and Child Sexual Exploitation (VEMT) and have seen several hundred drivers successfully complete the NOCN Level 1 accredited qualification unit Awareness of protection and safeguarding in health and social care (adults and young people) early years and childcare.

We are currently considering the following Government consultations and how they may impact in our Borough:

- Gambling Commission - controlling where gaming machines may be played
- Policing and Crime Bill - changes to The Licensing Act which are still progressing through Parliament

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our Vision

We have big plans for the young people of our Borough

Every single child is important to us. We are determined to give them as many opportunities as we can to help them be the very best they can be in life and we will do all we can to protect those children who need our care. Striving to ensure children get the best possible education, giving them confidence to grow into valued, respected and included members of the community.

Our Objectives

Ensure effective pre-natal and early years support for children and families

There continues to be a focus on the uptake of free education for disadvantaged 2 year olds. We have seen a significant increase in take up in 2016, with the latest figures indicating we have already achieved the target of over 80%. A specific post was recruited to support this activity, and there is a lot of positive feedback from this approach to date, which is using innovative and family focused approaches to connecting families to available support.

Performance in the Early Years Foundation stage continues to improve, with 65% of children reaching a good level of development, a 24% increase in the past 3 years.

100% of childcare settings and 98% of childminders are now graded good or better by Ofsted.

The transition guarantee, Moving Forward, will be introduced for early years.

The Place Select Committee is currently reviewing school readiness and will report back to Cabinet later in the year.

A review of available childcare places has been undertaken to prepare for the extension of the free education entitlement to eligible 3 and 4 year olds in September 2017. This has identified a number of areas in the borough where additional provision will be required. Capital works will also be needed to support implementation. Four bids have been submitted to the Department for Education and additional funding provision has been set aside to support expansion or remodeling of existing provision in some locations, as well as new provision in others, such as the collocated nursery in Fairfield Library, also agreed by Cabinet on 6 October.

A major consultation on future role of early years and children's centres, as approved at Cabinet on 1 September, is drawing to a close. This consultation is seeking views on the proposal to create a smaller number of family hubs, and to move to a model focused more on outreach and working with families in a more flexible way, with closer working with health visiting services.

Ensure children and young people are safe and feel safe

The Ofsted Single Inspection Framework undertaken in May / June 2016 looked at children in need of help and protection (early help, child in need, and child protection), looked after children and care leavers and leadership and governance.

Overall, services were found to be good. Services for children in need of help and protection were found to be good.

There remains a major focus on early help, with a new model agreed by Cabinet in July and a new performance framework in September. The establishment of an early help hub continues, with co-located services now including Harbour, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust (TEWV), Thirteen and the Health visiting services delivered by North Tees and Hartlepool.

Visioning and service design sessions are currently being held with all partners to support an embedding of the approach and to develop an enhanced focus on predicting and preventing vulnerable families from requiring more specialist support, building on the Troubled Families model.

The current reviews of early years and youth services are being undertaken within the framework and model for early help agreed by Cabinet.

There continues to be demand pressure across children's social care services. Levels of contacts into the children's hub remain high, though effective screening in the hub is reducing the number of assessments being undertaken as concerns are signposted back to agencies or to early help services.

Our numbers of Children in Need are reducing and latest figures would suggest we are now at a similar level to the regional average.

Numbers of children with child protection plans remain higher than regional and national averages and remain a focus, although numbers have remained more stable than the picture in some neighbouring authorities.

Numbers of looked after children increased significantly from a relatively stable level of around 380 for the past 3 years to 411. This mirrors a regional and national trend.

Performance in relation to statutory timescales for assessments, reviews remains strong. More detailed performance information was report to Cabinet on 1 September, and will be reported again in December.

A review of the operation of the Children's Hub will be undertaken in February 2017. Early signs are that the hub is providing very effective at securing effective partnership involvement and data analysis to support decision making for social care assessment.

Implementation of Signs of safety model – this approach is leading to an improvement in the quality of care planning for children.

The performance of the Youth Offending Team remains strong. The last 3 years has seen a reduction of 77% in first time entrants. There are some signs that this

pattern may now be reversing which will be monitored through the YOT Board.

There have been more custodial sentences in this period, though they relate to the same murder/manslaughter case in Norton.

Performance on reoffending is showing a more mixed picture. Fewer young people have reoffended and they have committed significantly fewer reoffences than the previous year (reduction of 43% from the previous year). However, national PNC data, shows a less positive picture. Reoffending and reoffender rates have both increased on the previous year and the frequency rate is above the regional and national averages.

Improve educational performance of all children and young people across the borough

As reported to Cabinet on 1 September, performance remains strong in our primary schools with results indicating achievement above national levels in many areas. The performance of our secondary schools overall continues to improve with many measures above national averages and results which place us amongst the top authorities in the North East. There are, however, a few academies whose performance remains a concern and we are liaising with the trust directors, the Regional Schools Commissioner and Ofsted regarding these academies.

Cabinet agreed a schools investment strategy on 6 October, which sets out proposal to meet the demand for additional secondary school places to 2020 as well as working with schools on a range of improvements to conditions. This will be developed into a detailed implementation plan and be reported to Cabinet in February 2017.

Cabinet on 6 October also agreed to proceed with the proposal to reshape SEND provision in the borough, with a significant reshaping of the current Additionally Resourced provision (ARP). The emphasis is on establishing provision which is both more coherently organised on types of need, and which avoids the need for children to be transported long distances away from their home communities as well as emphasizing early intervention from a variety of agencies.

There is a range of interest from Multi Academy Trusts in the creation of new special free schools across Tees Valley, and a new option for local authorities working in partnership to propose a new special free school. Tees authorities are working together on potential proposals.

Support young people to make a successful transition into adulthood

Youth service review undertaken through CYP Select Committee to develop a new approach and model for support to young people.

Performance of the Youth Direction Careers Service remains strong, with recent results indicating significant added value in terms of the reduction of NEETs for those schools participating. The emerging proposals through the Tees Valley

Combined Authority around careers and enterprise support for young people will be considered as part of future planning and are linked to the Youth revue.

A review of the 14-19 Partnership in the context of the Post 16 Area Review will be undertaken by the Secondary Heads and Principals Group in November. This will explore a range of issues including performance, provision, options for new approaches, and pathways into employment.

Improve outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers

Ofsted found services for looked after children and for adoption to be: requires improvement.

The number of children in care has risen in 2016. In terms of educational outcomes, due to significant changes in the way assessments are undertaken, comparison with previous years are more complicated.

In terms of early years, 38% achieved a good level of development, a 4 year improving trend and the gap between looked after children and all children has closed. At key stage 1 and 2, cohorts are small but and performance is below that of all pupils and not all comparable data is available. At key stage 4 there remain challenges on attainment and achievement despite a generally positive upward trend.

There has seen a steady increase in the percentage of care leavers who are in education, employment and training, rising from 49% to 51%. A number of initiatives are in place to support this work including a specific 'EET Clinic' which examines individual cases and develops specific and customised support plans. As a result of discussions at the MALAP, work has also been undertaken to ensure more effective support through a specific placement scheme facilitated through Council as an employer, and also to trial a scheme where additional brokerage with businesses is used to identify and support potential placements.

Progress on the health of looked after children and young children remains an area of focus. Although the numbers of children who have received a health assessment remains an improving picture there are some issue sin recording of this information. Work to streamline the process is underway with the CCG and the Foundation Trust who provide the specialist nursing service for looked after children.

As part of the Big Ticket programme, a review of our approach to looked after children, including the options for development of an 'edge of care' service (an Ofsted recommendation) to prevent young people form coming into care is being undertaken.

Ofsted inspection identified some shortfalls in the quality of plans for looked after children. This is being addressed by rolling out the Signs of Safety methodology.

There remain challenges in meeting the adoption scorecard measures for timeliness of adoption matches and placements. Work continues on the development of a sub-regional approach to adoption, in the context of receiving less

funding than anticipated.

However, Ofsted also praised the Council's work with care leavers as outstanding, based on the extent to which services continue to track, support and keep in contact with care leavers, and continue to support them.

Leadership management and governance

Work continues to embed the Children's Services Strategy agreed by cabinet in July, including a range of transformational change projects as well as business improvement actions.

The Ofsted report recognized the effectiveness of leadership and management. An action plan to respond to the recommendations in the inspection is being developed for submission to Ofsted in November, and will be reported to Cabinet in December.

The Ofsted report commended the strong role played by elected members through the Lead Member, Cabinet, Select Committee and through the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has held a development day to consider the Ofsted judgment of Requires Improvement, and this will result in a refreshed business plan and some changes to the way the partnership works which will be considered at its meeting in November. Discussions are also underway with Tees Valley authorities on options for moving to a new structural approach, based on the recommendations of the recent Wood Review. The proposal to abolish LSCBs in their current form is included in the Children and Social Work Bill currently before parliament.

The Children and Young People Select Committee review of the LSCB will conclude in November and report to Cabinet in December.

Voice of the child

Ensuring the Voice of the Child is sought, heard and acted upon remains a key priority in the Children's Services Strategy, and in the work of the LSCB and the Children and Young People's Partnership.

The Council has recently invested in a new approach to engaging the view of looked after children and young people through the Mind Of My Own (MOMO) application which is a nationally recognised good practice tool which enables real time feedback from children and young people.

The support provided to the Children in care Council has also recently changed, with the responsibility passing to Youth Direction. This will enable a more structured approach to be taken to engagement of all children and young people in care, and make better connections with other activities and programmes.

The #answeralex approach is now live, with the views of young people being sought through social media on a range of issues in the coming months, including views on

the current youth review.

Working jointly with Hartlepool and the Clinical Commissioning Group, a number of young people have been trained as peer researchers to help support the work underway to transform mental health services for children and young people.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our Vision

We have big plans for the health of our people

The health and wellbeing of the people in our communities is important to us. We want the Borough to be a place where people are supported to be fit and healthy, where they feel included and cared for, where they get the best possible advice, support and care whenever and wherever they need it and where health is protected as far as possible.

Our Objectives

Give every child the best start in life

Childhood obesity remains a significant issue for Stockton-on-Tees. This is part of a wider societal change and hence is therefore a major challenge to tackle, as part of wider strategies. There is some good news in that obesity at Year 6 was lower than in 2013/4 but longer term data is needed to know if this will be sustained. Primary schools within the borough continue to engage well with the National Child Measurement Programme with all schools participating and 98% of eligible children weighed. This supports the development of a robust dataset which can be used to inform local planning and delivery of services.

A wide population level approach will be required to tackle obesity and the national obesity strategy is awaited later in 2016 which will help to focus thinking on medium term plans and objectives. As part of contributing to obesity management and secondary prevention, Public Health has significantly increased funding for family weight management support since April 2015. There are some challenges in generating referrals to the service but continual engagement with partners (e.g. schools, GP practices, community groups, retailers) to promote the service is actively being pursued. The majority of families accessing the service are from quintile 1 and 2 and hence this is helping to reduce health inequalities. The service is achieving positive outcomes for BMI reduction.

Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

Smoking

8% of the smoking population are accessing the stop smoking service compared with the NE figure of 6.1%. Though this is below the target of 10%, Stockton-on-Tees is in the top 3 for performance in the region and services are regarded as an example of best practice nationally. Work continues with partners from the Adults Health and Wellbeing and Children and Young People's Partnerships.

There is a major challenge with smoking quitters and accessing traditional stop smoking services. This national and local downturn is believed to be a result of the

impact of electronic cigarettes and other alternatives to the use of the smoking cessation service. Work continues nationally to understand the impact of these alternatives.

Recent work in Stockton-on-Tees to counter this includes an intensive promotion of the local stop smoking service including a leaflet drop in all wards and advertising in a local newspaper. Particular focus is on those areas of highest deprivation.

Alcohol

The rate of emergency hospital admissions for alcohol related harm per 100,000 population remains around 25% higher than the England average, though is broadly in line with regional rates. The most recent data by quarter indicated a 6.5% reduction compared to the same period in 2014/15 and it is hoped this may start a downward trend.

To reduce alcohol related risk and harm across the Borough, Alcohol Screening and delivery of Brief Interventions Training is being delivered through 'Have a Word' Alcohol Training. Alcohol brief interventions/advice are an evidence based method of reducing alcohol harm. Both adult and children's workforce teams are currently taking part in the programme, with both Adult and Children & Young People's Partnership Boards giving their support to the programme.

There are also plans to develop a more advanced local alcohol strategy and plans for this have already been approved by Adults Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

Health checks

The year-end performance of 54% uptake exceeded the target of 50% and has improved on figures from early years of the programme. There has also been a sustained improvement in the number of people from the two most deprived quintiles that attended for an assessment. 50.8% of invitees from these quintiles accepted the invitation, which compares favourably with earlier years.

Work has been undertaken at practice level to specifically target such groups and this has led to improvements. In addition, a working group has been set up to look at those wards in which uptake is not as good, to see if lessons can be learned and what action can be taken to improve these.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Our Vision

We have big plans for helping our communities prosper

Communities lie at the very heart of what makes the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees so strong and amazing. We are creating an environment where people feel empowered to make a difference, where those who want to can get involved and where everyone can have an equal say. A community that is diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant.

Our Objectives

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

Recommendations from a review of Council Support to the VCSE were agreed by Cabinet in May. The review established long term security of funding to Catalyst as the Support organisation to the VCSE in the borough. The review also retained the Market Development Fund to support long term sustainability in the sector.

The Local Strategic Partnership continues to work through the four Locality Forums. It is a thriving partnership, bringing together a wide range of public, private and VCSE partners to deliver the Brighter Borough For All Strategy to tackle poverty in the borough. The focus of a lot of work this year has been on providing support to those under 35 years of age living in poverty.

Catalyst continue to co-ordinate The Volunteering Partnership to deliver the Volunteering Strategy in the borough. The new hub website “stocktonvolunteers.co.uk” is developing well as a site to bring together all volunteering opportunities in the borough.

We continue to provide support to 46 Community Centres across the borough. The programme of Community Asset transfers continues with the successful transfer of Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre and Norton Grange Community Centre to OnSite Building Trust in July.

Nominations have opened for the 7th annual Civic Awards which honour local people and organisations that make a positive difference to our community. The awards take place to recognise the people and groups which selflessly dedicate their time and effort to others across a variety of categories, including, for example, services to the community.

Deliver effective community consultation and engagement

Work continues to use the results of the 2015 MORI Residents Survey in service design and improvement.

The new “My Views” consultation portal has been launched and is providing an improved online platform to support consultations on service changes and proposals.

The Viewpoint residents’ panel continues to provide a valuable route for consultation on services across the borough.

Deliver effective local democracy

On publication of the revised register following transition to IER, there were 138,811 electors registered which represented 92% of the adult population, however, only 19% of attainers were registered. Comprehensive awareness raising through a range of channels has resulted in an increase in registration to 95% at 1 July 2016 with 41% of attainers registered. The Annual Electoral Canvass is on-going and response rates and channel shift to online and automated response methods are encouraging. The revised register will be published in December 2016.

All scrutiny reviews are progressing as planned and will report to Cabinet in due course. The approach to formulating the scrutiny programme has been developed. Work continues to strengthen quality assurance work by Members.

The Scrutiny Committee of the Tees Valley Combined Authority has commenced its programme of work and arrangements are in place to provide support and training to members of this committee.

The Member Learning & Development programme has continued beyond its initial Induction stage with the third annual Health & Wellbeing Community Leadership Programme sessions currently being held.

Following meetings with the LGA, Cabinet development work continues with an action plan drawn up. A comprehensive Member Development Programme has been developed and delivered, and will be refreshed as emerging needs arise.

Charter Plus Reaccreditation in respect of our support for Member Development has been achieved. Areas of particular good practice have been highlighted alongside areas for improvement.

Strong joint working and networking in the Tees Valley and regionally was evident as Stockton-on-Tees took the lead on delivering the PCC Election for the Cleveland Police Force Area and worked with Sunderland and the Regional Counting Officer to ensure the successful delivery of the EU Referendum.

ADULTS

Our Vision

We have big plans for the care we provide

We believe our Borough should be a place where people are treated with dignity and respect, are treated well and receive the attention, care and assistance they need and are supported to live independently should they so choose.

Our Objectives

Delaying and reducing the need for care and support

The introduction of the multi-disciplinary service and the redesigning of the reablement service has led to a more focused approach to reducing the need for care and support. These services support clients who have identified needs to receive services to promote independence, rather than long term care.

Ensuring that people have a positive experience of care and support

User satisfaction surveys are completed by all people who have a Care Act assessment and the feedback from these surveys is positive.

Support has been provided to a Voluntary, Community and Social Care sector provider to develop an alternative approach to home care services provision (registration with the Regulator is expected to be in place by the end of October 2016).

Safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect

Safeguarding adults at risk remains a priority and work is ongoing between the safeguarding team, care management and the commissioning team to ensure that appropriate actions are completed when individuals are identified as being at risk. Improvement work has been completed in relation to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) to ensure that the process is effective, that it supports the most vulnerable clients and that the Council meets its legal requirements.

Support carers in their caring role

We have worked closely with young carers to identify service quality issues through commissioned home care. This has resulted in a young carers' group delivering specific training to commissioned home care providers to ensure that providers organise their work in a way that supports young carers to continue caring in a way that does not have a negative impact on their living situation.

Options are currently being reviewed for future commissioned carer support, taking into account carer entitlement and new approaches to carer support developed through the Better Care Fund dementia work strand.

ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

Our Vision

We have big plans for great experiences

We recognise the role and value arts, culture and leisure has, both in its own right and in support of many of the other ambitions we have and the outcomes we are seeking to achieve. Our vision is of a borough where our heritage, festivals, cultural activities and leisure facilities help us attract visitors, investment and talent, and where our events are central to creating vibrant town centres. Our residents enjoy a wealth of experiences that inspire and educate, supporting aspiration, innovation and entrepreneurialism. Sport and active leisure opportunities help people sustain healthier lifestyles and support their wellbeing.

Our Objectives

Make more people aware of local history and heritage

Preston Hall Museum continues to be our primary means of raising awareness of local history, complemented by projects and activities in community settings and permanent features in public spaces, such as the heritage plaques recently installed in Stockton High Street.

Visits to Preston Hall have been boosted by a strong summer holiday programme. The Hall attracted 50,000 visitors in 6 weeks, the highest level since the reopening in 2012.

Work is progressing on the revised master plan for the park, setting out landscape and facility development and improvement priorities. It is envisaged that some elements could then be the subject of a Heritage Lottery bid.

In preparation for the bi-centenary of the birth of passenger rail in 2025, Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council have jointly commissioned work to audit the original line and to explore what can be done to protect and promote key sites on that historic railway track. The archaeological study is complete and an assessment of the opportunities and priorities is underway. This work is being undertaken with the Friends of Stockton Darlington Railway.

Develop a sustainable events programme that contributes to local social and economic improvements

Our success in attracting and delivering high quality large scale events that deliver an economic impact has continued. The 2016 Cycling Festival, incorporating the British Cycling National Road Race Championship, attracted an estimated 25,000 visitors and broadcast television coverage with an advertising equivalent value of

£4.2million thanks to 3 hours of live Eurosport coverage plus packages on ITV4 and other channels. Assessment of the full economic impact of the cycling festival is being finalised and will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

Our Specialist Market offer for 2016 has focused on delivering a reduced number of markets with a clear intention to drive up quality and attract better quality traders. Visitor satisfaction over the past 6 months has remained very high (*100% Retro Market, 98% Chic Vintique and 95% Kapow*) Footfall figures have shown an increase ranging from 5%-15%.

The Council has a strong reputation for delivering events which is built on a foundation of robust event management systems and experienced and skilled staff. It has developed a clear strategic and operational framework which delivers a 'one Council one-organisation' to planning, management and delivery.

The Event Service support over 20 externally-run events each year, helping to ensure that events in the Borough are always safe and well managed. In addition the team provides advice and guidance to communities to enable them to deliver their own small scale community events, such as street parties.

As part of its event operational framework, Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) is on target to have reviewed over 40 large scale events in 2016/17, providing a quality assurance function.

Implement plans for the library service

Use of Stockton-on-Tees libraries continues to grow with facilities providing activities, meeting space, online access as well as the books and reference material that are at the core of the library offer.

Consultation over plans for Egglecliffe and Fairfield branches have generated considerable work for managers and frontline staff but all normal activities have been sustained. In addition the design of the new library and leisure centre at Ingleby Barwick has achieved a proposed form and layout which has great potential for these continually evolving services.

In September the doors opened on the refurbished Yarm library, incorporating the Newcastle Building Society (NBS) and opening a new outdoor reading garden. NBS are already talking about the success of this pilot joint venture.

Support the creation of excellent art and excellent art experiences

SIRF16 including the community carnival sustained its profile and high customer satisfaction with 92% describing it as good or excellent and 96% stating that it was a good use of Council resources. In addition the number of visitors from beyond the North East increased by 6%, increasing the impact of the Festival on people's perceptions about the area. The economic impact figures are being finalized and will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

ARC is supported by SBC to provide a wide ranging programme of theatre, dance, music, cinema and community activity. They have successfully piloted a scheme to

allow people to 'Pay What You Decide' for all of their dance, drama and spoken word events. They have seen an increase in audiences and an overall increase in income. ARC also continues to secure significant national funding and to support wider initiatives such as our UK City of Culture 2025 aspiration.

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

Funky Feet continues to progress with expansion at a local level and meetings with colleagues at a regional level are likely to see the initiative visible in Newcastle in the near future through the Library service.

Sisters-R-Doing-It has made great progress across the Tees Valley attracting significant numbers of mainly inactive women into running. This includes a lady from Norton who went from the couch to completing the Great North Run in 9-months.

Air Trail has delivered against the targets set and TAL continues to work closely with SBC on the design and development of the Ingleby Barwick Leisure Facility. Sport England has invited Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to bid for £1.5m of Strategic Facilities funding towards the overall cost of the project. Application to be submitted early 2017.

SBC has worked closely with Billingham Rugby Club and the RFU to support the development of a new fully funded artificial grass pitch. Following consultation with key stakeholders the facility has been approved under delegated powers with work planned to start on site October 2016.

The National Road Race Championships brought not only elite riders and enormous crowds to Stockton but, through a partnership with the Tees Valley Community Foundation, over £20,000 of funding was awarded to 24 projects: 5 Parish Councils and Residents Associations, 12 Schools (11 Primary schools and 1 Secondary), 5 Community groups and 2 local cycling clubs.

The projects engaged hundreds, of all ages and abilities, in a range of activities including the creation of cycling themed art and community cycling themed fun days which both decorated and animated the Borough across the days of hosting the National Road Championships.

Improve our understanding of the culture and leisure needs and aspirations of our residents, customers and audiences

An annual Festival and Events viewpoint survey has been delivered for the past two years and findings are used to support and influence future events and specialist market programming. Feedback is sought on awareness, attendance, access, value for money and overall satisfaction.

The most popular views in 2016 were that events and specialist markets are good for the Borough (86%), help attract new people into the Borough (77%) and happen in the right places (74%). These findings correlate with the recent resident surveys which showed 74% surveyed felt events and specialist markets attracted new people into the Borough, 78% felt they happened in the right places and 85% said they are good for the Borough

Travel to and from events/specialist markets has been raised as a key influence for attendance and being informed about catering arrangements was also highlighted as an important factor.

In addition to the view point survey, individual customer surveys are carried out for a number of events, including SIF, Sparkles and Specialist Markets.

OUR ORGANISATION

Our Vision

Ambitious, effective and proud to serve

This is 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.

Our Objectives

Delivering a balanced and sustainable medium term financial plan

A response has been issued to the consultation paper on Business Rate retention.

The Business Rate revaluation information was released in early October and this is being analysed.

Preparatory work for the 2017/18 budget and MTFP is underway with a report planned for Cabinet in December. Autumn statement is expected in November.

Work continues around the savings programme, report presented to CMT included performance against targets.

Developing and delivering value for money and efficiency

Finance and Assets Review completed, savings delivered and structure in place.

The first phase of the Revenues and Benefits review is complete and second phase is now underway with consultation commencing on October 5th.

Continue to support reviews including Commissioning which will now incorporate the Procurement function.

Reviewed the approach to supporting Tees Valley Combined Authority with changes at Senior Finance Manager level.

Continuing to develop on line forms. A number are now live and operational in Revenues and Benefits.

Report to Cabinet and Audit Committee agreed the development of shared Internal Audit Service with Darlington.

Agreed that a further review and rationalisation of internal recharges is needed.

An approach to Smarter Working and Smarter Thinking is being developed to sit alongside the MTFP and our Shaping a Brighter Future programme.

Maximising and safeguarding income

Council Tax and NNDR collection levels are being monitored very closely and recovery action for non-payment is consistent with previous years. The valuation office has split some of our business centres in light of a recent High Court ruling and therefore we have created additional debit, this may be impacting around the margins.

Optimising the use of assets

Sale agreed for EDC and this is progressing through legal processes.

Accommodation changes are underway involving members and a number of services to facilitate service reviews.

School investment strategy was presented to Cabinet on 6th October.

Project underway to review current land and buildings and update disposal plans.

Developing and ensuring a robust governance framework

New style year end performance report presented to Cabinet.

Accounts complete and approved by Audit Committee.

Annual governance statement completed and approved.

Corporate planning and delivery framework being developed.

Review of the Tees Valley Combined Authority constitution underway to reflect the Mayoral Authority.

Work continues with services in the delivery of the information governance programme using the simplified information risk management checklist. The completed checklists form the basis of information risk treatment plans.

The online ICT security awareness training course has continued to be promoted throughout Q2, with update reports being provided to Directors.

Monitoring Officer and legal support and advice to members has continued, including Monitoring Officer attendance at Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings. The Council Constitution was updated in May 2016. Training and regular meetings are taking place with the Independent Persons.

National Living Wage/Living Wage – the Council’s current pay and grading structure meets and exceeds the national living wage however further consideration needs to be given to further changes to ensure compliance as the National Minimum Wage increases to over £9.00 per hour in 2020. Consideration is being given to a revision of the national pay spine and we are linked in to these discussions via NEREO.

Public Sector Equality data relating to the Council’s workforce, including pay differential between men and women, has been collated and published and an equal pay audit undertaken . Both suggest that whilst we are under-represented in the workforce by the equality strands, we are performing well in respect of the pay differential. We will continue to work with the community and Staff Forums to improve equality workforce representation.

Providing financial advice and support to our communities

Details of clients affected by benefit cap received and work commenced on developing support.

Business Improvement District confirmed and work underway establishing arrangements.

Deliver customer service excellence

Work in this service area is divided between front line customer interface and behind the scenes work to automate and drive channel shift.

Customer service front line performance continues to be strong. Demand varies but in the first half year 67% of calls were answered within 3 minutes, 88% of queries were dealt with at the first point of contact and 70% of customers were satisfied with the experience of contacting the Council.

We continue to work on the “Do-it-online” campaign to promote channel shift and were up to 4,833 registrations for My Stockton as at 1 October 2016.

Warm Homes Healthy People service was launched on the 3rd October, enhanced security in Lagan system has allowed us to roll out self-serve for partner organisations CAB, Broadacres and HVE.

We had successful certification in Corporate Customer Service Excellence not only did we reach the standard but we were fully compliant in all areas and awarded nine ‘Compliance Plus’ levels for showing best practice.

Our SBC Customer Service Excellence Awards attracted numerous strong nominations. Judging is complete and the awards ceremony is planned for 27th October 2016.

Be clear, open and honest in our communication

Key campaigns for 2016/17 have been agreed with CMT in line with the Council vision and continue to reiterate the Big Plan ethos. The Big Picture campaign continues with a clear, open and honest view of the council budgets, how they are spent and the steps being taken to manage funding reductions.

We continue to produce and distribute 4 editions of Stockton-on-Tees News per year to every household in the borough.

We continue to develop the core SBC website and 39 social media platforms as a way of keeping residents, businesses and visitors informed about the Council and the borough. Developments in 2016 include an accessibility audit a new home page and introduction of an improved search function.

Communications activity has been strengthened by the recent restructure of the Service which brought together the Marketing, Corporate Communications and Engagement teams.

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

We continue to deliver the Shaping A Brighter Future programme to support and develop employees to help them continue to deliver excellent services and cope with the pressures which arise from the reductions in funding and the increased demands for services. The programme goes from strength to strength with employees actively involved in the delivery team in addition to their day jobs. A new workforce Culture Statement and set of behaviours has been developed for the organisation and personal and team development programmes rolled out. Employees have also been working through the SBF programme to improve recruitment processes and employee wellbeing programmes.

We continue to deliver the programme of Service Reviews as part of the programme to achieve the savings needed to cope with the reduction in funding. We continue to support employees at risk of redundancy with support from a close and constructive relationship with Trade Unions and with support from Job Centre Plus and the National Careers Service.

We continue to seek to increase recruitment from under-represented groups and to attract candidates to hard to recruit areas, particularly in Social Work. Work is underway to ensure that the Council is able to meet its commitments under the new Apprenticeship changes (including the employer levy and public sector quotas).

The biennial Employee Survey takes place in October 2016. The results will be used to help us support and develop employees.

We continue to improve the Intranet as a means of ensuring effective communication with employees during change.

The annual Innovation Challenge event is in its 4th year with 200 employees taking part in real-life challenges outside their area of work.

Sickness absence continues to be challenging. Initial analysis of the first 6 months of this year indicate that the annual corporate target of 7.6 days average per FTE may not be met. It is clear that this is a national trend and actual levels continue to be relatively good when measured against regional and public sector averages.

We continue to actively manage sickness cases and to provide support through a wide range of preventative and wellbeing services:

- A new counselling provider, Insight, was appointed from 1st April 2016
- Body2fit were appointed as the Council's physiotherapy provider
- Targeted support, including pro active support, is being provided in areas where there are sickness absence trends
- The Council's Occupational Health Advisor continues to work closely with Health and Safety, and Service Managers, to provide an appropriate work place environment for our employees, ensure appropriate health surveillance is in place, as well as to offer advice and support to employees and the Council regarding on going employee health conditions
- The Council achieved the Better Health at Work Award (Silver) last year and is now working towards the Gold award accreditation this year.

The Council's training programme has been updated and will continue to be updated to reflect recommendations from SBF. Current courses held/to be held include appraisal training, coaching for managers, stepping in to management, planning for retirement, mindfulness, Headway and Equality and Diversity Training Support. Updates to corporate induction have taken place.

Ensuring we have a resilient and flexible ICT infrastructure

Continued with the Mobile Connectivity procurement.

Implemented the email classification system.

Worked with the GIS team on a review of the Council's Graphical Information Systems.

Successfully completed the PCI (Payment Card Industry) security audit.