

**Date:** Thursday 13 July 2023 at 4.30 pm

**Venue:** Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library, The Square,  
Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1TU

**Cllr Robert Cook (Leader)**

Cllr Nigel Cooke  
Cllr Clare Gamble  
Cllr Steve Nelson

Cllr Lisa Evans  
Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy  
Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE

**AGENDA**

- |           |   |                 |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Evacuation Procedure</b>   | (Pages 7 - 8)   |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Apologies for Absence</b>  |                 |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>   |                 |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Minutes</b>  |                 |
|           | To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 June 2023                 | (Pages 9 - 14)  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Medium Term Financial Plan - Draft Outturn March 2023</b>                    | (Pages 15 - 24) |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Powering our Future Report</b>   | (Pages 25 - 36) |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Vibrant and Thriving Town Centres - Regeneration Update</b>                  | (Pages 37 - 46) |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Indigenous Growth Fund Update</b>  | (Pages 47 - 52) |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Powering our Future - Senior Management Capacity Review</b>                  | (Pages 53 - 56) |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Volunteering Policy</b>  | (Pages 57 - 64) |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Electoral Update</b>   | (Pages 65 - 70) |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Modern Slavery Statement</b>   | (Pages 71 - 80) |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report in the Public Interest</b> | (Pages 81 - 94) |

- |           |                                       |                   |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>14</b> | <b>Xentrall Annual Report 2022/23</b> | (Pages 95 - 100)  |
| <b>15</b> | <b>Minutes of Various Bodies</b>      | (Pages 101 - 114) |

**Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting**

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Democratic Services Officer, Peter Bell on email [peter.bell@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:peter.bell@stockton.gov.uk)

**KEY - Declarable interests are:-**

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

**Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance**



**Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b>	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
<b>Contracts</b>	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
<b>Land and property</b>	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
<b>Licences</b>	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
<b>Corporate tenancies</b>	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
<b>Securities</b>	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

\* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

\* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

## Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
  - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
  - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
  - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

## **Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library** **Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping**

If the fire or bomb alarm should sound please exit by the nearest emergency exit. The Fire alarm is a continuous ring and the Bomb alarm is the same as the fire alarm however it is an intermittent ring.

If the Fire Alarm rings exit through the nearest available emergency exit and form up in Municipal Buildings Car Park.

The assembly point for everyone if the Bomb alarm is sounded is the car park at the rear of Splash on Church Road.

The emergency exits are located via the doors between the 2 projector screens. The key coded emergency exit door will automatically disengage when the alarm sounds.

The Toilets are located on the Ground floor corridor of Municipal Buildings next to the emergency exit. Both the ladies and gents toilets are located on the right hand side.

### **Microphones**

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when directed to speak by the Chair, to ensure you are heard by the Committee.

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## Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 15th June, 2023.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook (Chair), Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Steve Nelson and Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E.

**Officers:** Mike Greene (CE), Garry Cummings (F,D&R&DCE), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Geraldine Brown, Peter Bell (CS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Ann Workman (A&H), Martin Gray (ChS).

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Pauline Beall and Cllr Marc Besford (Assistant Cabinet Members).  
Cllr Sylvia Walmsley.

**Apologies:** Cllr Ann McCoy.

### **CAB 1/23** Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CAB 2/23** Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

### **CAB 3/23** Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

### **CAB 4/23** Council Plan 2022-25 Update

Consideration was given to a report provided an update on the priorities included in the Council Plan 2022/25.

The report focused on the implementation of the Council Plan 2022/25. This was therefore the year-end update on progress during 2022/23.

An update on each of the Council Plan priorities was attached to the report indicated significant progress in all areas of this year's priorities.

A new approach to strategic planning would be introduced during 2023 leading to a new corporate plan being approved in June 2024. This would be covered in more detail in a report to Cabinet in July 2023.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **CAB 5/23** Appointments to Outside Bodies

Consideration was given to a report that requested appointments to various

outside bodies.

RESOLVED that the following appointments be made:-

ARC - Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust - Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

PATROL (Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London) Adjudication Joint Committee - Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport  
Substitute – Leader of the Council

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

North-East Flood Defence Committee - Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport

**CAB  
6/23**      **Minutes of Various Bodies**

Consideration was given to a report that detailed minutes of various bodies for consideration by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the following minutes be received:-

TVCA Cabinet – 17 March 2023  
TSAB – 7 March 2023

**CAB  
7/23**      **School Term and Holiday Dates - 2024/2025**

Consideration was given to a report on the proposed calendars of school term and holiday dates for 2024/2025 academic year.

School employers were required to set the term dates of their school year.  
Employers were:

- the Local Authority in maintained, voluntary controlled and maintained special schools
- the Governing Body in foundation and voluntary aided schools;
- Multi Academy Trusts, academies and free schools.

In line with statutory requirements and the protocol agreed in 2008, consideration had been given to compile a set of term and holiday dates for schools in the Borough.

Officers consulted with colleagues from all neighbouring authorities to

endeavour to reach consensus on a proposed model for the academic year.

The proposed dates for 2024/2025 were attached to the report.

As part of the consultation process the document was duly circulated to schools/academies and all other relevant parties, including Diocesan Authorities and Trade Unions/Teaching Associations. There were no comments received.

To date the neighbouring authorities that had published their dates had endorsed the proposed matrix for 2024/2025. This level of agreement between authorities would relieve many of the cross-boundary issues that some families had suffered in the past.

RESOLVED that the school term and holiday dates 2024/2025 shown at Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

## **CAB 8/23**      **Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) - Outcomes and Action Plan**

Consideration was given to a report on the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services ILACS – Outcomes and Action Plan.

The authority received its most recent inspection on 27 February – 14 March and their report was published on 9 May. The report to Cabinet summarised the key findings of the inspection; details the area of good practice and improvement also identified; introduced the key strands of the already existing improvement plan which had been revised to take into account the outcome of the inspection, and sought Cabinet approval for the action plan.

The inspection resulted in an overall judgment of 'Requires Improvement'. Ofsted required an action plan to be developed in response and to be submitted to them by 16 August.

The Good and Beyond Board was already established as an independently chaired body charged with providing effective oversight and drive for continuous improvement planning. This Board was already providing leadership and focus for actions emerging from the September 2022 Focused Visit. The Board would continue to provide this oversight role for the revised improvement plan.

The key areas for improvement identified by Ofsted were around:

- a. The quality and effectiveness of plans for children and care leavers, including safety plans agreed with parents.
- b. Sufficiency of suitable foster homes for children.
- c. Frontline management oversight across the service, in relation to the quality of assessment and plans and the impact of interventions.
- d. Opportunities for more children and care leavers to have a voice and to influence the development of services.
6. Other key areas around the need for further action were:
  - a. for placement sufficiency, especially for children with complex needs
  - b. More capacity for foster care

- c. Evidence of the impact of challenge from Independent Reviewing Officers
- d. The need for more opportunities for participation for children and young people in care and care leavers
- e. Consistency of PA support
- f. Better arrangements for health information for care leavers
- g. The visibility of the care leavers offer
- h. The need for a refresh of the corporate parenting approach

The inspection also detailed the considerable amount of progress since the previous inspection and several areas of good and positive practice:

- a. There are clear signs of progress and improvement since the 2019 inspection and since the September 2022 Focused Visit;
- b. Leaders know the services well and are realistic about them;
- c. Positive statements about the front door responses;
- d. Skills and ability around issues such as domestic abuse;
- e. Thoroughness of child protection investigations;
- f. Improving quality of assessments;
- g. Effective legal planning in deciding when children need to come into care
- h. Sensitive responses for disabled children
- i. Effective arrangements around child exploitation
- j. Tenacious responses for missing children – interviews and responses
- k. A focus on school attendance
- l. Effective responses to homeless young people
- m. Good approaches to family and friends placements
- n. Effective adoption arrangements
- o. Good management of out of area placements
- p. Good support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- q. High levels of ambition from the Virtual school for children in our care
- r. High quality working and commitment from personal advisers
- s. Arrangements for apprenticeships for care leavers
- t. Good feedback from the Courts and from CAFCASS

The overall outcome was clearly a disappointment. Although there were clear indications of progress since the last inspection, the overall judgement has stayed the same.

The own self-assessment was found to be accurate and that the Council knew the service well and the areas where improve was needed.

There were therefore a number of themes we have developed in response:

- a. The importance of a continued focus on workforce – sufficient staff, with the right skills, who know what is expected of them
- b. Continuing to improve the quality of assessments and plans across our services as these are the fundamental building block for effective work with children, young people and families
- c. Continuing to focus on the need for more foster care placements as this is a significant sufficiency challenge – these are being developed as part of our Investment Plan for children in care, and as part of the regional fostering pathfinder work which is being taken forward in the North east as part of the

region's response to the national care review and Government response  
d. Developing more effective arrangements for hearing and responding to the views of children in the care system and those with experience of it.

Therefore response to the inspection, and as part of the ongoing process of self-evaluation and improvement planning linked to the inspection framework, an action plan had been developed to respond to the key issues highlighted in the inspection. This was attached to the report.

The action plan had been developed around four key areas:

- a. Our people – these elements focus on recruitment and retention as well as the way in which we support and develop staff and include a new proposal for an Academy for ASYE social workers - those in their first year of employment following graduation
- b. Our practice – how we embed our focus on our practice model \*(for how we want our staff to work); our use our quality framework which oversees the data, feedback and qualitative information we use to drive improvement
- c. Our processes – making sure that key issues such as accommodation, HR, Finance and ICT are enablers of good practice rather than barriers. A review of the case management system and how this can more effectively provide data and intelligence on practice has already been commissioned.
- d. Our partnerships – how we will work with key partners to address some of the thematic challenges – around threats to children, issues such as domestic abuse and experiences of the care system

The Council was proposing to continue to make use of external support to help drive forward improvements. The improvement board was independently chaired, and the Council had benefitted from other support from other Local Authorities such as around our Emergency Duty Team, and on the use of our ICT system to help drive improvement. This would continue action plan was implemented.

Feedback on the inspection and action plan would also be presented to a member seminar in July.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The outcome of the recent ILACS Inspection be noted.
2. Improvement Plan at Annex 2 be approved.
3. Further feedback be presented to a Members Seminar in July.

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## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

13 JULY 2023

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF  
FINANCE, DEVELOPMENT  
& REGENERATION AND  
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## CABINET DECISION

**Leader of the Council – Councillor Robert Cook**

### **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – DRAFT OUTTURN MARCH 2023**

#### **SUMMARY**

This report updates Cabinet on the draft financial performance and position as at 31 March 2023.

Overall there is an improvement in the draft outturn 2022/23 financial position compared to that projected at December of around £200,000.

The Report highlights the inflationary pressures currently being experienced by local authorities and sets out that these will be considered further in future MTFP update reports.

The Capital Programme has been updated to incorporate new schemes and reflect those schemes completed as at the financial year end.

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

To update Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Plan, including the draft outturn position for 2022/23.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Note the draft outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2023 and the updated Capital Programme.

**DETAIL****FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2023****GENERAL FUND**

1. The following table sets out the draft financial position for each Directorate at 31 March 2023. The reasons for any significant variances from those previously reported are summarised in the paragraphs below.

Directorate	Annual Budget	Actual Outturn	Actual Variance Over/(Under)	Forecast Variance at Q3 Over/(Under)	Movement from Q3
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adults & Health	81,294	78,705	(2,589)	(2,593)	4
Children's Services	44,682	51,593	6,911	6,359	552
Community Services, Environment & Culture	51,564	50,964	(600)	174	(774)
Finance, Development & Regeneration	14,784	14,123	(661)	(764)	103
Corporate Services	11,790	10,898	(892)	(1,025)	133
Corporate Items	4,623	3,359	(1,264)	(1,046)	(218)
<b>Total</b>	<b>208,737</b>	<b>209,642</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>1,105</b>	<b>(200)</b>
Pay Offer Pressure		2,835	2,835	2,835	0
<b>Revised Total</b>	<b>208,737</b>	<b>212,477</b>	<b>3,740</b>	<b>3,940</b>	<b>(200)</b>
Excess General Fund Balances b/f from 2021/22			(1,413)	(1,413)	0
<b>Revised Balance</b>			<b>2,327</b>	<b>2,527</b>	<b>(200)</b>
<b>Release earmarked reserves to balance outturn position</b>			<b>(2,327)</b>	<b>(2,527)</b>	200

Adults and Health

2. Activity around residential services and homecare was slightly less than forecast (£300,000) which has been offset by greater investment in support for carers and one-off environmental health expenditure.

Children's Services

3. The unprecedented cost pressures relating to Children in our Care, which have been identified and reported throughout the course of the financial year, continued into the final quarter of 22/23. Growth in the demand for external residential placements and greater complexity of needs, leading to higher costs, have led to a further overspend of £530,000.
4. As detailed in previous reports, the unprecedented financial issues across the residential market are wide ranging and well publicised. In recent years the Children in our Care budget has had significant additional resources applied across the MTFP and the Children's Capital Investment Strategy for Children in our Care with additional needs, which has previously been approved by Cabinet, identified areas to target to address some of the main problem areas. This continues to be one of the greatest areas of financial challenge for the Council and this area will be one of the key focuses of the transformation programme.



### Community Services, Environment & Culture

5. Overall the Directorate shows an improved position at year end. This was for a range of reasons. Savings on waste disposal costs due to reduced tonnages (£270,000), alongside a reduction in fuel prices and usage (£150,000). A mild winter and subsequent saving on winter maintenance (£70,000) and a greater saving on vacant posts (£200,000).

### Finance, Development & Regeneration

6. The position has moved by £123,000 due mainly to a pressure in respect of collection of rent allowance arrears.

### Corporate Services

7. The savings in relation to vacant posts was slightly less than anticipated.

### Corporate Items

8. Business rates income was higher than previously anticipated.

### **Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block**

9. There continues to be significant pressure on the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant. This relates to pressures on the provision of services for Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. Whilst this is ring-fenced schools funding and does not affect the Council's MTFP, the deficit in Stockton was £3.87m at 31 March 2023, a reduction of £1.61m from the previous year. Statutory guidance is clear that this should be held separately and not funded from the General Fund. Through the Delivering Better Value Programme the Council are working with the Department for Education on a plan to resolve this position over the medium term.

### **General Fund Balances**

10. The total General Fund Balances at 31 March 2023 are £8m, in line with the agreed level and as outlined in the report to Cabinet in February 2023.
11. Members will recall that the report to Cabinet in February 2023 outlined a call on earmarked reserves of £2.527m to resolve the in year budget gap. This will now be reduced by the £200k improvement.

### **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

12. Members will recall in the Medium Term Financial Plan report to Council in February, that there were two issues outstanding relating to the 2021/22 accounts, before the Audit Completion Report could be taken to Audit and Governance Committee. These two issues were relating to the valuation of Infrastructure Assets and the audit of Teesside Pension Fund. Both of these issues have now been resolved however, a further issue has subsequently arisen relating to the triennial valuation of the Teesside Pension Fund.
13. This has generated a requirement for further audit assurance from the pension fund's auditors and they have committed to undertake the work as soon as possible which they have indicated will be in the Autumn. The backlog of local authority audits and the difficulties audit firms are facing has been well publicised and is a national issue affecting many local authorities and audit firms. Once we have received this assurance, the 2021/22 accounts will be brought back to Audit & Governance Committee for approval.

14. Due to the issues described above, there has subsequently been delays to the publication of the draft statement of accounts for 2022/23. Once completed the draft Statement of Accounts will be presented to Audit and Governance Committee and the Public Inspection Notice issued.
15. There continue to be ongoing issues of capacity within the audit sector for auditing local authority and pension fund accounts. This has been widely reported and our auditors have indicated that the timescales for when external audit can begin the audit of the Council's 22/23 accounts will be delayed until the autumn. Many local authorities are affected by the issues outlined above, causing the majority of authorities to be delayed in finalising their accounts.
16. This is an incredibly frustrating situation, as Stockton on Tees Borough Council have an unblemished track record in meeting publication and audit deadlines in relation to our Statement of Accounts. We continue to keep in regular contact with auditors and are regularly updating Audit and Governance Committee on progress.

### **Inflationary Pressures/MTFP**

17. Inflation continues to add pressure across the council's budgets. Despite some early indications of some improvements in some areas, costs still remain at a level higher than they were before COVID. We continue to monitor costs and look at ways we can mitigate the impact upon council services. Areas of pressure include:

- Energy Costs
- Fuel Costs
- Food costs
- Costs of Vehicles
- Construction Costs
- Pay Award

The impacts are currently being assessed and will be included in future update reports on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

18. The employers pay award offer for 23/24 has been rejected by the trade unions. This rejected offer would create a budget pressure of £1.5m in year and across the MTFP.
19. Energy and fuel costs have started to fall compared to their recent high. Prices are forecast to fall below those previously estimated for future years. North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) purchase energy on behalf of all of the North Eastern authorities. They balance affordability and sufficiency in determining the timing and quantities of energy purchased in advance. NEPO provide regular forecasts on energy prices and we will continue to monitor this and any updates will be brought back in future MTFP reports.
20. Members will be aware from previous reports that the Council will be embarking on a Transformation Programme and this is covered in a report elsewhere on the Agenda.
21. Work is ongoing on the transformation programme to look at financial sustainability and delivery outcomes to maintain vital council services.

### **CAPITAL**

22. The Capital Programme is summarised below and shown at **Appendix A**.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2024	Current Approved Programme £'000	Programme Revisions £'000	Revised Programme £'000	Completed Schemes 2022/23 £'000	Variances (Completed Schemes) £'000	Revised Programme £'000	New Approvals £'000	Revised Programme £'000
School Investment Programme & Childrens Services	47,084	454	47,538	(1,838)	(3)	45,698	932	46,630
Housing Regeneration Development & Growth	38,785	0	38,785	(3,161)	129	35,754	0	35,754
Town Centres	118,909	66	118,975	(449)	(3)	118,524	0	118,524
Transportation	46,603	281	46,884	(4,131)	(75)	42,678	561	43,239
Community & Environment, Culture & Leisure	13,023	778	13,801	(3,322)	78	10,558	7,185	17,743
Adults & Public Health	352	94	447	0	0	447	0	447
<b>Total Approved Capital MTFP</b>	<b>264,756</b>	<b>1,673</b>	<b>266,430</b>	<b>(12,901)</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>253,659</b>	<b>8,678</b>	<b>262,337</b>

23. Members will note that the programme has been updated to reflect the approvals contained within the 2023/24 Budget Report and to reflect changes to the programme resulting from the sourcing of external funding. The changes are summarised in **Appendix B**. The Programme has also been updated to reflect schemes which have completed in 2022/23.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

24. As part of the process of making changes to policy or delivery of services, we consider the impact on our communities. No changes to policy or service delivery are proposed as part of this report.

### CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

25. None

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

26. The report updates Members on the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme.

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

27. There are no specific legal implications.

### RISK ASSESSMENT

28. This Medium Term Financial Plan update report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

### WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

29. N/A

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

30. None

**Name of Contact Officer:** Garry Cummings,  
**Job Title:** Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration and  
Deputy Chief Executive  
**Telephone:** 01642 527011  
**Email Address:** garry.cummings@stockton.gov.uk

## APPENDIX A

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2024	Current Approved Programme	Programme Revisions	Revised Programme	Completed Schemes 2022/23	Variances (Completed Schemes)	Revised Programme	New approvals	Revised Programme	Expenditure Apr 2017 - March 2023
<b>SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME &amp; CHILDRENS SERVICES</b>									
School Investment Programme	39,414,569	354,186	39,768,755	(1,630,851)	5,586	38,143,490	182,275	38,325,765	15,523,547
Children Investment	7,669,214	100,085	7,769,299	(206,848)	(8,183)	7,554,268	750,000	8,304,268	344,327
<b>SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME &amp; CHILDRENS SERVICES</b>	<b>47,083,783</b>	<b>454,271</b>	<b>47,538,054</b>	<b>(1,837,699)</b>	<b>(2,597)</b>	<b>45,697,757</b>	<b>932,275</b>	<b>46,630,032</b>	<b>15,867,874</b>
<b>HOUSING REGENERATION, DEVELOPMENT &amp; GROWTH</b>									
Housing Regeneration	1,598,330	0	1,598,330	(133,019)	0	1,465,311	0	1,465,311	133,019
Inclusive Growth & Development	7,726,642	0	7,726,642	(707,512)	(32,488)	6,986,642	0	6,986,642	1,052,257
Private Sector Housing	2,379,786	0	2,379,786	(2,320,823)	161,918	220,881	0	220,881	2,320,823
Office Accommodation	27,080,721	0	27,080,721	0	0	27,080,721	0	27,080,721	428,469
<b>HOUSING REGENERATION DEVELOPMENT &amp; GROWTH</b>	<b>38,785,479</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38,785,479</b>	<b>(3,161,354)</b>	<b>129,430</b>	<b>35,753,555</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35,753,555</b>	<b>3,934,568</b>
<b>TOWN CENTRES</b>									
Stockton Town Centre Schemes	2,846,175	18,276	2,864,451	0	0	2,864,451	0	2,864,451	679,311
Reshaping Town Centres	10,807,204	0	10,807,204	(52,743)	0	10,754,461	0	10,754,461	503,184
Billingham Town Centre	10,000,000	0	10,000,000	0	0	10,000,000	0	10,000,000	245,956
Thornaby Town Centre	29,800,440	0	29,800,440	0	0	29,800,440	0	29,800,440	1,532,412
Re-Development of Castlegate Site	43,543,812	0	43,543,812	0	0	43,543,812	0	43,543,812	11,539,384
Yarm & Eaglescliffe LUF	20,000,000	48,000	20,048,000	0	0	20,048,000	0	20,048,000	1,220,469
Infrastructure Enhancements, Regeneration & Property Acquisitions	1,911,070	0	1,911,070	(396,099)	(2,605)	1,512,366	0	1,512,366	434,717
<b>TOWN CENTRES</b>	<b>118,908,701</b>	<b>66,276</b>	<b>118,974,977</b>	<b>(448,842)</b>	<b>(2,605)</b>	<b>118,523,530</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>118,523,530</b>	<b>16,155,433</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>									
Local Transport Plans/ City Regional Sustainable Transport	23,128,677	252,898	23,381,575	(3,834,002)	(61,117)	19,486,456	561,149	20,047,605	1,007,538
Other Transport Schemes	19,793,309	15,035	19,808,344	(11,039)	(19,000)	19,778,305	0	19,778,305	14,101,058
Developer Agreements	3,680,874	13,238	3,694,112	(286,189)	5,428	3,413,351	0	3,413,351	2,553,085
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>46,602,860</b>	<b>281,171</b>	<b>46,884,031</b>	<b>(4,131,230)</b>	<b>(74,689)</b>	<b>42,678,112</b>	<b>561,149</b>	<b>43,239,261</b>	<b>17,661,681</b>

<b>COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE &amp; LEISURE</b>									
Energy Efficiency Schemes	1,289,137	(550)	1,288,587	(140,000)	(15,863)	1,132,724	0	1,132,724	1,271,078
Environment and Green Infrastructure	4,361,365	529,423	4,890,788	(102,385)	17,661	4,806,064	6,772,710	11,578,774	2,259,274
Building Management	2,603,636	0	2,603,636	(415,720)	0	2,187,916	0	2,187,916	793,736
Vehicle Replacement	4,769,173	249,237	5,018,410	(2,663,581)	76,286	2,431,115	412,323	2,843,438	2,663,581
<b>COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE &amp; LEISURE</b>	<b>13,023,311</b>	<b>778,110</b>	<b>13,801,421</b>	<b>(3,321,686)</b>	<b>78,084</b>	<b>10,557,819</b>	<b>7,185,033</b>	<b>17,742,852</b>	<b>6,987,669</b>
<b>ADULTS &amp; HEALTH</b>									
Adults & Public Health Investment	352,177	94,451	446,628	0	0	446,628	0	446,628	45,459
<b>ADULTS &amp; HEALTH</b>	<b>352,177</b>	<b>94,451</b>	<b>446,628</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>446,628</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>446,628</b>	<b>45,459</b>
<b>Total Approved Capital MTFP</b>	<b>264,756,311</b>	<b>1,674,279</b>	<b>266,430,590</b>	<b>(12,900,811)</b>	<b>127,622</b>	<b>253,657,401</b>	<b>8,678,457</b>	<b>262,335,858</b>	<b>60,652,684</b>

## APPENDIX B

### Programme Revisions 2022/23

#### Schools Capital

- £352,849 added in respect of Academy contributions to the Secondary Schools Adaptations works, £200,000 Ian Ramsey changing rooms and reconfiguration and £152,849 St. Michael's MUGA.

#### Transport

- £160,000 for flood risk works and structural maintenance has been added to the capital programme, funded from RCCO's.

#### Other

- £160,922 added to Disabled Adaptations funded from client contributions and RCCO.
- £306,974 added to the capital programme for works at Ropner Park and Harold Wilson play areas, funded through developer contributions.
- £222,449 has been added the Capital Programme in respect of SBC share of the Joint Waste Management Strategy for Residual Municipal Waste Treatment, funded via loan from TVCA.
- £249,237 added to the Vehicle Replacement Fund for 2023/24 planned purchases, £412,323 included for 2024/25 vehicles with £2,663,581 spent in 2022/23. Vehicle purchases are funded from RCCO and receipts from sale of vehicles.

### Completed Schemes 2022/23

#### Schools Capital

- Planned Maintenance Schemes on a range of schools have been delivered in 2022/23.
- The final contribution to Abbey Hill expansion has been paid this year.

#### Housing Regeneration & Inclusive Growth & Development

- Victoria Regeneration peripheral works have been delivered this year.
- Employment Hub works have completed this year.

#### Town Centre Schemes

- The works to the party walls at the Glam/Post Office site have been completed, following the demolition work two years ago.
- Works to install two digital screens in Stockton have completed.

#### Transportation

- £3,834,003 has been spent delivering schemes as part of the City Regional Sustainable Transport programme.
- A number of S278 Access works fully funded via Developer contributions completed in year.

#### Other schemes

- £2,311,173 has been spent on Disabled Adaptations in homes across the Borough.
- A number of planned maintenance schemes have been delivered across a range of Council Buildings.
- A number of parks and cemeteries schemes have completed in year.

- The works to install PV Panels at Cowpen Depot as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation programme completed in year.
- Children's carers extension/adaptation works costing £206,848 have been delivered in year.

### **New approvals 2022/23**

#### **School Capital**

- Following DFE announcements in March 2023, £182,275 of Basic Need Grant from 2025/26 allocation has been added to the capital programme.

#### **Children's Services**

- £750,000 capitalised ICT costs in respect of Education Management System replacement, fully funded from Transformation Reserves has been included within the programme.

#### **Transportation**

- 2023/24 City Regional Sustainable Transport allocation £561,149 has been added to the Capital Programme for pot holes.

#### **Other schemes**

- £6,772,710 Flood Coastal Resilience Programme has been added to the programme, fully funded via Environment Agency Grant.



## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO CABINET

13 July 2023

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION AND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## CABINET DECISION

**Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook**

**Powering Our Future – Delivering for People, Place and Economy**

### SUMMARY

This report builds on existing programmes of activity, including Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and the Transformation Programme (set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan, agreed at Cabinet in February 2023). It provides further detail about how these initiatives will be achieved, as part of a comprehensive approach to strategic planning, transformation and delivery for the Council.

Following the Council elections in May and confirmation of the new administration, it is timely to set out a refreshed strategic planning process to deliver Members' ambitions for the future of the Borough.

The report sets out how we will bring together existing and planned areas of activity to 'Power our Future', improving outcomes for Our People, Our Place and Our Economy. It is proposed that delivery is based around a long-term Vision for our Borough that is developed collaboratively with communities and puts them at the heart of everything we do.

The recommendations in this report recognise that we are a high performing council. However, in order to maintain excellence and respond to growing community and service pressures, we will need to adapt and accelerate delivery. This report identifies headline Objectives to 'Power our Future', and provides detail on relevant areas of activity including:

Developing a new and ambitious long-term Vision for the future of our Borough. Led by communities and empowering them to identify the place they want to live and spend time. This will begin a new, on-going 'conversation' with residents to set shared ambitions and inform approaches to delivery.

Council Plan – developing a new Council Plan focused on People, Place and Economy. This will provide a framework to deliver the Vision developed with communities, including key deliverables and measurable outcomes. It will drive prioritisation and future service planning.

Working with partners – confirming a shared Vision and developing collaborative approaches to delivery that remove organisational boundaries to meet the needs of individuals. An inclusive and streamlined approach can ensure that we maximise the impact of our shared resources.

Fit for Future – focusing on the areas where we need to do things differently over the short, medium and longer term, including:

- Service Transformations - ensuring that the council delivers excellent and efficient services that are financially sustainable and reduce inequality
- Powered by Communities – an asset based community development approach that works with communities to shape and drive our priorities, actions and monitoring

- through understanding and acting upon: What communities can do best; What communities require help with; What communities need outside agencies to do for them
- Fairer Stockton-on-Tees – the Council’s strategic framework to reduce inequalities, address the underlying causes of poverty whilst focusing activity on our most deprived neighbourhoods
  - Powering our People through Workforce Development – ensuring we have a workforce that is fit for the future by investing in, supporting and developing our staff, attracting and retaining a talented and committed workforce empowered to deliver services and work with communities.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)**

Cabinet is recommended to agree the proposed approach to ‘Power our Future’ to ensure that the Council delivers meaningful impact for communities, and achieves measurable improvements for our People, Place and Economy. This includes reviewing the way the Council operates to ensure it is fit for future.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the overall approach to strategic planning and delivery set out in this report.
2. Agree the Powering our Future Objectives set out below.
3. Agree the Powering our Future Principles set out below.
4. Agree to a Big Conversation taking place with communities to develop a Vision for the future, from September 2023.
5. Agree a new approach to strategic planning being introduced during 2023 leading to a new Corporate Plan being approved in June 2024.
6. Agree that the Council establishes a Place Leadership Board to develop our approach to joint working with partners.
7. Note progress and agree future plans for the Transformation Programme, focused on Outcome-based Reviews, Service Reviews and delivering improvements in Children’s Services.
8. Note the alignment of Fairer Stockton-on-Tees with the Powering Our Future programme and the medium-term priority actions that will be progressed to address inequality in the Borough.
9. Asset Based Community Development - Agree an approach and programme of work is developed to embed working with our communities and partners in all that we do, based on their strengths and resources - to shape and drive our priorities, actions and monitoring of impact.
10. Agree to the development of a Workforce Strategy and Action Plan to ensure we have a workforce that can support and deliver services which are fit for the future and that a further report be presented to Cabinet.

## DETAIL

1. This report builds on existing programmes of activity, including Fairer Stockton on Tees and the Transformation Programme (set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan, agreed at Cabinet in February 2023). It provides further detail about how these initiatives will be achieved, as part of a comprehensive approach to strategic planning, transformation and delivery for the Council. A programme management approach will ensure that interdependencies between areas of activity are managed effectively, overseen by the Director of Finance, Development & Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive.
2. The recommendations in this report recognise that we are a high performing council. However, in order to maintain excellence and respond to growing pressures for communities and public services, we will need to adapt and accelerate delivery.

### Evidence of need

3. The cost of living continues to place significant pressures on households, largely attributed to higher food, electricity and fuel costs. Nine of our 26 wards are in the 10% most deprived in the country, and costs will be more acute for these residents, who will typically spend a higher proportion of their income on food and housing.
4. Health inequalities persist in the Borough, and there is an average male life expectancy gap of 21 years between our most and least deprived areas. More of our communities are spending more of their lives in poor health, with all the societal and economic impacts this brings. Rising costs combined with existing disadvantage and vulnerability leave households at risk of hardship and poor wellbeing in the short-term, and reduced opportunity in the long-term. This reinforces the need for our revised and comprehensive approach.
5. The Council has confirmed a balanced budget in 2023/24. However, the financial position over the medium term continues to be extremely uncertain in the context of a one-year financial settlement for local government and inflation. Current projections indicate a budget gap in 2025, although given the uncertainties this position could become even more challenging.
6. The Council has a strong history of forward planning and delivering transformation. This has resulted in financial resilience, which we need to continue if we are to stay ahead of the curve and improve outcomes.

### **Objectives and Principles**

7. Draft headline Objectives for this work are Sustainability, Equality and Excellence. Through our approaches to delivery, we will:
  - Build sustainable communities - economically, environmentally and socially, with equality of opportunity for all
  - Reduce Inequalities: undo, prevent and mitigate the fundamental causes and impacts of inequality
  - Deliver excellent and efficient services that all communities can access
  - Achieve financial sustainability for the Council through delivery of a balanced budget aligned to the MTFP.
8. It is recommended that Cabinet agree these Objectives, which also align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
9. A set of key Principles will underpin activity and should be evident in everything we do. Draft Principles, for Cabinet approval are:

- Empowering communities - understanding our communities and helping them to thrive in the way they choose, focusing on their strengths
- Collaborating with communities – having a new, ongoing conversation to describe what we want the Borough to be like in future and understanding impact
- People centric - removing organisational boundaries to ensure we meet the needs of individuals
- Being Brave and Bold - doing things differently and identifying creative and original ways to make a difference
- Stronger Together - understanding what we can do collaboratively to have the biggest impact.

## **Powering our Future**

10. Powering our Future comprises the following strands of activity:

- A new Vision for the future of our Borough, developed with communities
- Council Plan – a framework to deliver Powering our Future Vision, including key deliverables and measurable outcomes
- Partnership working – a collaborative approach to meet the needs of individuals and maximising shared resource
- Fit for Future – doing things differently over the short, medium and longer term, including:
  - Service Transformations - to deliver excellent and efficient services that are financially sustainable and reduce inequality
  - Communities: Powering Our Future – embedding working with our communities in all that we do (asset-based community development)
  - Fairer Stockton-on-Tees – the Borough’s strategic framework for reducing inequality
  - Workforce Development – ensuring that we have the right people empowered to support and deliver transformation and future services.

11. The following sections of this report provide detailed proposals and updates for individual areas of activity.

## **Communities: Powering our Future - The Big Conversation**

12. It is proposed to start a Big Conversation with communities and stakeholders from September 2023 to develop a Vision for the future of our Borough. This will be a two-way dialogue that enables the Council and its partners to understand what matters most to communities now and in the future.

13. Through the Big Conversation, we will ask communities to tell us about the strengths of their community; some of the challenges facing their community; what they would like to see in their community’s future; what changes they think will need to happen to achieve their vision; and what should stay the same.

14. The Big Conversation will not be a one off – it will be ongoing throughout the development and delivery of our Vision as part of our asset-based community development approach. It will ensure that we set a bold ambition and deliver meaningful impact for our People, Place and

Economy. We will develop a detailed Engagement Plan that will identify key opportunities to engage with communities, along with feedback loops to communicate progress and celebrate success.

15. The Big Conversation will:

- Be collaborative, inclusive and fully representative of our communities
- Proactively target priority stakeholders and groups (including young people to build enthusiasm about their future in Stockton on Tees and celebrating the unique identity of our towns and villages)
- Work with communities to explore alternative and creative methods of engagement – to ensure diverse reach and ownership
- Co-ordinate cross-council and partner approaches to engagement and collaboration as part of our asset-based community development approach – maximising our collective reach, bringing together intelligence and avoiding consultation fatigue
- Empower our staff to be advocates and part of the Big Conversation, using their existing relationships with communities
- Build in methods of benchmarking to track progress.

16. It is proposed that Councillors, as community champions, are advocates for the Big Conversation and lead engagement with residents. Following the production of a detailed Engagement Plan, Members Briefings will take place to confirm the approach over the Summer.

### **Communities: Powering our Future – Asset-Based Community Development**

17. Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a way of working with communities and individuals to build healthier, safer, prosperous and more inclusive communities from the ground up, with citizens in the lead.

18. The ABCD approach challenges a deficit-based approach that tries to solve development problems (development, health and wellbeing, etc.) by focusing on the needs and deficiencies of individuals, neighbourhoods and towns. Instead, it starts from the point of identifying and building on the assets that communities already have (relationships and networks, culture, knowledge, buildings, green space, etc.). ABCD is an approach across partners and communities, rather than a 'project' or 'intervention'. It helps to determine:

19. What is it that communities can do best?

- What do communities require help with?
- What do communities need outside agencies to do for them?

20. There is evidence ABCD works. It aims to help effectively build capacity and resilience in communities, meet need (therefore help manage demand), maximise resource, support a focus on prevention, strengthen partnerships and improve outcomes including from the community's perspective. The approach has been employed in many areas nationally and internationally. It is not a panacea but is proposed as a key tool in collective work to achieve our aims for the borough.

21. Alongside the need and inequality in our borough, we have many strengths as building blocks – such as vibrant, diverse communities; many good quality services and assets; strong partnerships and a vibrant VCSE sector. We also already demonstrate examples (building blocks) of an ABCD approach locally e.g. strengths-based approaches in social care, place development work such as the ‘Healthy Streets’ pilot.
  
22. The Council’s role in ABCD would be working alongside communities to develop our collective approach and the programme of interventions / actions that would fall out of this. As place lead and place-shaper, and convenor across key partners, SBC is well-placed, leading by example to demonstrate the approach for partners. Elected Members and Councillors would be key given their democratic role and insight into local communities.
  
23. The proposal is to adopt the ABCD approach across all that we do as a Council and shaping our work with partners. This will mean embedding how we work with our communities into defining our vision for the borough, developing our strategies and approaches / models of support, right through to procurement and how we measure impact. The approach and programme of work will be developed in a phased way and build on the range of existing good practice locally, as well as being married with the other aspects of the Powering our Future programme.

### **Strategic Planning – Council Plan**

24. It is proposed to implement a new approach to strategic planning during 2023 leading to a new corporate plan being approved in June 2024. This includes:
  - A new strategic planning function in place with the capacity and capability to embed a new intelligence and insight driven strategic planning approach
  - A long term vision for the borough, developed using a new approach to engagement and co-production (as part of asset based community development) and adopted by key stakeholders
  - An underpinning set of principles to enable the Council and key stakeholders to work together towards achieving the vision
  - A new Corporate Plan approved at Cabinet/Council in June 2024, with new vision, priorities, actions and measures (including a new approach to our existing partnership strategies)
  - A new approach to reviewing and monitoring progress against the new Corporate Plan.

### **Partnerships: Powering our Future – Place Leadership Board**

25. It is proposed to establish a Place Leadership Board to develop a Borough-wide approach to systems change and delivery. This group would seek to remove organisational boundaries to meet the needs of our People and our Place.

Senior leaders from stakeholder organisations and groups would:

- Have shared ownership and responsibility to identify a Vision for Stockton-on-Tees – developed with communities
- Understand and jointly respond to the needs of communities
- Develop a shared narrative and speak with one-voice to promote Stockton-on-Tees
  - Empower Communities - building confidence and Pride in Place
  - Attract new investment and talent
- Provide delivery-focused leadership for Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and drive our approach to reduce inequalities

- Drive approaches delivery and collaborate on areas of interest - removing organisational and sector boundaries to meet the needs of individuals and place.
26. The Board will deliver on the strategic direction set by Councillors with a focus on operations and systems change. It will support democratic accountability through governance links to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Cabinet, thematic and regional delivery groups (including: Health and Wellbeing Board, ICB, ICP, Place Committee, TVCA Cabinet).
27. It is proposed that an initial meeting of the Place Leadership Board takes place over the Summer, enabling it to inform approaches to community engagement and develop a vision for the future of the Borough.
28. Membership would include, but not be limited to:
- Public Sector Leaders (including Health, Community Safety and Housing)
  - Learning and Skills Leaders
  - Tees Valley Business Board representative
  - VCSE representative.

### **Change: Powering our Future - Transformation Programme**

29. The Transformation Programme is the central part of our new approach to public service integration, efficiency and innovation. The Service Transformation programme looks to address four main strategic priorities, which will need careful consideration over the next two years up to 2025-2026. These are:
- The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and future saving requirements
  - Addressing demands on services and the resulting pressures
  - Understanding and improving performance levels in service delivery
  - Addressing workforce capacity in terms of skills, recruitment and retention, and wellbeing.
30. To ensure focus is kept on the four main strategic priorities of this programme, five key aims have been developed to ensure the programme remains within scope and focused on key priorities. It is proposed these are:
- Ensure we are providing the optimum services aligned to the priorities in the Council Plan
  - Ensure the services we deliver to residents are done so in the most efficient and effective way to meet need
  - To identify financial savings and improve efficiency and performance of service delivery
  - Improve outcomes for our community in line with the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees strategic framework for tackling inequalities in the Borough
  - Develop a culture whereby transformation is understood, embraced and owned by everyone.
31. The Transformation Programme will consider a range of other factors, including existing strategies and plans, alongside the need to maintain business as usual by providing quality services to the public throughout. The reviews undertaken in this programme of change will need to consider:
- The priorities, aims and objectives of the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Plan
  - The existing strategic plans and frameworks already in place, including the commitments made within them

- This includes the principles of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees strategic framework and an uncompromisable focus on supporting the most vulnerable in our community and addressing inequality
  - The role of a wide range of our strategic and local partners including working alongside our communities
  - In line with our Environment Strategy, reviews will also need to consider the CO2 impact and carefully explore the potential for designing services in a way that benefits the environment.
32. The Transformation Programme by its design, will be cross cutting throughout the entire Council. It will capture all transformation and change work currently on going across the authority, whilst also delivering a range of reviews that are linked to the Medium-Term Financial Plan. To manage the scale of this undertaking, the work programme will be further broken down into distinct sections, each with its own governance, oversight and reporting arrangements with additional support provided in the form of a central programme office.
33. **Outcome-based Reviews** – These reviews cover areas and functions where an outcome based review approach and transformative change is possible. These reviews will consider and challenge the established approach, including operating models, and explore opportunities to do things entirely differently. These reviews will cover areas that are more likely to be cross-directorate and will by their nature be thematic reviews with clear outcomes identified. As such, the focus will be on outcomes delivered, now how Services are organised. Some of these reviews will also align closely with a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees.
34. **Service Reviews** – There will be some areas where there is less opportunity for transformation and these reviews are likely to focus on efficiency in Services.
- .
35. Members will be aware of the improvement journey in **Children’s Services** and the financial challenges facing the Service. There are numerous initiatives already underway and these will be incorporated into the Transformation and Change Programme to unlock additional support, ensure consistency in governance arrangements and benefits realisation. This will include responding to the findings of the recent Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) and continuing improvement to good and beyond.

## A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees

36. As members will recall, a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees is the Council’s long-term (10 year) ambitious programme for tackling inequalities. Whilst the remit of the programme is wider than poverty, activity over recent months has focused on how the Council can best support its residents facing the challenges of the current cost of living crisis. Examples of initiatives implemented have included:
- Establishing the Cost-of-Living on-line information HUB (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-hub>)
  - Establishing an extensive network of Warm Spaces
  - Working with our VCSE partners to support food initiatives, specifically targeted at those in need (over the winter period)
  - Bringing local businesses and VCSE organisations together via a Social Corporate Responsibility (SCR) networking event aimed at maximising the role businesses can play through SCR (volunteering time, services or money) to address inequality.



37. Looking ahead, a number of priority projects have been identified to maintain our momentum in addressing the Borough's inequalities. Given that the current cost of living challenges are unlikely to diminish, a focused area of activity will be an Anti-Poverty Action Plan, which will be co-developed with our partners and those with lived experience (aligning with the Council's 'Powered by Communities' principles detailed above). The Anti-Poverty Plan will focus on how the Council can help both prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty, whilst also building on initiatives recently implemented (for example, enhancing our Warm Spaces). This will be supported by the development and implementation of an Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment Toolkit, which is intended to ensure that all future decisions and policies (taken at all levels of the Council) are 'poverty proofed'. A programme of activity aimed at embedding the ethos of a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees will be undertaken with council service teams to ensure that all colleagues (in their day-to-day roles) understand the role they play in addressing inequality and poverty. This programme will align with the Workforce Development Programme detailed below and will include for example roll out in the corporate employee induction programme and upskilling (where appropriate).
38. One of the key focuses of the Council's approach to addressing inequalities is prioritising deprived neighbourhoods. A local, neighbourhood management model of service delivery will be piloted in the Central Stockton area. This will allow for targeted area work with our partners and local residents. Further updates will be reported back to Cabinet in terms of roll out, lessons learnt and impact.
39. A further focus of activity is reducing inequality faced by identified disadvantages for communities (for example those experiencing acute need or those with additional vulnerabilities). This area of activity is likely to be cross cutting (across multiple Council service teams) and will be progressed through the Transformation Programme. This approach will allow the council to explore and challenge how we operate (as a council and with our partners) to break the cycle of inequality faced by disadvantaged communities and achieve improved outcomes through the potential introduction of new operating models.

### **People: Powering our Future - Workforce Development**

40. Despite a reduction in our workforce of over 20% in the last 12 years, the Council still has a workforce committed to delivering excellent services for Stockton on Tees residents. We are however facing further challenges in terms of workforce capacity and the ability to recruit and retain the skills we need, which is a regional and national issue. It is therefore essential that we now look to invest and develop our workforce to ensure we have a workforce that can deliver the programme of transformation and is fit for the future.
41. It is therefore proposed that we develop a Workforce Strategy to deliver our future plans and ensure that we are putting 'Power in our People'. This will address key workforce issues regarding capacity, recruitment and retention, skills gaps, and ensure our workforce has the resilience and ability to work differently.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

42. Improving outcomes for communities and reducing inequality is at the heart of proposals set out in this report. Delivery approaches will consistently:
- Empower communities - helping them to thrive in the way they choose, focusing on the

- strengths of communities
- Collaborate with communities – ensuring communities shape Borough-wide ambitions and approaches to delivery
- Be people centric - removing organisational boundaries to ensure we meet the needs of individuals
- Identify creative and original ways to make a difference for communities.

43. A Community Impact Assessment will be undertaken for individual areas of work as required.

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

44. There are no direct Corporate Parenting Implications as a result of this report. Where this is relevant to individual areas of activity, a separate Cabinet report will be brought as appropriate.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

45. The transformation and change programme is required to deliver savings outlined in the medium term financial plan. The costs associated with the strands outlined in the report are yet to be determined but will be within existing resources.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

46. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

47. This report sets out the long-term approach to strategic planning to deliver improved outcomes for the residents of the Borough and to meet the financial challenges faced by the Council. The report includes recommendations to implement several supporting and enabling programmes that will reduce the risk of not achieving improved outcomes and the financial challenges from MEDIUM to LOW.

48. Regular monitoring of the content and delivery of the programmes will be undertaken to ensure risk remains LOW.

### **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

49. A Communications Plan is being developed as part of Powering our Future delivery. This will include:

- Cabinet briefings
- Members Seminars (all wards)
- Policy Workshops
- Councillors shaping Community Engagement approach.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

50. A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees: A strategic framework for reducing inequalities in the borough: Report to Cabinet 15 July 2021.

51. A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees: A strategic framework for reducing inequalities in the borough – post engagement final draft: Report to Cabinet 14 October 2021  
A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) Next Steps: Report to Cabinet 21 April 2022.

52. Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy: Report to Cabinet February 2023.

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## AGENDA ITEM

## REPORT TO CABINET

13 JULY 2023

## REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### CABINET DECISION / KEY DECISION

#### Regeneration and Housing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke

#### VIBRANT AND THRIVING TOWN CENTRES – REGENERATION UPDATE

#### SUMMARY

This report updates members on the Council's ambitious regeneration programme and outlines proposed next steps for place-based economic development and growth.

Ensuring our town centres are prosperous, vibrant places that are fit for future generations is key to attracting investment, creating opportunities, and improving outcomes for communities across Stockton-on-Tees.

Our current level of ambition is attracting significant interest from private developers, who are keen to be involved in the next phase of design and development. This report provides an update on progress to date, along with proposals to confirm future focus. It includes:

- A progress report on regeneration plans for Stockton Town Centre, Thornaby and Billingham
- A proposal to consider future facilities in Stockton Town Centre, including options for the leisure centre, library and register office as well as proposing plans for the historic Town Hall and Shambles
- An update on the redevelopment of Dunedin House and our Office Accommodation Strategy
- An update on the Thornaby Town Deal and in particular the potential requirement to provide a loan to enable the development of NETA facilities
- Proposals to see a Sports Hub created in Billingham on the former Billingham Campus site

This report also considers the strategic importance of areas with further development potential, including Teesdale Business Park and the Marshalling Yards.

Building on work to date, the report proposes that regeneration blueprints are developed for each of our six towns, which will outline the vision and future strategy for these areas. The blueprints will be used to promote and inform future investment and form the basis for detailed masterplans for key sites where appropriate.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations in this report, to confirm the level of ambition and future focus to drive economic development and growth across Stockton-on-Tees. The ambitious programme set out, can enable us to deliver vibrant and prosperous places that improve outcomes for Our People and Our Place.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet approve the development of regeneration blueprints for our six town centres outlining a regeneration narrative and development strategy. This includes an externally commissioned blueprint for Stockton Town Centre and Teesdale.
2. Cabinet approve the preparation of development briefs and the agree to undertake more formal engagement with potential development partner/s for:
  - a. The current Municipal Buildings site and surrounding area. This should consider options for retaining/incorporating the current Stockton Central Library site
  - b. The Stockton Waterfront site adjacent to the urban park
3. Cabinet agree to re-assess the options for the future leisure offer for Stockton Town Centre as a component of the Stockton and Teesdale blueprint
4. Cabinet approve the development of a Masterplan and business case for development at Teesdale, based around potential for a Care and Health Zone
5. Cabinet approve in principle the repurposing of the Town Hall and for the principle of re-locating the Register Office and service into the building.
6. Cabinet note a further report will be brought once plans have been developed to allocate the funding, which is currently approved for the town centre redevelopments
7. Cabinet confirm the commitment to supporting redevelopment in Billingham Town Centre and note the work underway to assess redevelopment options for Billingham in light of the unsuccessful Levelling Up Bid.
8. Cabinet approve the allocation of £4m from the £6m provided from the Tees Valley Combined Authority to help drive economic growth in Billingham as part of their refreshed 10 year investment plan in July 2022 to support the development of the Sports Hub on the former Billingham Campus site.
9. Cabinet note work ongoing with Education Training Collective (ETC) to explore funding options to support the redevelopment of the NETA facility as part of Thornaby Town Deal and agree to recommend a loan of up to £4m with a further report to Council seeking formal approval should a loan be required.
10. Cabinet approve the revised cost estimate and agree the revised funding profile to deliver the Office Accommodation Strategy.

## DETAIL

1. Members will be aware of the significant and ambitious regeneration programme in all of our Town Centres in recent years. This report includes an update on progress and outlines the approach for future development. Collectively, our regeneration programme can significantly improve economic outcomes for communities across Stockton-on-Tees.

## **Stockton Town Centre and Waterfront**

2. In Stockton Town Centre, the Council has led a programme of transformation, including the acquisition of two shopping centres and the decant and demolition of Castlegate Shopping Centre. 31 businesses have relocated from Castlegate to Wellington Square and the High Street. They are currently performing well, including a 10 per cent year on year increase in footfall in Wellington Square and a vacancy rate in the primary retail area that is around the national average. This is a contrast to the figures in 2018 which showed vacancy rates were approaching three times the national average. Demolition of the Castlegate Centre is progressing well and will continue throughout the summer, with completion programmed for October 2023.
3. Plans to transform the town centre include the creation of 'Stockton Waterfront', a bold, urban riverside park. Following public engagement undertaken in summer 2022, work has focussed on the detailed design of the park. A reserved matters planning application for the site is was determined at Planning Committee in July 2023.
4. Subject to approval, work will begin in the summer on essential structural works at the southern end of the site extending along the full of the length between the urban park and Riverside Road. It is expected that the park will be complete in spring 2025, providing a fantastic facility for all residents and visitors to the town.

## **Municipal Buildings and surrounding area**

5. There has been significant interest from developers wanting to work with the Council and explore opportunities to bring forward development across the wider town centre. Initial conversations as part of soft market testing, have indicated that the investment made so far, particularly the creation of an urban park connecting our town to the river, is the catalyst for their interest.
6. Developers have presented a range of exciting ideas which include high quality housing, potential destination leisure, as well as food and beverage venues. This includes potential to redevelop the current Municipal Buildings site as well as exploring the potential development of adjacent sites.
7. It is therefore proposed that a detailed development brief incorporating Municipal Buildings and surrounding area is prepared with a view to understanding the development and redevelopment opportunities on these sites and to formalise existing market interest, where appropriate. Initial conversations also indicate that the current leisure centre and library could be retained within any redevelopment (see further detail below). The Development brief will therefore examine this option in more detail.
8. It should be noted that given low land values, it is possible that any developer submitting proposals may require some Council support to bring forward developments, however this process will give greater clarity on values and potential delivery models.

## **Leisure and Civic Buildings**

9. The report to Cabinet in July 2021 approved the principle of a replacement for Splash, incorporating a new facility to support customer contact, library, register office and a new flexible space for civic and public facing business meetings on the southern section of the waterfront development site. Alongside the approval in principle, was an allocation of £20m to enable delivery. A key reason for the relocation was to support the regeneration of the town centre.
10. Since the last update to Cabinet, work has been underway to assess options and costs for the provision of a new civic building on the southern section of the waterfront development site alongside proposals for a new Community Diagnostic Hub for the Tees Valley to be delivered by the NHS.

11. Work has progressed as planned on the Community Diagnostic Hub (CDH). A planning application for the new £25million facility was submitted in May with work due to begin on site in the summer of 2023 with a view to opening the CDH in spring 2024.
12. Due to the interest from potential developers in key sites across the town centre it would seem sensible to take stock of proposals, consider the opportunities available and explore the option to retain Splash and invest in improvements to the existing facility, with future enhanced leisure opportunities being investigated as part of the Stockton and Teesdale blueprint document and development briefs discussed elsewhere in this report.
13. It is recommended that the allocation of £20m approved by Cabinet in July 2021 is retained to support future interventions pending the outcome of this more detailed exploratory work and development opportunities.
14. It is proposed that a development brief for the southern section of the Waterfront site is prepared to explore potential development opportunities alongside a greater level of market engagement to establish the most appropriate means of bringing forward development on the site.

### **Town Hall**

15. Stockton Town Hall is a Grade II\* listed building and an important focal point in Stockton Town Centre. The Council Chamber layout and furniture, as it survives today was created in the 1880s and is a rare example of a historic civic chamber. Most recently the town hall was used for municipal and ceremonial purposes by the Council but has been closed since the pandemic, partly due to its deteriorating condition. Whilst the Council Chamber has significant heritage value, it is not fit for purpose – access is poor, there is a lack of public space and facilities.
16. A recent condition survey concluded that work was required to the building fabric and structure. The essential conservation works are currently being carried out as part of planned maintenance, to make the building watertight, by updating leadwork to the roof and spire, repairing and redecorating the clock tower and spire, and installing lightning protection. During the conservation work, structural repairs will also be made to the basement structure, the decorative ceiling in the Council Chamber will be repaired and support scaffold put in place for the water damaged ceiling in the Mayors Chamber. All works are expected to be complete by autumn 2023.
17. Work has been underway to consider options which would enable the Town Hall to be brought back into a sustainable and viable use. The heritage significance of the Council Chamber and its furnishings means that it is essential that it is preserved in its entirety, and whilst this precludes the ability to use this space as a modern flexible Council meeting facility, the retention of this heritage asset is a key consideration.
18. Members will be aware that there is still a need to provide improved facilities for the Register Office. The emerging preferred option is to re-locate this service into the Town Hall. The restored Council Chamber would offer a unique heritage setting for marriages, civil partnerships, and citizenship ceremonies whilst the committee room could be used as an alternate modern ceremony space offering commanding views to the new waterfront park. The lower ground floor and upper floors would provide registration meeting spaces to support service delivery.
19. The original shop front appearance and access to the ground floor on the southern elevation could be restored and this would create an opportunity to unlock the ground floor for public access and bring the vacant space back into use as either a retail/café space or as a new location for tourist information. Both options would also enable the building, and specifically the Council Chamber, to be used for municipal ceremonies. It is proposed to appoint Architects to develop detailed proposals, and this will be considered in a future Cabinet report.

### **Shambles Market Hall**



20. The Shambles Market Hall is Grade II listed Georgian building. The present building was constructed in 1825 but a Shambles (obsolete term for a butchers) had been on site since 1699. The building was completely refurbished in 1982 into 19 smaller market stall units and the Council subsequently refurbished the building in 2008. It currently houses several small retail units, a café, and public toilets.
21. Given the central high street location and proximity to the proposed waterfront development, the Shambles Market Hall building will become an increasingly prominent landmark as the physical built environment changes over the course of the next couple of years.
22. There are a number of examples from across the UK that demonstrate how existing market halls can be successfully upgraded to support the wider regeneration plans for those places. To secure the future of this important heritage asset and to ensure it that it complements the neighbouring riverside park project, it is recommended that a feasibility study is undertaken to explore the future of the building and incorporate this into the wider Town Centre regeneration programme.

### **Linking Stockton Town Centre and Teesdale Business Park**

23. The redevelopment work and creation of the riverside park has raised the profile of Stockton Town Centre significantly, and there is now growing interest from the private sector in progressing development opportunities. It is clear that the investment and intervention from the Council has created the environment for further development of the town. If we are to achieve our future ambitions, it is critical that we harness this interest, optimise opportunities and develop the town centre to maximise economic growth and create prosperity.
24. Given the close proximity of Teesdale Business Park to the town centre, this site is of significant strategic importance, particularly once Castlegate has been demolished and the links between Teesdale Business Park and the town centre are strengthened. We are effectively creating a widened town centre area which spans our river and brings together some of our key assets.
25. Teesdale Business Park is a prime office location and is the base for many businesses and jobs (including Professional & Business Services, Finance & Information and Communication Technology). Durham University International Study Centre is also located at Teesdale and features accommodation for hundreds of international students, which provides a campus feel to the area. Alongside this is Stockton Riverside College, several private residential properties and specialist accommodation. Adjacent to Teesdale Business Park is Tees Marshalling Yards, a large site with a live railway and a series of sidings, which has long been a favoured site for large-scale, brownfield regeneration.
26. In recent years, there has been an increase in vacant office space at Teesdale, as well as several buildings on the park being transformed from office accommodation to residential. Although this remains a small proportion, the trend is a concern as this site remains a strategic employment and education site. In addition, despite the presence of the International Study Centre and research activity, the Durham University Queens Campus facilities are increasingly underutilised. There is a significant opportunity to bring together a strategy for both sites which could see a nationally significant regeneration scheme focused around key sector growth. Early discussions have highlighted an appetite to develop a Health and Social Care Zone, with potential for: integrated training and health facilities, business incubation, research and development.
27. Health and Social Care is a growing sector in the Borough, as well as the wider region. Development of a cluster, or zone for this sector can support economic growth, whilst ensuring the best quality services are available to our residents.
28. Given the current position and scale of future potential, it is timely to consider the wider strategic vision for the town centre, Teesdale and the surrounding area, including how these sites can

link together to be greater than the sum of their individual parts. It is therefore proposed that the Stockton and Teesdale blueprint (referred to elsewhere in the report) outlining a regeneration and development strategy is prepared. This could include:

- Town centre living
- Leisure, Culture and events
- Transport and infrastructure
- Public Sector provision
- Integrated training and health facilities
- Business incubation space aligned to Health and Social Care.

29. It is proposed that this includes a detailed feasibility study that will, amongst other things, forms the basis for a masterplan and business case for investment in a new Health and Social Care Zone. This work would be undertaken collaboratively with partners, including the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), the NHS and the education sector.

## **Billingham**

30. Members will be aware of the unsuccessful Levelling Up bid for Billingham Town Centre which was based around Council ownership, demolition, and re-purposing parts of the Town Centre. The Council remains committed to supporting redevelopment of Billingham Town Centre, and given the current position there is a need to assess the potential opportunities for future development and consider how they can be delivered alongside the owners of the Town Centre.

31. It is therefore recommended that a masterplan is prepared for the Town Centre, which will build on previous public consultation, explore potential redevelopment opportunities, and can be used to guide future investment decisions alongside private sector investment.

32. As part of the Council's commitment to improving leisure facilities and encourage participation in sport and active leisure, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) was adopted in January 2023. Designed and developed to identify investment and improvement opportunities across eight sports and different facility types, the PPOSS was developed alongside key partners.

33. Hubs Programme sites are football-led but they will support the delivery of a wide range of other sports and activities and typically include at least two full-size floodlit 3G pitches, as well as facilities such as car parking, a café and changing rooms. A Hub may also include grass pitches, small-sided 3G pitches, indoor meeting space, other sports and recreation facilities and other community uses.

34. Following an initial expression of interest which was based on delivering a Hub Programme development on the former Billingham Campus playing fields, the Council was invited by the Football Foundation to proceed to the next stage of the programme which was titled 'Community Engagement and Initial Feasibility'. The purpose of this stage was to undertake initial work to demonstrate the potential benefits and viability of a proposal at the proposed site. In March 2023, following review of work undertaken to date, the Football Foundation identified the potential for the scheme to deliver strong outcomes and formally invited the Council to progress to the next stage of the programme which involves developing an outline design for the proposal and undertaking further community engagement.

35. The proposal has the potential to support local clubs in the area, increase participation in sport and achieve wider social outcomes. Adjacent to the site is Bede Sixth Form College which includes its Institute of Sport and Education and associated sports facilities; we are keen to ensure the two facilities support each other in a seamless manner.

36. Initial estimates suggest a £10m capital cost for a Hub Programme development at the former Billingham Campus site. Discussions are ongoing with Football Foundations regarding providing

a significant proportion of investment for the proposal (using investment from the Premier League, The FA and Government through Sport England). However, there will be a requirement for local match funding. It is recommended that £4m, of the £6m earmarked to support developments in Billingham in the Tees Valley Investment Plan Refresh agreed by the TVCA Cabinet in July 2022, be allocated in principle to this project.

37. It is hoped that a final funding application could be made to the football foundation in 2024 and the Hub site delivered and operational in 2025.

### **Thornaby**

38. Work is underway on the demolition of Phoenix House, with work due to begin in the summer on the design of a new swimming pool on this site as well as continuing to work hard to find a solution to the former Eagle Hotel.
39. As part of the Town Deal programme, the Council is working closely with the Education and Training Collective (ETC) to support the relocation of NETA from its current location on Portrack Lane, to a new facility at Stockton Riverside College. To support the relocation of NETA, ETC have already secured funding, including grant funding from Department for Education, however this is lower than originally anticipated. ETC are revisiting the plans for relocation and the cost of delivering as well as exploring other funding options, and they have requested that the Council considers supporting the project with a loan.
40. In February 2021, Council approved prudential borrowing for Thornaby of up to £5m to support regeneration in the Town and an element of this could be used to support a loan to ETC. Following due diligence and assessment of the business case, this will be brought back to Council for approval, in line with our Treasury Management Strategy.

### **Accommodation Strategy**

41. A report to Cabinet in July 2021, approved the purchase and refurbishment of Dunedin House on Teesdale to facilitate an Asset Rationalisation strategy and re-locate the Council's Services. This was replacing the original plan to build a new facility estimated at over £32m. In addition, the report also agreed to explore options for a second smaller accommodation offer as part of the ongoing regeneration of Billingham. £10m was allocated for accommodation, £8m for Dunedin House and £2m for a second accommodation facility. This was a high-level estimate prior to the acquisition of the building.

### **Progress to date**

42. Work has been underway to assess the Council's office needs in the context of modern working practices. Building on the Council's pre-pandemic Smarter Working in Stockton (SWiS) programme, adopting and incorporating, where appropriate, new ways of working with a view to understanding what implications these factors would have on any new office space.
43. Since the acquisition of Dunedin House was completed in September 2021, detailed condition survey work has been undertaken. The layout of the building needs to be good quality and support a modern working approach. Good quality accommodation is also key to the recruitment and retention of staff.
44. Work to date has identified that although the building is in great condition structurally, some areas have not been modernised since the 1990s and therefore mechanical and electrical equipment is approaching or is beyond its design life. Equally, due to multiple tenancies, inconsistencies exist throughout. Therefore, significant works are required internally to bring essential building services in line with current regulations and to reduce any future maintenance costs.

45. Some parts of the building are currently leased to external organisations. Around 4/5 of the building is available and this will allow us to accommodate all office-based staff based on our flexible working arrangements.
46. The space available will include desks, breakout space, private, quiet space, in essence a mixture of facilities to support a modern working environment. It is anticipated there will be a phased completion programme which will finish in the summer of 2024. It is proposed to migrate staff across to Dunedin House as and when the refurbished floors become available.
47. The proposed refurbishment will support objectives defined in the Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy, including the drive towards net zero and to reduce energy demand wherever possible by continuing to improve the energy efficiency of Council assets. To assist with this, proposals include the delivery of a renewable energy scheme via the installation of photovoltaics (solar panels) to reduce the buildings energy demand from the national grid, and to reduce the ongoing monthly energy costs, particularly in light of the significant increase in fuel costs seen over last year. Electric vehicle (EV) charging bays will be provided as part of the Council's commitment to support a wider delivery of electric vehicle charging points across the Tees Valley and to support more sustainable modes of transport. This is in addition to modifications being made to existing lighting within the refurbished areas to low energy LED lighting which will bring about reduced energy consumption and costs.
48. In addition to the services that have been identified to be relocated into Dunedin House, there are numerous examples of operational/public facing services (such as consulting rooms) that are within the existing 10 buildings which may not be suitable for location in Dunedin House. Work is ongoing to determine the most appropriate location and a further report will be presented to Cabinet outlining the proposal and any financial requirements.
49. An update is provided above on Billingham Town Centre, and given the position, work to design a second office has not progressed. The Council will retain a significant presence in Billingham Town Centre with the library, customer service centre and also the Learning and Skills Service. The number of office-based staff has reduced significantly following the introduction of hybrid working, and the closure of Kingsway House. There is not understood to have been any negative impact on Town Centre Businesses.
50. As part of the Council's commitment to enhance collaboration and explore opportunities for improving service delivery, discussions are underway with a number of partners in relation to co-location of services. There are opportunities to incorporate any such requirements into the future redevelopment of our Town Centres.
51. Due to the inflationary increases seen since the July 2021 Cabinet Report, the volatile changes in the construction and material supply market, alongside a more detailed understanding around changes that can be made to help deliver the Council's Environmental Sustainability Carbon Reduction Strategy the latest project estimate for Dunedin House alongside costs to renovate and refurbish a second facility comes to £9.5m.
52. £7.1m of funding is remaining for accommodation following the acquisition of Dunedin House. Members will recall that the former Glam and Post Office site was demolished, and the future of this site now forms part of the wider regeneration blueprint for Stockton town centre and Teesdale £1.2m is currently unallocated from the original budget and can now be re-allocated. Alongside this a number of tenants have remained in the building and this has generated revenue of £900,000 and given that the investment will avoid future maintenance costs the remaining £300,000 will be funded from the planned maintenance budget.
53. A separate piece of work is underway to develop a disposal strategy for the 10 administration building sites. Some of this is already underway with the closure of Kingsway House in March 2023, marketing Ideal House in Thornaby for sale.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

54. Whilst there are no specific community impact implications arising from the recommendations in this report at this stage, it is recognised that the physical and social environment in which we live and work has an important influence on the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities.

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

55. There are no specific corporate parenting implications at this stage.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

56. Total funding previously agreed to support investment in Leisure and Civic facilities of £20m will be retained to support the initiatives outlined in this report and will be subject to a further report to Cabinet.
57. The updated cost estimate and funding profile for accommodation is outlined in paragraphs, 49, 50 and 51.
58. The potential loan to Education Training Collective will be at no cost to the Council and the financial risks will be considered as part of the business case assessment process.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

59. As the projects described in this report develop and progress there will be a range of legal issues to consider and address including in relation to property rights and acquisitions, planning, environmental and other impact assessments, the potential for public consultation and engagement to be required and the need to ensure that sound contractual agreements are put in place to protect and secure the Council's interests.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

60. The recommendations made in this report are at this stage are categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk. More specific risk assessment will be required as the detail of projects develop and progress.

### **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

ALL

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report to Cabinet July 2021

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## AGENDA ITEM

## REPORT TO CABINET

13 JULY 2023

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### CABINET DECISION

**Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Robert Cook**  
**Regeneration and Housing – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke**

#### INDIGENOUS GROWTH FUND UPDATE

##### SUMMARY

The report provides Cabinet with an update on the Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) Strategic Initiatives Programme including progress to date, changes in the economic market, and proposed programme reprofiling to stimulate inward investment, support inclusive growth, and be a catalyst for job creation across the borough using the IGF that the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) has allocated to the Council.

##### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

To provide Members with an update on the Tees Valley Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) and an overview of the proposed reprofiled IGF Strategic Initiatives Programme.

##### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet approve the reprofiled IGF Strategic Initiatives Programme at table 2 and note the allocation of resources from the Indigenous Growth Fund.
2. Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing for expenditure of the initiative's defined in the programme.
3. Cabinet delegate to the Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing the authority to amend the value of individual initiatives within the overall scope of the total IGF allocation to meet future market demand.

##### DETAIL

##### Background

1. The TVCA Investment Plan allocated £50m to the IGF, a programme developed to support the Strategic Economic Plan objective to develop 'Place' through area regeneration in support of economic growth. The IGF will be used to sustain, support and enhance these critical economic assets, allowing the Borough to continue to be a major contributor to the region's economy.

2. In January 2020, Cabinet approved the acquisition of the remaining undeveloped employment land at Durham Lane Industrial Park at Market Value and noted that the allocation of resources from the IGF will be considered as part of the Council's MTFP by full Council. The MTFP report from February 2020 incorporated the IGF within the capital programme and agreed that any allocation would be reported through Cabinet.
3. In January 2021, Cabinet approved the IGF Strategic Initiatives Programme which sought to promote inward investment, unlock employment land, support existing business growth, and be a catalyst for economic growth and job creation across the borough.
4. This was proposed to be driven primarily by a branded inward investment strategy which will actively promote all investment sites across the borough both publicly and privately owned. The brand would provide a front facing tool for potential investors whilst enabling access to key information and contacts for existing businesses to engage with alongside the Employment and Training Hub.
5. The proposed intervention programme also sought to support business growth and inward investment through the delivery of infrastructure schemes and the acquisition of key sites. This could include road improvements to increase capacity and unlock employment land for development, or the strategic acquisition of derelict land or buildings to enable existing business to expand.
6. The programme proposed to provide support to the borough's small and medium enterprise businesses via a Business Growth Fund. Existing business are able to apply for the fund to help them grow their business or implement innovative ways of working in response to the coronavirus pandemic.
7. Specific schemes will be identified and will be based on robust evidence to support the intervention. The values attached to each initiative are approximate only and that an agreement of financial variance between activities across the programme will be considered by the Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Housing.

### **Progress to date**

#### **Initiative 01: Key sites acquisition and investment**

8. SBC purchased vacant employment land at Durham Lane Industrial Estate in July 2021 to safeguard strategically important employment land.
9. Commissioned numerous site surveys and an options appraisal in order to better understand the sites opportunities and constraints; essentially completing due diligence to make the site more attractive to a developer.
10. Supported the extension of Cleasby Way and the development of the new car park which will serve Eaglescliffe Railway Station.
11. Appointed Knight Frank as land agents with the site currently marketed on behalf of the Council to procure a developer to bring the site forward.

#### **Initiative 02: Key sites infrastructure delivery**

12. Design fees incurred for potential junction improvements at Cheltenham Road/ Portrack Lane to release capacity in the highway network and unlock 37 acres of strategic employment land at Dynamo Park, Cheltenham Road. This is a privately owned site.



13. During the planning process and detailed traffic modelling undertaken by the applicant it was established that junction improvements would not be required to mitigate increased traffic flow and the employment land could be 'unlocked' without IGF investment and therefore the funding in this strand can be released for other projects.

### Initiative 03: Inward Investment Strategy

14. "Since the "soft launch" of the Invest Stockton-on-Tees brand in July 2021 the focus of the Invest Stockton-on-Tees campaign has been brand awareness which sign-posted audiences to the Invest Stockton-on-Tees microsite for more information. The full website was launched in July 2022 and is available to view [here](#).
15. Brand awareness has been provided across various marketing media including within Tees Business, This is Tees Valley, Business Works and Business Works Guide publications. Beyond this; radio, billboard and bus advertising has also been undertaken. The Invest Stockton-on-Tees brand also has LinkedIn (633 followers) and Twitter (1,115 followers) platforms, with 10,020 impressions and 305 interactions on LinkedIn, and 11,100 impressions and 234 engagements on Twitter over the last 3 months.
16. This brand awareness will be continuing alongside development of the Invest website through use of 'good news' articles and marketing of our strategic sites.

### Initiative 04: Business Growth Fund

17. To date funding has supported 4 businesses in the Borough providing match funding to overall project costs (total project costs £666,699 invested into the area) and 9 jobs have been created. The businesses have been located in two of our strategic business locations (Durham Lane and Preston Farm Industrial Estate) and within our priority sectors (manufacturing, logistics and financial sectors).
18. The Economic Development Team are currently engaging with a number of businesses on grant applications and targeted marketing of the fund will be undertaken using the Invest Stockton-on-Tees website.
19. There is no other funding available locally to support business growth therefore it is anticipated there will be an increase in applications (TVCA Business Growth Scheme has now ceased).

**TABLE 1 - SPEND TO DATE**

Cabinet Approved IGF Programme			
IGF Initiative	Initiative Value	Spend to date	Remaining
<b>01: Key Sites Acquisition and Investment</b>	£6,000,000	£3,026,033	£2,973,967
<b>02: Key Sites Infrastructure Delivery</b>	£3,000,000	£14,733	£2,985,267
<b>03: Inward Investment Strategy</b>	£500,000	£162,816	£337,184
<b>04: Business Growth Fund</b>	£500,000	£161,528	£338,472
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£10,000,000</b>	<b>£3,365,110</b>	<b>£6,634,890</b>

### **Changes in market/strategic sites**

20. In their Investment Plan the TVCA have added an additional £2m to SBC's initial £10m allocation creating a total IGF allocation available to the Council of £12m. In light of this additional allocation and a number of required shifts in the previously agreed programme a re-profiled programme is proposed.
21. The proposed re-profiled programme will continue to support business growth and inward investment through the delivery of infrastructure schemes and the acquisition of key sites. It will promote inward investment, unlock employment land, support existing business growth, and be a catalyst for economic growth and job creation across the borough.
22. It is proposed to expand the criteria of the Business Support Growth Fund to allow the Council to support a broader range of businesses, particularly those in our key large sectors (250+ employees) not just small and medium enterprise businesses as previously approved. It is understood that given the rise in energy and inflation costs experienced over the last year, that many SME's are concentrating on consolidating their existing offer and therefore there is little appetite for exploring growth opportunities at this moment in time.
23. The need for this is even more essential now given that TVCA have abruptly stopped their business support grants. The proposed amendment will offer Grants of up to 50%\* towards project costs and also be available for large businesses looking to grow their business or implement innovative ways of working to enhance sustainability and productivity. Projects must create new jobs (minimum 5) and promote economic output.

\*Grant amount will be based no. of jobs created

### **IGF - Proposed re-profiled programme**

24. Allocation of £3.9m spread evenly from initiatives 01 and 02 towards funding infrastructure at Durham Lane Industrial Estate. This is essential to unlocking the land for inward investment working in partnership with a preferred developer. This then leaves £1m in initiative 01 for specific site acquisitions.
25. Re-allocation of £0.5m from initiative 02 into initiative 04: Business Growth Fund. This along with amendments to the criteria is in response to market changes that will allow us to support a broader range of businesses, particularly those in our key large sectors.
26. Proposal to move £0.5m from initiative 02 into a newly established initiative called '05: Regeneration Investment' and combine with the additional £2m from TVCA. This strand will support emerging regeneration opportunities with specific projects yet to be defined.
27. The revised programme is summarised in the table below.

**TABLE 2 – REVISED IGF PROGRAMME**

<b>Revised IGF Programme</b>			
<b>IGF Initiative</b>	<b>Revised Value</b>	<b>Remaining</b>	<b>Projects</b>
<b>01: Key Sites Acquisition and Investment</b>	£6,000,000	£2,973,967	£1m - Site Acquisitions £1.95m - Durham Lane Infrastructure
<b>02: Key Sites Infrastructure Delivery</b>	£2,000,000	£1,985,267	£1.95m - Durham Lane Infrastructure (£0.5m moved to 04: Business Growth Fund and £0.5m moved to 05: Regeneration Investment)
<b>03: Inward Investment Strategy</b>	£500,000	£337,184	Continued spend to support Inward Investment
<b>04: Business Growth Fund</b>	£1,000,000	£838,472	Revised criteria to match current market
<b>05: Regeneration Investment</b>	£2,500,000	£2,500,000	To be agreed Including additional £2m allocation
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£12,000,000</b>	<b>£8,634,890</b>	

**Added Benefits through Economic and Social Value**

28. The activities that may be generated by the IGF Strategic Initiatives Programme not only ensures we support inward investment in strategically important employment land, it also will allow the Council to realise additional economic value as a result of job generation and social value embedded in our approach to procurement.
29. The Council is committed to maximising the impact of its public expenditure for the benefit of the local economy, the environment and wider society and communities, and this is being delivered through embedding strong Social Value policies through the procurement process. Social Value is an ability to determine and measure what is created as added value through a contracts and commissioning processes, considering more than just the financial transaction but what added benefits we wish to achieve.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

30. The proposals in this report cover a wide range of initiatives, which will potentially have numerous community impacts including, amongst others, employment, retail, transport and environment. As the proposals are further developed a Community Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

**CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

31. This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

32. The activities set out in the IGF Strategic Initiatives Programme will be fully funded through the TVCA Indigenous Growth Fund allocation. The original £10m allocation is already within the approved Capital Programme and, subject to Cabinet approval the remaining £2m will also be incorporated.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

33. The proposals in this report cover a wide range of initiatives, which will potentially have numerous legal implications including, land valuation, land acquisition, and legal title checks. As the proposals are further developed and come forward, legal advice will be sought and the necessary due diligence undertaken.
34. The Council will also undertake necessary due diligence as part of the planning process.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

35. This Indigenous Growth Fund Update report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.
36. As individual proposals are further developed and come forward, the necessary risk assessments and due diligence will be undertaken.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

37. Leader of the Council – Councillor Robert Cook and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing – Councillor Nigel Cooke.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

38. Cabinet Report: Indigenous Growth Fund Update - 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020.
39. Cabinet Report: Indigenous Growth Fund Update – 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

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## AGENDA ITEM

## REPORT TO CABINET

13 July 2023

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

### CABINET DECISION

**Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook**

**Powering our Future - Senior Management Capacity Review**

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to bring forward a proposal for a restructuring of the senior management of the Council (Corporate Management Team) and includes the creation of a new directorate including the recruitment of a new Director post to optimise senior leadership capacity, ensure the delivery of our ambitious economic growth programme and the Powering our Future Programme provide capacity to deliver on the agreed ambitions of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

#### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet is asked to approve the recommendation in the report in order to allow the start of a formal consultation with the employees affected by the proposal as the first step of implementation of the new structures and to enable the recruitment of the additional Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth post to commence.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet approve:

1. that the post of Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be created with the responsibilities as set out in this report.
2. the modifications to the role of the Director Finance, Development and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive including a change in job title to Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance with the responsibilities as set out in this report.
3. that the Chief Executive be delegated to make whatever arrangements are necessary to implement the new directorate structures, including any necessary changes to responsibilities at or below director level.

#### DETAIL

1. The Council and local government in general face increasing financial and demand challenges, whilst the Council was able to set a balanced budget for 2023/24, the financial position for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council over the medium term therefore continues to be uncertain, particularly given the context of a one-year financial settlement for local government and the occurrence in the economy of high levels of inflation with uncertainty for how long those significant inflationary pressures will remain.

Current projections continue to indicate a budget gap in 2025, if left unaddressed the uncertainties of this could become more acute and challenging.

2. A critical part of meeting the budget and demand challenges will be a programme of transformation and public service reform. This will ensure that the council can continue to operate on a sustainable footing within its overall budgetary constraints but at the same time reforming and improving upon our services for residents. As described in the report Powering our Future - delivering for People, Place and Economy, the Council is about to commence this transformational programme. Alongside this, the Council continues to progress delivery of our major regeneration initiatives, including those being delivered in our town centres. It is also vitally important the council continue to promote inward investment, inclusive economic growth and lever in external funding opportunities to provide future resilience to our area. These programmes and future projects can only be delivered if there is strong and effective corporate management in place with sufficient capacity to deliver.

### **Current Senior Management Capacity**

3. Whilst it is only relatively recently that Cabinet last reviewed the senior management structure (February 2022) the challenges faced by local government and this council in particular have increased significantly. Having considered the scale of the issues faced, not least the delivery of savings as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, it is now appropriate to revisit the Council's Senior Management structure
4. The Chief Executive has commissioned an external review of senior capacity. This has looked in particular at the organisation's ability to deliver against the financial, demand and transformational challenges faced whilst at the same time maintain the delivery at pace of the regeneration of our town centres and growing our local economy. The review has identified that without additional senior capacity to drive and deliver improved outcomes, it is unlikely that the council will be able to maintain a trajectory for success.
5. The independent review work has identified that the council has, in terms of its corporate management team, become an outlier compared to other comparable local authorities, with 9 out of 10 authorities which were looked at having a dedicated Regeneration/Business Growth/Economy/Place directorate.
6. The current Finance, Development and Regeneration Directorate whilst originally intended to be balanced with other directorate portfolios has with the increased financial pressures and the introduction of the transformation work become out of alignment, resulting in insufficient management time to deal with regeneration issues. Coupled with this there remain some key regeneration functions distributed across Council, such as the strategic transport function in community services, meaning that the function as a whole is not fully integrated within the council and therefore delivering to common objectives.

### **Directorate Proposals**

7. In order to ensure effective senior leadership during this period of transformation and change and to ensure that council priorities are delivered, changes are now required to the Council's current senior management structure. This will see the creation of one additional director and a rebalancing of portfolios across the corporate management team. The proposed changes will provide additional strategic leadership and focus, in addition to providing support to members and the Chief Executive to lead and deliver the Council's transformation, regeneration and growth plans.

8. The proposals identify that separating out the regeneration and place making functions from the council's finance functions and transformation programme will increase capacity and focus enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency resulting in overall better outcomes for our communities and the borough as a whole. The fundamental issue in bringing forward these proposals is that there is currently a lack of senior capacity and therefore our ability to deliver and continue delivering over the medium to longer term is at risk unless this is strengthened.
9. Services 'in scope' of the new Regeneration and Growth directorate include:-
  - Place development
  - Economic Development
  - Major Projects
  - Highways Design
  - Property/Assets/FM
  - Planning and Building Control
  - Learning and Skills
10. It is proposed that these services form the core of the new directorate. The review also considered that fairer Stockton on Tees and strategic housing could be better delivered if more closely aligned with the existing adults and health portfolio. As this change was only relatively minor, in terms of the number of employees affected, it has already been made under delegated powers by changing line management responsibilities.
11. Services 'in scope' of the revised Finance, Transformation and Performance directorate include:-
  - Finance
  - Revenues, Benefits and Welfare
  - Xentrall
  - Powering our Future Programme
  - Strategic Planning and Performance
12. In addition, the additional responsibilities also of the Deputy Chief Executive will remain.
13. The process to introduce a new director will take some time, usually at least 6 months (or more) for a senior level recruitment, therefore be necessary to put in place some interim arrangements whilst that process begins.
14. There is a recognition within this report that as the transformation programme delivers out, that the management capacity needed by the council will need to flex and change. This report therefore recognises that at the culmination of the transformation programme it is likely to be necessary to take a fresh look at senior capacity at that time.

#### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

15. A Community Impact Assessment was not required to support the development of these proposals. The proposals concern the internal operation of the Council.

#### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

16. There are no direct Corporate Parenting Implications as a result of this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

17. The appointment of the additional Director will provide additional capacity in the organisation and allow other Senior Managers to focus on the Transformation agenda and as such this will be funded from the money earmarked in the 2023 MTFP report. Towards the conclusion of the transformation programme it will be necessary to review and if necessary make further changes to the Senior Management Structure to ensure that it is appropriate to meet the demands, challenges and opportunities for the Council in the medium to long term.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

18. The council has a wide discretion to create a senior management structure to reflect the current needs of the organisation, subject to ensuring that statutory responsibilities the council is required to allocate are provided for.
19. The proposed changes will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the council's HR policies and procedures.
20. In accordance with the constitution, Cabinet approval is required to create director posts reporting to the Chief Executive.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

21. The proposed senior management restructuring is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

22. The proposals do not have an impact on any specific wards.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

23. None

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## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **REPORT TO CABINET**

**13 July 2023**

### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

## **CABINET DECISION**

**Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook**

### **Employer Supported Volunteering**

#### **SUMMARY**

In recognition of the importance of volunteering to our residents and communities to consider an approach to employer supported volunteering, that encompasses employee volunteering leave of absence, volunteering as part of a team development day and employer organised volunteering opportunities.

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)**

Part of this Council's commitment to the Stockton Volunteering Strategy is to encourage organisations to support their employees to volunteer. It is therefore important that as a key employer in the Borough, that we set the standard for other organisations to follow, by promoting and facilitating our own employees to undertake volunteering through time off work, and organised volunteering activities.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet approve the Employee Volunteering Policy (at Appendix 1)

#### **BACKGROUND**

1. In July 2021 Cabinet endorsed 'People Power: A Volunteering Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2021 to 2026'. This Volunteering Strategy was co-produced by the Council and Catalyst with the aim of informing, supporting, and developing volunteering within the borough.
2. The vision detailed in the Volunteering Strategy is to ensure that we have a borough where:
  - More people will be sharing their skills and talents for the good of the community through volunteering.
  - Volunteering in the Borough will be a positive experience for volunteers and the people and organisations they volunteer with.
  - The contribution volunteers make to the Borough will be recognised and celebrated.
3. The Council's current leave of absence policy provides employees with the ability to request unpaid leave to undertake volunteering in work time. Subject to Cabinet approval we propose to introduce a new employee policy, this specifically outlines our commitment to supporting our employees to volunteer within the borough of Stockton-on-Tees in work time.

4. See Appendix 1 for full copy of the proposed Employee Volunteering Policy.
5. This policy will also form part of our approach to Stockton Futures. By encouraging and supporting our employees to take time of work to volunteer in our community we will be supporting the principles of:
  - Empowered communities - Understanding our communities & helping them to thrive in the way that they choose;
  - Collaborate with communities – starting a new conversation with residents & communities to describe what we want the Borough to be like in future;
  - Positive conversations - Focussing on the strengths of people & communities;
  - People Centric – removing organisational boundaries to ensure that we meet the needs of individuals ;
  - Equality - Aiming to reduce inequality across the Borough in everything we do;
  - Doing things differently - Developing creative & original ways to make a difference;
  - Stronger together - Developing a shared understanding of what we can do together to have the biggest impact.

## **PROPOSALS**

6. We ask Cabinet to consider the policy having particular regard to the following options:
  - Employee Volunteering Leave of Absence
  - Volunteering as part of a Team Development Day.
  - SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities

### Employee Volunteering Leave of Absence:

7. Our proposal is to amend the current policy of unpaid leave, to allow employees to take 1 day paid leave (pro rata for part time employees) within a rolling 12-month period to undertake volunteering activities within the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. All requests would be subject to the usual line manager approval in line with business needs and will be recorded on the MyHR system so we can monitor take up.
8. It is proposed to start by offering 1 day a year and to monitor the take up in the next 6-12 months, at which point we can review. It is unlikely all employees will take up the offer, but if they did this would equate to 18,914 volunteering hours (based on 2,556 FTE as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023).
9. In addition to paid leave, employees can still request unpaid leave, annual leave, and flexitime to undertake additional volunteering activity or to volunteer outside of our borough.

### Volunteering as part of a Team Development Day

10. Volunteering as a team can help develop communication skills, creativity, collaboration, and ability to work together as a group. Teams will be encouraged to seek out volunteering opportunities for their Team Development Day or apply for the SBC Organised Opportunities (see above). Conversations are also ongoing with Catalyst (Volunteer Manager) with the aim of working with our VCSE partners to identify a 'forward plan' of potential activities for SBC teams to volunteer their time and services.

### SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities

11. As part of the ongoing Fairer Stockton on Tees (FSOT) Cost of Living activity there is a Corporate Social Responsibility task and finish work group. Colleagues across the FSOT and Community Engagement Teams will work with the VCSE to identify volunteering projects or pieces of work on a time-limited basis to enable employees to share their time, skills, and experience, in addition to the volunteering activity for teams. These opportunities will be promoted in KYIT for employees or teams to apply for and may where appropriate to the project grant more than 1 day paid leave.

### **MONITORING & REPORTING**

12. All volunteering activity will be record on the MyHR system as paid (or unpaid Leave). No change to the MyHR system is needed to accommodate this, and managers can input paid (or unpaid) leave the same way as they input sickness absence.  
We will monitor employee volunteering activity (paid and unpaid) and report back to Cabinet on the take up by employees and Teams in the next 6 months.

### **COMPARISONS WITH THE TEES VALLEY LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

13. Middlesbrough Council provide 1 day paid leave for employees to undertake volunteering. At the time of writing Darlington, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland currently do not offer any paid time but have stated this is likely to be reviewed.

### **VOLUNTEERING WITH STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

14. A further report will be presented to Cabinet in the near future, outlining volunteering activity within the Council and proposing terms by which we engage volunteers.
15. We have a number of volunteers supporting our work in the Community, but they have been engaged on different terms with some receiving an attendance allowance, some expenses, and others nothing at all. Volunteer agreements and paperwork also vary.
16. We propose to introduce a standard set of terms for all volunteers, and new documentation for all services to use when engaging volunteers. Volunteer activity will also be included in our Workforce Profile Report in future.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

17. A Community Impact Assessment was not required to support the development of these proposals. The proposals concern the internal operation of the Council.

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

18. There are no direct Corporate Parenting Implications as a result of this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

19. The policy will be managed within in existing resources.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

20. Confirmation of insurance and responsibility for risks will need to be in place for any volunteering activities and any situation such as loss of pay due to incidents arising while staff are volunteering will be addressed through HR procedures.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

21. The policy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk. The main risks are associated with accidents or incidents while staff are volunteering. Suitable risk assessments should be in place for any volunteering activities.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

22. The proposals do not have an impact on any specific wards.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

23. People Power: A Volunteering Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2021 to 2026 – Cabinet July 2021

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# Employee Volunteering Policy

Human Resources  
July 2023

## SBC Employee Volunteering Policy

### Introduction

The Council actively encourages and supports our employees who wish to undertake voluntary work within our borough. Volunteering is a great way for you to gain or share your skills and experiences, meet new people and give something back to our community. We believe that the borough would benefit from an increase in the number of people who are able to share their skills and talents through volunteering, which is why we have created this policy to outline our support to employees undertaking voluntary work in working time.

According to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) the most widely reported benefits to volunteering are enjoyment and a sense of personal achievement, and a feeling of making a difference. Also, widely reported is the value to a volunteers' mental and physical health and how it can help reduce isolation.

For the host organisations that engage volunteers there are also many reported benefits ranging from increased capacity to gaining additional skills, ideas and experiences and benefiting from practical support.

This policy sets out our commitment to support employees who want to volunteer, and how it can be used to support Team Development. It also forms part of our overall vision and approach to Stockton Futures, empowering and collaborating with our communities and developing a shared understanding of what we can do together to have the biggest impact.

### What is Volunteering

Volunteering is where you donate your time, knowledge and/or skills to undertake an activity that benefits others, free of charge.

Work experience placements are different to volunteering, although undertaking volunteering activities can help develop skills to support your development and access employment.

Employer Supported Volunteering, is where an employer allows employees to take time off work in normal working time— paid or unpaid (see below) to support work in the community.

For the purpose of this policy, helping your close friends or relatives is not considered volunteering.

### Volunteer Leave of Absence

#### Paid & Unpaid Leave

All employees are entitled to 1 day paid leave within a rolling 12-months, or pro rata equivalent if you work part-time to undertake volunteering activities **within** the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. It must be taken in your normal working time – time off in lieu for volunteering outside your normal working hours will not be given.

If you wish to undertake additional volunteering activities, or volunteer outside of the borough, unpaid leave can be requested, or use of annual leave or flexitime approved in line with normal arrangements.

The paid or unpaid leave of absence may be taken as a full day, half day or blocks of at least one hour.

#### Finding volunteering

You can use your volunteer leave to pursue volunteering activities of your own choice within the borough of Stockton on Tees – we want you to be involved in something that you genuinely care about. You may want to consider one of the examples below:

- See section below “SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities
- Stockton Volunteering Website – many organisations post their opportunities on Stockton Volunteering's website where you can apply online. <https://www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk/>
- Work for a local charity / foodbank
- Provide your skills to a VCSE (Voluntary Community Social Enterprise) organisations – e.g., website design, bid writing, administration support
- Carry out fund raising or support events
- Help out in a local School or Library
- Litter Picking or groundwork in a local park
- Support NHS services

## SBC Employee Volunteering Policy

### Requesting Volunteer Leave

All volunteer leave must be approved by your Line Manager in advance, giving as much notice as possible.

You must provide details of the volunteering programme that you wish to undertake (who the volunteering is with and what activity) and each day / number of hours that you are requesting as volunteer leave (paid or unpaid).

Every effort will be made to support your request. However, there may be circumstances where your line manager may turn down your request due to operational needs, where there is insufficient capacity within the team to accommodate high levels of leave or they consider that a conflict of interest may arise. If your request is turned down, you may request to take your volunteer leave at a different time or with an alternative organisation.

### Recording Volunteer Leave

It is important that all volunteer leave is recorded on MyHR by the Line Manager under paid or unpaid leave – recorded in the same way as sickness absence.

Details of the volunteering which is being undertaken by the employee should be recorded in the “Comments” section.

## Volunteering as a Team

Volunteering as a team is a great way for your team to connect with your colleagues.

Perhaps your team has some specialised skill or knowledge that could benefit a charity, or maybe the volunteering provides an opportunity to learn something new together.

Volunteering as a team can help develop your communication skills, creativity, collaboration and ability to work together as a group. Why not seek out a volunteering opportunity for your next Team Development Day?

### Identifying Team Opportunities

Teams are encouraged to identify their own volunteering opportunities or apply for the SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities (see below) as a Team. Perhaps you have a partner organisation you work with who may mutually benefit from your team’s time?

If you would like some support in identifying a Team Volunteering activity, contact Community Engagement

### Recording Team Volunteering

We would ask that managers record Team Volunteering on MyHR in the same way as individual volunteering. This is so we can monitor the amount of volunteering being undertaken by our employees within our borough.

## SBC Organised Volunteering Opportunities

The Council will work with Catalyst to identify volunteering projects or pieces of work within the VCSE sector on a time-limited basis to enable you or your Team to share your time, skills and experience with.

These opportunities will be promoted in KYIT for individual employees or teams to apply for and may where appropriate to the project grant more than 1 day paid leave.

Before applying to take part in organised opportunities, you should confirm with your Line Manager that time off work can be given. If the activity is on a non-working day, time of in lieu will not be provided.

Keep a look out in KYIT for future opportunities.

## Related Documents

- [Work / Life Balance & Attendance Policy – Appendix 4 A-Z Guidance on Leave](#)
- A Volunteering Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2021-2026
- Stockton Volunteers Website - <https://www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk/>

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**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**13 JULY 2023**

**REPORT OF RETURNING OFFICER**

## **CABINET INFORMATION ITEM**

**Leader – Councillor Bob Cook**

### **ELECTORAL UPDATE**

#### **SUMMARY**

To provide feedback from the Local and Parish Elections in May 2023 and an update on the further implementation of the Elections Act 2022. The lessons learned will be taken into account as part of planning for future elections.

#### **REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT**

To provide feedback on the May 2023 polls and outline next steps in the implementation of the Elections Act 2022.

#### **DETAIL**

##### **ELECTIONS 2023**

1. This report considers performance against the Electoral Commission (EC) performance standards for Returning Officers. It highlights what went well and any lessons learned to enable the Returning Officer to plan for future polls.
2. The Electoral Commission Returning Officer performance standards are as follows:
  - Outcome 1 – Electoral Services are robust and support the delivery of well-run elections
  - Outcome 2 – Everybody who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do so and has confidence in the voting process
  - Outcome 3 – Everybody who is eligible and wants to stand for election is able to do so and has confidence in the process
  - Outcome 4 – Everyone can have confidence that the election process is well managed and in the accuracy of the results

##### **HOW DID WE PERFORM**

3. In order to deliver a well-run election, it is imperative that there is a robust understanding of the legislative framework, and the various roles and responsibilities. In addition, the scale of the task should not be under-estimated; for the May elections:
  - 97 polling stations were booked
  - Borough Elections – 157 Nomination forms were processed (with 314 assenters)
  - Parish Elections - 120 nominations were processed (with 240 assenters)
  - 60 agents were appointed,
  - 433 staff were appointed to 965 jobs
  - Borough Elections - 48,367 postal ballot packs were issued and 30,617 were receipted, opened and processed

- Parish Elections – 10,403 postal ballot packs were issued and 5,847 were receipted, opened and processed.
  - 1,177 postal votes were returned on polling day. All had to be opened and processed for verification as soon as possible after 10pm
  - Turnout was 32.73%
4. The Elections Act 2022 came into force on 28 April 2022 and brought with it various new requirements for the May 2023 elections, including wider accessibility requirements and the need for those electors voting in the station to produce specified photographic voter ID. In addition to composing the suite of development plans required to run an election, changes to the voting process for those electors voting in a station required back-office changes to software, changes to polling station staff duties and changes to the customer interface, including new portals to process customer applications for voter ID. In addition, significant data collection requirements were introduced to support and evidence the impact of the changes.

#### *Accessibility*

5. The changes to accessibility necessitated a review of all polling stations to ensure the new requirements could be accommodated and the necessary equipment purchased.

#### *Boundary Changes*

6. In addition, the Local Government Boundary review which came into effect from May 2023 required a full polling district and places review to be undertaken to take account of the boundary changes and new polling stations were required in some instances. Polling districts had to be re-drawn to reflect the needs of both existing and future ward boundaries. This was achieved by establishing temporary polling districts for the period 1 December 2022 to 1 December 2023 which will then be merged into appropriate adjoining polling districts on publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2023.

#### *Elections Printing*

7. As a result of concerns during the 2021 elections, a new specialist print supplier was procured for the May 2023 elections. Although, this required additional work to establish an effective working relationship, new procedures for data transfer and proofing have been seamless and communication constant and clear. The change secured successful delivery of print services. In addition, following previous candidate complaints of the poor acoustics at the count venue we contracted a new audio service which resulted in improved acoustic performance during the verification and count.

#### *Nominations*

8. Again, to support effective relations with candidates and agents, we extended the period for nominations, held multiple briefings and provided a comprehensive candidates and agents pack alongside the Electoral Commission's guidance. Regular communication was maintained throughout the statutory period.

#### *Voter ID*

9. Conscious of the potential for problems associated with voter ID in polling stations, our Cleveland Police SPOC was briefed on our approach to raising understanding of Voter ID with the electorate and how we planned to manage any complaints / public unrest during polling day. We also maintained regular contact with DLUHC regarding the on-going and evolving requirements of the voter ID system and how this would impact our service and the electorate in Stockton. All electoral staff completed the DLUHC / AEA training to support their knowledge and application of these changes.

10. Raising understanding of Voter ID during the planning period was vital to ensuring no voter was disenfranchised on polling day. A comprehensive communications plan was developed, household notification letters were sent and information was also enclosed with Council Tax bills. We also were able to develop a larger poll card with our printer, enabling the Voter ID messaging to be delivered on the card itself. Voters were aware of the Voter ID requirements as evidenced by feedback on the doorstep and from stations on polling day. This was further evidenced by the extremely low number of voters who failed to bring ID with them on polling day. 99.9% of Stockton-on-Tees electors who attended a polling station were issued with a ballot paper; 25 electors were not issued with a ballot paper which amounted to 0.1% of Stockton-on-Tees electors who applied for but were refused a ballot paper by the close of poll.

#### *Absent Voters*

11. The numbers of absent voters increased from the previous local elections in 2019 from 38,000 to 48,000. This increase is partially due to electors switching to a postal vote during COVID and the rise we experienced this year which we assume was linked to voter ID. Given the contested Parish elections, this resulted in excess of 58,000 postal vote packs being issued. Local elections saw 63% return and Parishes a 56.2% return. We also updated the postal vote opening procedure to build in further digital checks prior to packing the ballots for the verification and count. The new print supplier worked with us on improving the postal voting product. The rejection rate for absent voters failing to provide correct date of birth and signature was 2.5%, compared to 3% in 2019. All those electors who votes were rejected due their personal identifiers being incorrect will be notified and invited to update their personal identifiers.

#### *Staffing*

12. The recruitment of staff continues to prove very difficult. Corporate commitment to releasing staff for election duties is essential for the delivery of future elections. Given the widespread changes to the work in the polling stations, we used the Association of Electoral Administrators on-line training for all station staff and supplemented and reinforced this locally. Feedback from staff on the training was good and this enabled staff to feel comfortable with the new requirements they were implementing on the day.

#### *Support Services*

13. Support from other council services remains a critical element of delivering a successful election and early planning with communications, ICT, Care for Your Area and enforcement ensures successful delivery and helps services to plan their workload. These services continue to provide essential support and contribute to the smooth running of arrangements leading up to, during and after polling day.
14. Maintaining close links with all stakeholders during the election is imperative and this includes liaison with Parish clerks, suppliers, other agencies e.g. Police, candidates and agents and the electorate. Networking effectively across the sub-region, region and nationally also ensures we are proactive in our delivery of these services. This activity is built into our planning and early progression of these relationships supports the effective delivery of the election.
15. Liaison with the Police through our Single Point of Contact (SPOC) allows us to discuss security and integrity issues in a timely manner and facilitates the development of a risk assessment to identify and address potential concerns about electoral malpractice, thereby complying with EC advice. Prior to every electoral event, our Integrity Plan is reviewed and shared with our SPOC.

16. There were various allegations of electoral offences raised by candidates/ agents about the conduct of other candidates during the local election campaigns and these were referred to the SPOC for investigation. Complaints were mainly concerned with imprints, false statements in leaflets and inappropriate use of the Council address. Referrals resulted in advice being shared with candidates and agents and no matters remain outstanding.

#### *Quality Checks*

17. The overall nature of the elections process is manual with numerous elements in the process subject to human error. Therefore, all processes are actively reviewed and software and delivery methods developed to eradicate opportunity for such errors. Where this is not possible, dual control checking is in place alongside checking data from different sources.
18. Finally, successful delivery of the elections was testament to the knowledge, skills and dedication of the electoral team whose proactive engagement with the legislative changes was essential to the smooth running of the elections.

### **FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS**

19. The next scheduled elections are the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and Tees Valley Mayoral Elections in May 2024. Stockton will again be the lead for these elections and preliminary planning work will commence shortly. In addition, the next Parliamentary Elections will need to be held by 28 January 2025. It is likely that the Parliamentary elections will be on new boundaries and in Stockton's case, constituency boundaries will be shared with Middlesbrough and Darlington.

### **ELECTIONS ACT 2022**

20. Further changes to be implemented from the Elections Act 2022 ahead of the 2024 polls and beyond are set out below.
21. Firstly, changes to the postal voting application rules are expected to be implemented by October 2023. These changes will require voters to re-apply every three years. It is estimated that 25,000 postal voters will need to renew their postal vote in January 2024 as a result of the changes. The introduction of online applications for postal votes and the requirement for a voter's identity to be checked as part of the process will also be introduced for all application methods.
22. Secondly, there will changes to the postal voting handling rules expected to be implemented by December 2023. This change will limit who can hand in a postal vote to, only the voter, family member or designated carer. Voters will not be allowed to hand in more than five postal ballot packs (in addition to their own), and there will be requirement for the postal votes to be rejected if they are not handed in in accordance with the new requirements.
23. There are also planned changes to the proxy vote rules which are expected in October 2023. This will reduce the number of people an individual can be proxy for to two people, no matter the relationship. The exception to this is anyone who is voting of behalf of UK voters who live overseas, as they can act as a proxy for up to four people. Proxy voters will also be able to apply online and will also be subject to the new requirement for an identity check to be completed (except for emergency proxies).
24. From January 2024, British citizens living overseas, will no longer have a 15-year limit on their voting rights and the registration period will change from a one-year renewal to a three-year renewal period. So, any British citizen living abroad who has previously lived in or been registered to vote in the UK, will have the right to vote at UK Parliamentary elections.

25. Finally, from June 2024 the act removes the right for some EU citizens to vote and stand as a candidate in certain elections in England and Northern Ireland. The changes apply to local elections in England and Northern Ireland, Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and elections for Police and Crime Commissioner in England and Wales.

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**Chief Executive**  
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## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO CABINET

13 JULY 2023

### REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

## CABINET DECISION

**Leader of the Council - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook**

### **MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Council is committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in the delivery of its services and corporate activities. The Council recognises that modern slavery and human trafficking remain a hidden blight on our society and that the Council has a responsibility to be vigilant in spotting associated risks and to strive to ensure that its supply chains are free from modern slavery and human trafficking at any level.

This Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement details the steps the Council has taken to understand potential modern slavery and human trafficking risks related to its business and the measures adopted with the aim of ensuring that these offences are not committed through the delivery of services or via supply chains

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS**

This Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement includes the Council's commitment to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking and presents an action plan to be delivered to reduce the associated risks.

Section 52 of the Act imposes a duty on public authorities, including district councils, to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of modern slavery or human trafficking.

Section 54 of the Act imposes a legal duty on commercial organisations, which supply goods and/or services from or to the United Kingdom and have a global turnover of more than £36 million, to publish a modern slavery and human trafficking statement each financial year.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet approves the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement in Annex 1.

## **DETAIL**

### **What is modern slavery?**

1. Modern slavery and human trafficking include the following offences:
  - slavery, where ownership is exercised over a person
  - servitude, where a person is obliged to provide services imposed by coercion
  - forced or compulsory labour, which involves work extracted under the menace of penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily
  - human trafficking, which involves the movement of people by means such as force fraud, coercion or deception with the aim of exploiting them

### **The Modern Slavery Act 2015**

2. To tackle these crimes, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the Act) was introduced. The Act consolidates and clarifies modern slavery and human trafficking offences; toughens penalties and prosecution; and introduces greater support and protection for victims.
3. Section 54 – Transparency in Supply Chains Provision of the Act requires commercial entities with an annual turnover of £36m or more to report annually on their actions to identify, prevent and mitigate modern slavery and human trafficking in their supply chain through a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. The statement must be included on the entity's website and the Government's Modern slavery and Human Trafficking Statement Registry.
4. Councils are currently under no legal obligation to publish statements in compliance with Section 54 provision, but this is soon to change. New rules now require all public bodies with a budget of £36m or more to regularly report on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in their supply chains.
5. Procurement of services is an important part of councils' expenditure with local government third party revenue expenditure totalling around £60 billion a year. Councils are therefore uniquely placed to manage the risks of modern slavery.

### **The Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement**

6. The statement is attached at Appendix A and includes details of how the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking are currently managed both within the Council and its supply chain and further actions to be implemented this financial year to reduce the risk further.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7. Actions identified within this report are either statutory requirements or require relatively low resource or capacity input from the teams identified.
8. A proactive, coordinated response to the threat of modern slavery and human trafficking will help to reduce future costs that might be associated with inaction, such as providing



for the needs of more victims or terminating contracts where it has been discovered that Modern slavery and human trafficking is taking place within supply chains.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. Modern slavery Act 2015 requires that all large organisation with an annual turnover of more than £36m must undertake effective due diligence in procurement and report upon this in an annual Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. There has been a significant increase in prosecutions for non-compliance in recent years, as well as organisations being 'named and shamed'. This Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement provides a set of actions to report activity against in future years, helping to ensure that this duty is met.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

10. There are also a number of risks to the organisation that are associated with failure to prepare for and respond effectively to potential or actual modern slavery and human trafficking.
11. Modern slavery and human trafficking cases can be high-profile and attract considerable media interest. Cases where victims are improperly supported or should have been identified at an earlier point have the potential to cause significant reputational damage.
12. Coordinated, strategic action across the Council to tackle and protect against modern slavery and human trafficking provides a range of opportunities to both strengthen the business and also to help protect people who may be vulnerable to exploitation.



## Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

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### Contents

1. About Stockton Borough Council
2. The Council's responsibility
3. About this statement
4. Our activity
5. Our supply chains
6. How we will manage the Modern Slavery risk in supply chains
7. Action plan
8. Useful links

### 1. About Stockton Borough Council

Stockton Borough Council (SBC) serves a growing population of 196,600 (source: ONS 2021). As a council, we provide a wide range of services to residents, both directly and through agreements with organisations who deliver on our behalf.

The Council employs over 3000 people and spends circa £200m/year on contracts and services, in order to deliver the Council Plan. Examples of services we buy include social care, cleaning, catering, refuse collections, construction, clothing, energy, vehicles, specialist consultancy support, electronic equipment, and IT software.

### 2. The Council's responsibility

The Council recognises that it has a responsibility to take a robust approach to modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern slavery is a crime resulting in an abhorrent abuse of human rights. It is constituted in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 by the offences of 'slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour' and 'human trafficking'.

The Council has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of modern slavery and human trafficking in any part of the business or supply chains. The Council is responsible for ensuring that any activity as an employer and service provider safeguards people from this risk. As commissioner of activity delivered on our behalf, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that suppliers and service providers can evidence that they are actively mitigating risks of modern slavery and human trafficking in their own business and supply chains. The Council also has a duty to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, in accordance with Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

### **3. About this statement**

This statement covers the activities of the Council and covers direct employees of the Council, agency workers engaged through the Council, services delivered on behalf of the Council by third party organisations and in the Council's supply chains.

This statement describes the steps the Council will take to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in the organisation and supply chains. It includes activity to be delivered by the Procurement Team, when entering into and managing contracts on behalf of the council. It also provides links to Council policies and other useful information.

Finally, it sets out our next steps for 2023/2024, describing how we plan to improve our processes.

### **4. Our activity**

Whilst the greatest modern slavery and human trafficking risk lies within the supply chain, the Council is alert to these risks both within the organisation itself and externally within the Borough.

Our trained safeguarding officers support staff across the Council to identify and respond to safeguarding issues which may include modern slavery and human trafficking. A modern slavery pathway has been introduced by the Teeswide Adult Safeguarding Board to ensure those found in modern slavery and human trafficking are protected and supported.

<https://www.tsab.org.uk/>

Council officers within regulatory and civic enforcement roles are alert to modern slavery and human trafficking and can recognise and refer for investigation.

The Council's recruitment processes are transparent and reviewed regularly. They include procedures for vetting new employees, which ensures they can confirm their identities and qualifications, and all workers are paid directly into an appropriate personal bank account. To comply with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, all prospective employees are asked to supply evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK. References are also requested and followed up. <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/media/341513/recruitment-policy-august-2021.pdf>

The Council encourages its employees to report any concerns related to the direct activities or the supply chains of the Council. The Confidential Reporting Policy is designed to make it easy for employees to make disclosures, without fear of retaliation and includes issues of possible fraud, corruption, exploitation sexual or physical abuse of clients.

<https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/employee-support-and-benefits/employee-engagement/confidential-reporting/>

The Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy includes the Council's commitment to activity that meets legal duties, outlines the Council's commitment to equal opportunities, valuing diversity and inclusion, creating a safe and inclusive working environment free from unlawful and unfair discrimination. <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/media/341107/equality-diversity-inclusion-policy-2022.pdf>

### **5. Our supply chains**

Stockton Borough Council operates within the United Kingdom, which is considered at low risk of modern slavery and human trafficking, relative to other parts of the world. While the Council has a high level of confidence that policies and processes are in place to protect

against risks of modern slavery and human trafficking in the supply chains with regards to Tier 1 suppliers, it is more difficult to be confident about links further up the supply chain. Higher risk categories identified by the procurement team include: cleaning, construction (particularly demolition, asbestos removal, groundworks, clearance/stripping work), clothing manufacture (particularly involving imported textiles), security (manned guards), domestic furniture supply and manufacture, environmental (waste management, recycling), horticultural (grounds maintenance and plant nurseries), some social care/personal services (including taxis), recruitment/agency staff provision and dry imported foods (rice, cocoa, etc).

SBC is committed to ensuring that its suppliers adhere to the highest standards of ethics and to ensure that suppliers treat their workers with dignity and respect and in accordance with the requirements set out in employment legislation. Whilst a high proportion of suppliers have a presence within the North-East, the Council's supply chains stretch across the world. Raw materials and components can come from sources anywhere in the world and there may be links in the supply chain which could be involved in modern slavery and human trafficking. As the customer, the Council will make clear to our suppliers, and those wishing to do business with us, that they are required to provide confirmation that they are compliant with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. They will also be required to confirm their subcontractors and suppliers comply with the act.

The Council spends around £200m each year on supplies, services and works. This large and varied supply chain is majority based in the UK, but the Council understands that supply chains for these contracts may include countries where there is a higher risk of modern slavery and human trafficking. The Council also understands that certain types of contract activity may present greater risk to employees of exploitation, so the Council plans and manages contracts in categories, enabling better identification and risk mitigation in supply chains and production methods.

The Council's Constitution includes Contract Procedure Rules. These internal regulations govern processes for the way the Council buys supplies, services and works.

<https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/services/corporate-services/procurement-and-governance/strategic-procurement/procurement-regulations-inc-contract-procedure-rules/>

The Council has a contract with an external agency for temporary/ interim staff to deploy within the Council and meet service needs. The Agency has robust procedures in place to check identity and eligibility to work, and a process to enable payment of salary directly into an appropriate personal bank account.

## **6. How we manage the modern slavery and human trafficking risk in supply chains**

This council will continue to operate in a responsible manner by adhering to legal obligations prescribed by the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in its procurement activities. Stockton Borough Council will continue to:

- Require all suppliers of goods and services to comply with all applicable laws, statutes, regulations [and codes], including but not limited to, the Modern Slavery Act 2015, their own anti-slavery policy (where applicable) and this Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.
- Requires its service providers engaged in 'regulated activity' for children and adults to have safeguarding policies, procedures and training in place and to comply with the reporting procedures in the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- Challenge any abnormally low-cost tenders to ensure they do not rely upon the potential contractor practising modern slavery and human trafficking
- Publicise its Whistleblowing/ Confidential Reporting Policy for staff to report on any suspected examples of modern slavery and human trafficking.

- Require our contractors to adopt a Whistleblowing/Confidential Reporting Policy which enables their staff to report on any suspected examples of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Refer for investigation via the National Crime Agency's national referral mechanism any of its contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Consider ways to increase awareness within the Council, and to ensure a high level of understanding of the risks involved with modern slavery and human trafficking in our supply chains and in our business.
- Ensure those officers in the Council's Procurement Team, who are Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) members, undertake specific training related to modern slavery and human trafficking in supply chains, through the CIPS online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply.
- Build mitigation measures into the tender process and contract terms & conditions where risks are identified, which will allow for termination of the contract if these clauses are breached.
- Publish details of all spend over £500 for transparency purposes, showing was paid, how much and what it was for.

## 7. Action Plan

The Council will implement the following actions during 2023/24: The Council will:

- Introduce a new pre-tender modern slavery and human trafficking risk assessment to ensure appropriate identification of high-risk contracts.
- Adopt the new Government Crown Commercial Service's standard selection questionnaire (SQ). Part 3 of the SQ includes a section on the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Identify additional appropriate and proportionate activity during the tender process to ensure bidders evidence their compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This could also include asking specific questions during tender evaluation about how a bidder will manage their modern slavery and human trafficking risk.
- When appropriate, include additional clauses in contract terms and conditions in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking.
- When appropriate, include assessment of how modern slavery and human trafficking risks are managed by contractors via contract management.
- Signpost other officers not members of CIPS but whom have a responsibility for procurement to the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board modern slavery and human trafficking training.
- Signpost other officers who may be in a position to identify modern slavery and human trafficking in the course of their work to the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board modern slavery and human trafficking training.
- Publish the National Referral Mechanism guidance on the Council's website which describes how to identify possible indicators of modern slavery and human trafficking and how to report concerns through this National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Review this statement annually, to identify any further actions required to manage the modern slavery and human trafficking risk.

## 8. Useful Links:

[Modern Slavery Helpline](#)  
[National Referral Mechanism Guidance](#)  
[National Crime Agency](#)  
[Anti Slavery International](#)  
[Stop the Traffik](#)

This Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement is approved by the Council's Corporate Management Team and endorsed by the Cabinet. It will be reviewed and updated as necessary and published on an annual basis.

This Statement has been approved by:

Signed:	Date:
Name in capitals:	Designation:
(on behalf of the Corporate Management Team)	

Signed:	Date:
Name in capitals:	Designation:
(Cabinet Member)	



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## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **REPORT TO CABINET**

**13 July 2023**

### **REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

## **CABINET DECISION**

### **Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook**

### **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report in the Public Interest following Investigation Reference 22 010 732**

#### **SUMMARY**

On 30 May 2023 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman wrote to the Chief Executive to confirm that after consideration of a complaint they had received, they have decided to issue their findings as a public interest report. The Ombudsman can issue a public interest report where they think it is important to raise awareness of an investigation, because of its seriousness and significance and that by highlighting the learning from complaints, it can help to improve services for others.

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)**

The purpose of this report is to ensure elected members are notified of the reasons for, and outcomes of, the Investigation Reference 22 010 732, and the actions and recommendations connected with it, as required by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet agrees to consider the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Report in the Public Interest following Investigation Reference 22 010 732, and to seek assurances that all recommendations contained within it will be fully implemented.

#### **DETAIL**

1. The case relates to a young adult (Mr Y) with an Education Health and Care Plan ("EHCP") who was entitled to transport to and from college free of charge. Initially free transport was provided in shared transport, paid for by the Council. The arrangement broke down due to the Mr Y's anxiety, because of this his mother (Ms X) considered the transport provided as unsuitable.
2. The Council offered an alternative option to Mr Y, by offering to arrange Independent Travel Training. Ms X complained and following Stage 1 of the Council's complaint process the option of transport on a dedicated college vehicle was offered. The Council noted that Mr Y had accessed transport to his previous college and school for several years in a shared vehicle. Ms X did not consider this suitable for Mr Y.
3. Ms X complained at stage 2 of the Council complaint process, the Council upheld its previous decision, Ms X then complained to the Ombudsman that the Council had refused to pay costs she incurred taking her son, Mr Y, to college from September 2019 to the end of

summer term 2022 and delayed considering her appeal. Ms X says she suffered financially and had to give up work.

4. In reviewing her complaint, the Ombudsman found that the Council did not properly consider Ms X's concerns and did not make other suitable arrangements for Mr Y's transport. The Ombudsman found the Council's post-16 transport policy was not in line with its statutory duties. The Ombudsman notes that the Council should have provided transport free of charge if it considered transport necessary, but instead it required a contribution from the mother.

5. The Ombudsman also criticised the delays by the Council in addressing the mother's concerns. The Ombudsman's investigation also found the Council's appeals process did not fully follow statutory and good practice guidance in that it did not offer a hearing at stage two of the complaints process, and then did not signpost people who were not happy to the Ombudsman. Additionally, the Ombudsman criticised the Council for poor record keeping in particular the Ombudsman identified problems in accessing information after staff had left employment with the Council as the service did not have a central system for recording decisions.

6. The Ombudsman made the following recommendations to remedy the injustice caused (within three months of the Ombudsman Report) the Council:

- a) provides Ms X with a further apology;
- b) pays Ms X £2,632.50 to reimburse fuel costs;
- c) pays Ms X £500 for distress and uncertainty;
- d) pays Ms X £300 for time and trouble;
- e) amends its stage 1 letter template to include information on how to escalate to stage 2;
- f) amends its stage 2 letter template to include a referral to us [the Ombudsman];
- g) amends its Post 16 transport policy to ensure it addresses its adult duty correctly and to ensure its appeal process is in line with statutory guidance; that is to:
  - i) make clear that where it decides it necessary to make transport arrangements for adults or relevant young adults with an EHCP under section 508F of the Education Act 1996, such transport will be free of charge;
  - ii) remove any requirement to pay a charge or contribution where s508F applies;
  - iii) allow for a hearing with verbal representations at stage 2 of the appeal process;
  - iv) signpost to the Ombudsman.
- h) provides training/guidance to those staff responsible for school transport on its new policy and reminds them to give clear evidence-based reasons for decisions; and
- i) amends its processes to ensure it can access records of school transport decisions even if decision-makers leave the Council.

7. The Ombudsman requires that the Council discuss their findings and recommendations at a high decision-making level of elected members, which for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is Cabinet.

8. The Council have accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations in full and the actions to improve processes and policies to ensure other young adults and their families are treated fairly and in line with statutory and good practice guidance will all be fully completed within the three-month timeline.

9. The Ombudsman completed the investigation into this complaint by issuing a report because it was considered to be in the public interest to do so, given the significant injustice caused to the complainant, and because it was considered to be a significant topical issue.

10. To comply with requirements surrounding a Report in the Public Interest, a notice is required to be put in two local newspapers advising of the existence of the report and how a copy could be obtained by any member of the public. A physical copy will be available through the Customer Service access point at the main library.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

11. A Community Impact Assessment is not required to support the implementation of these recommendations.

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

12. There are no direct Corporate Parenting Implications as a result of this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

13. The total amount payable as set out in this report of £3,432.50. This will be funded from the transport service budget. This cost is not recurrent and there is no impact on the MTFP.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

14. Under the Local Government Act 1974, the Ombudsman has the power to investigate the complaint and to issue a report where there has been maladministration causing injustice. The Ombudsman has the power to make recommendations to the Council on how to improve its services and to put things right for the complainant.

15. On receiving a report in the public interest from the Ombudsman, the Council is required to give public notice in two local newspapers and make the report available to inspect by the public at the Council's offices.

16. An Ombudsman's report should not normally name or identify any person. Therefore, the young adult and his mother are referred to as 'Mr Y' and 'Ms X' and officers are not identified by name.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

17. The proposed actions in response to the Ombudsman's report are categorised as low medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to ensure they are implemented.

### **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

18. The proposals do not have an impact on any specific wards.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

19. Post 16 transport policy.

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**Post Title:** Monitoring Officer (Director of Corporate Services)  
**Telephone No:** 01642 527003  
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**Report by the Local Government and Social Care  
Ombudsman**

**Investigation into a complaint about  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
(reference number: 22 010 732)**

**30 May 2023**

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## The Ombudsman's role

For almost 50 years we have independently and impartially investigated complaints about councils and other organisations in our jurisdiction. If we decide to investigate, we look at whether organisations have made decisions the right way. Where we find fault has caused injustice, we can recommend actions to put things right, which are proportionate, appropriate and reasonable based on all the facts of the complaint. We can also identify service improvements so similar problems don't happen again. Our service is free.

We cannot force organisations to follow our recommendations, but they almost always do. Some of the things we might ask an organisation to do are:

- > apologise
- > pay a financial remedy
- > improve its procedures so similar problems don't happen again.

We publish public interest reports to raise awareness of significant issues, encourage scrutiny of local services and hold organisations to account.

Section 30 of the 1974 Local Government Act says that a report should not normally name or identify any person. The people involved in this complaint are referred to by a letter or job role.

### Key to names used

Ms X	The complainant
Mr Y	Her son

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## Report summary

### Education and Children's services

Ms X complained the Council refused to cover transport costs for her son, Mr Y, to attend college and delayed considering her appeal, causing financial loss and distress.

### Finding

We have found fault causing injustice and made recommendations.

### Recommendations

The Council must consider the report and confirm within three months the action it has taken or proposes to take. The Council should consider the report at its full Council, Cabinet or other appropriately delegated committee of elected members and we will require evidence of this. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 31(2), as amended*)

To remedy the injustice caused we recommend, within three months of the date of this report, the Council:

- provides Ms X with a further apology;
- pays Ms X £2,632.50 to reimburse fuel costs;
- pays Ms X £500 for distress and uncertainty;
- pays Ms X £300 for time and trouble;
- amends its stage 1 letter template to include information on how to escalate to stage 2;
- amends its stage 2 letter template to include a referral to us;
- amends its Post 16 transport policy to ensure it addresses its adult duty correctly and to ensure its appeal process is in line with statutory guidance; that is to:
  1. make clear that where it decides it necessary to make transport arrangements for adults or relevant young adults with an EHCP under section 508F of the Education Act 1996, such transport will be free of charge;
  2. remove any requirement to pay a charge or contribution where s508F applies;
  3. allow for a hearing with verbal representations at stage 2 of the appeal process;
  4. signpost to the Ombudsman.
- provides training/guidance to those staff responsible for school transport on its new policy and reminds them to give clear evidence-based reasons for decisions; and
- amends its processes to ensure it can access records of school transport decisions even if decision-makers leave the Council.

The Council has accepted these recommendations.

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## The complaint

1. Ms X complained the Council refused to pay costs she incurred taking her son, Mr Y, to college from September 2019 to the end of summer term 2022 and delayed considering her appeal. Ms X says she suffered financially and had to give up work.

## Legal and administrative background

### The Ombudsman's role and powers

2. We investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this report, we have used the word 'fault' to refer to these. We must also consider whether any fault has had an adverse impact on the person making the complaint. We refer to this as 'injustice'. If there has been fault which has caused an injustice, we may suggest a remedy. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26(1) and 26A(1), as amended*)
3. We cannot investigate late complaints unless we decide there are good reasons. Late complaints are when someone takes more than 12 months to complain to us about something a council has done. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26B and 34D, as amended*)
4. Ms X's complaint to us is out of time however, as any fault and injustice was ongoing until recently, we consider there is good reason to investigate.
5. Under the information sharing agreement between the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), we will share this decision with Ofsted.

### Adult transport duty

6. Councils have a duty under section 508F of the Education Act 1996 to make such arrangements for the provision of transport as they consider necessary in respect of:
  - adults (i.e. those who are aged 19 or over) for the purpose of facilitating their attendance at maintained or assisted further or higher education institutions; and
  - relevant young adults with an Education Health and Care Plan ("EHCP") for the purpose of facilitating their attendance at institutions where they are receiving education or training outside the further and higher education sectors. For those young adults, the council's duty only applies where it has secured both the provision of education or training and the provision of boarding accommodation.
7. The adult transport duty applies only to young people who are attending a course which they started after their 19th birthday, including those with EHCPs.
8. Where the council decides it is necessary to make arrangements, any transport provided must be free.
9. *"This [decision about what is necessary] is not a pure discretion. Although the question of what is necessary is a matter for [councils], in deciding that question they must exercise their judgment judiciously and in good faith. If they come to the conclusion that it is necessary, they must make the necessary arrangements and the transportation must be free of charge."* (*Staffordshire County Council v JM (2016 WL 03208801)*)



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10. Where a council decides it is not necessary to provide transport, it has discretion to pay all or part of the reasonable travelling expenses for the student.
  11. An “adult” means a person who is neither a child nor a person of sixth form age.
  12. Councils also have a duty under section 508G to prepare a transport policy statement setting out any transport or other arrangements it proposes to make for “relevant young adults”.

### **Council’s transport policy**

13. We asked the Council for a copy of its transport policy in effect in 2019 as applied to those aged 19 or over. It provided a copy of its Post 16 transport policy 2019/20 and said this also applied to those over 19 with an EHCP.
14. We have only referred to sections relevant to this complaint.
15. Councils do not have to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement.
16. Transport assistance is discretionary and subject to the availability of resources and to an individual student meeting the relevant eligibility criteria. There is a charge for post 16 transport which is set at £100 a term.
17. The policy outlines the discretionary assistance available. This includes independent travel training.
18. The Council will consider individual circumstances for those young people with learning and physical difficulties who apply for transport over the age of 19 years. It would be likely that in most cases, they will be referred to Health and Social Care for an assessment. If assistance is agreed, a contribution towards the transport would be required.
19. The Council’s current policy (for 2023/24) is on its website. This mirrors the previous policy in respect of the assistance available to those with learning and physical difficulties who apply for transport over the age of 19 years.
20. Neither policy explains if the Council decides it is necessary to provide transport under the adult duty this will be free of charge.

### **Appeals**

21. The Council has a two stage appeals process under both its previous and current policy.
  - Stage 1: review by a senior officer within 20 working days, providing a decision with reasons and information about how to go to stage 2.
  - Stage 2: review by an independent appeal panel within 40 working days, providing a decision with reasons and information about how to go to the Secretary of State if unhappy.
22. The statutory guidance sets out a two stage appeals process, this includes:
  - a hearing at stage 2, allowing the parent to make verbal representations; and
  - a recommendation councils make clear there is a right of complaint to us.

### **Principles of good administrative practice**

23. In 2018 we published a [guidance document](#) setting out the standards we expect from bodies in jurisdiction. This includes the following.

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- Taking reasonable, timely decisions, based on all relevant considerations.
  - Stating the criteria for decision making and giving reasons for decisions.
  - Keeping proper and appropriate records.

## **How we considered this complaint**

24. We produced this report after speaking to the complainant and examining relevant documents provided by the complainant and the Council.
25. We gave the complainant and the Council a confidential draft of this report and invited their comments. The comments received were taken into account before the report was finalised.

## **What we found**

### **What happened**

#### **Background**

26. When we spoke to Ms X she explained the Council had always provided transport for her son to attend school or college at its own cost. She said the Council first arranged a college placement when her son was 18 but later found this was the wrong college and course. It then arranged another college placement for her son in September 2018, when her son was 19. It also provided transport to and from college. Ms X says her son then continued at this college moving through different levels of a course until he finished in summer 2022.

#### **This complaint**

27. On 9 and 20 September 2019 Ms X told the Council the shared taxi it had arranged for her son was no longer suitable. He was fearful and anxious getting the taxi and travelling with other people; he was unable to continue to use it. She explained she was now taking him to and from college and wanted the Council to pay her expenses.
28. On 24 August 2022 the Council wrote to Ms X apologising for its delay. It explained the COVID-19 pandemic was a factor but should not have resulted in such a delay. It said it had initially offered Independent Travel Training (“ITT”) to Mr Y, which Ms X did not consider suitable. Therefore, it offered Mr Y transport to and from college. Ms X did not accept this offer. She gave reasons for refusal, but this offer remained available. The Council would not contribute to her fuel costs because an offer of transport was available, and Mr Y had not been disadvantaged as she took him to college. It said Ms X could go to a stage 2 appeal if she remained unhappy.
29. Ms X wrote further to the Council.
  - It had not given any information on how to appeal.
  - It had delayed dealing with her appeal causing injustice.
  - ITT was not suitable and the Council agreed to provide transport however that transport was not suitable.
  - The Council had a duty to ensure her son could access college.
  - He would not have been able to access college unless she took him.
30. The Council responded at stage 2. In summary.

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- It upheld its previous decision.
  - It considered information from Ms X as to why ITT was unsuitable. It then agreed to provide transport for Mr Y to and from college.
  - In September 2019 Ms X raised concerns. She said she would take her son and requested expenses. However other options could have been explored to help her son in using the transport offered.
  - A social care assessment was considered but both parties agreed this would not help.
  - It would not agree to an additional cost by way of fuel contribution over and above the transport offered, as the latter was already offered outside of its usual funding.
  - Ms X could complain to the Secretary of State if she remained unhappy.
31. Ms X then contacted us. She explained she first raised concerns with the Council in September 2019 but despite chasing had not received a response until recently.
32. In response to our enquiries the Council confirmed Mr Y had an EHCP and started a college course secured by the Council after his 19th Birthday. It agreed s508F of the Education Act 1996 applied. However, it also had regard to s509AB 3, s509AB 3c and s509AB 3d in relation to the costs of transport. However, we note these sections only apply to learners of sixth form age.
33. We asked the Council for records it made at the time of its decision to offer transport in September 2019. It said its records were limited as an officer had left and IT confirmed they could no longer access their emails.
34. The Council explained the following.
- After offering ITT, Ms X explained Mr Y would struggle with this and asked for long-term transport.
  - It then offered transport on a dedicated college vehicle which remained available throughout Mr Y's time at college. This was a 2.5 mile, 10 minute journey.
  - Mr Y accessed transport to his previous college and school for several years on a shared vehicle.
35. The Council also said it offers any mileage allowance in line with the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) set by the Government of 45p a mile while the student is in the vehicle.

## Conclusions

36. The Council's Post 16 transport policy (both past and current) are not in line with the Council's statutory duties. Where the Council considers it necessary to make transport arrangements for adults it must provide any transport free of charge. However, its policy says a contribution is required. This is fault. The Council's response to our enquiries suggests it remains unaware of its duties in this respect. This therefore appears to be a systemic issue which may cause injustice if not addressed.
37. The Council's appeals process (both past and current) is not in line with statutory guidance. The Council has not provided for a hearing at stage 2 and it does not refer complainants to us. This is fault. This did not cause injustice to Ms X or Mr Y

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- but it may have caused injustice to others. We recognise the guidance is not mandatory however councils need to have good reason for departing from it.
38. We expect councils to keep records of their decisions and reasoning. However, the Council is unable to provide records of its decision to provide transport to Mr Y in September 2019. This is fault. This did not cause injustice to Ms X or Mr Y, but it could affect others. The Council should have a system allowing it to access records even after staff have left, for example by keeping records centrally.
  39. We are satisfied from the documents we have seen that the Council decided it was necessary to provide transport for Mr Y to and from college and it agreed to provide a shared vehicle at its own cost. When Ms X said this transport was no longer suitable the Council should have considered this and either decided it was suitable or made other arrangements.
  40. The documents provided in the Council's response to a draft report show some consideration of Ms X's concerns, but the Council did not address each point raised. We consider there was fault in the decision making which may have affected the decision outcome.
  41. The Council delayed addressing Ms X's concerns from September 2019 to February 2020 and then from March 2020 to August 2022. This is fault. We acknowledge Council resources were stretched during the COVID-19 pandemic however this level of delay is not justified. Ms X suffered distress and uncertainty as to whether she would recover her costs. She was also put to time and trouble chasing a response. This is injustice.
  42. At stage 1 the Council did not show it had considered Ms X's points that the transport offered was unsuitable and it did not explain how to escalate to stage 2. This is fault. Ms X suffered distress and uncertainty. This is injustice.
  43. At stage 2 the Council still did not show it had considered Ms X's points that its offer was unsuitable. It recognised options could have been explored at the time to improve its offer yet did not acknowledge it took little or no action to do so. This is fault. Ms X suffered distress and uncertainty. This is injustice.
  44. Had the Council addressed Ms X's concerns in full in either September 2019 or March 2020, as it should have done, we are satisfied it would have at least taken steps to address/improve the suitability of its offer so that Mr Y could continue to travel at the Council's cost. However, the Council took no substantive action for almost three years leaving Ms X to incur costs taking her son herself. This is fault causing injustice. Ms X made four journeys per day during term time over three years. Based on the Council's information and taking into account the usual mileage allowance, we calculate Ms X's fuel costs as £2,632.50 (2.5miles x 4 journeys x £0.45 per journey x 195 days per year x 3 years). While we acknowledge the Council's policy is to pay mileage only when the student is in the car, Ms X would not have incurred any costs but for the Council's fault. It is therefore appropriate for the Council to reimburse her for all four legs of her journey.
  45. We are satisfied Ms X was put to time and inconvenience in having to transport her son and we acknowledge the impact of the financial loss. This is further injustice. However, we cannot say Ms X had to give up work or took early retirement due to the Council's fault, as other factors were likely involved in those decisions.

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46. In response to a draft report Ms X said the Council was wrong to suggest the 2.5 mile journey from home to school took just ten minutes. The journey on the Council's shared transport took 45 minutes due to all the pick ups, causing her son distress.
47. In comments on a draft report the Council made the following comments.
- It had found further records. We note this includes:
    1. an enquiry from Ms X's local MP on 24 January 2020, chasing a response to Ms X's query of September 2019;
    2. a response from the Council to the MP's office on 10 February 2020. This outlined: the Council first offered ITT; Ms X then explained why Mr Y could not undertake this; it then offered a seat on its bus until he could take the ITT assessment. It considered Mr Y's fears of accessing the wrong bus could be addressed through driver reassurance. As both offers had been refused it would not offer a fuel contribution. However, Ms X could appeal this decision;
    3. on 24 February 2020 Ms X raised the matter directly to the Council. She explained she did not refuse ITT rather she provided evidence to explain why Mr Y could not undertake this, but she did not receive a reply. The Council had underestimated Mr Y's fears and only commented on one of those she raised; overlooking his anxiety in travelling with others. She also raised further points for consideration;
    4. on 19 March 2020 the Council told Ms X it would address her concerns under its appeal process. However, it apologised that there would be some delay in responding due to the Coronavirus situation at that time.
  - The Council accepts it is unlawful to charge a contribution once it has determined that it is necessary to provide transport for adults. It would like to assure us that it does not require those eligible for transport to make a financial contribution and the charge referenced in its policy has not been actioned for any other person and so no injustice has been suffered.
  - The guidance recommends a hearing but this is not mandatory. Nonetheless, the Council is happy to amend its policy to make it consistent with the national picture and with guidance.
  - It accepts our recommendations and has now amended its Post 16 transport policy.
48. We welcome the Council's engagement and are pleased it has already taken action to amend its policy. However, on review we find the updated policy does not resolve all the fault identified. The Council has removed the £100 per term charge and now provides for verbal representations on appeal and signposts to us. However, the policy still does not make clear that where the Council considers transport is necessary for adults it will provide this free of charge. And it still says a contribution is required, as referred to at paragraphs 18 and 36 above.
49. We have made some changes to our report to take into account and address the new information provided. Though overall our findings and recommendations remain the same.

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## Recommendations

50. The Council must consider the report and confirm within three months the action it has taken or proposes to take. The Council should consider the report at its full Council, Cabinet or other appropriately delegated committee of elected members and we will require evidence of this. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 31(2), as amended*)
51. In addition to the requirements set out above the Council has agreed to take the following action to remedy the injustice identified in this report. Within three months of the date of this report the Council will:
- provide Ms X with a further apology;
  - pay Ms X £2,632.50 to reimburse fuel costs;
  - pay Ms X £500 for distress and uncertainty;
  - pay Ms X £300 for time and trouble;
  - amend its stage 1 letter template to include information on how to escalate to stage 2;
  - amend its stage 2 letter template to include a referral to us;
  - amend its Post 16 transport policy to ensure it addresses its adult duty correctly and to ensure its appeal process is in line with statutory guidance; that is to:
    1. make clear that where it decides it is necessary to make transport arrangements for adults or relevant young adults with an EHCP under section 508F of the Education Act 1996, such transport will be free of charge;
    2. remove any requirement to pay a charge or contribution where s508F applies;
    3. allow for a hearing with verbal representations at stage 2 of the appeal process;
    4. signpost to the Ombudsman.
  - provide training/guidance to those staff responsible for school transport on its new policy and remind them to give clear evidence-based reasons for decisions; and
  - amend its processes to ensure it can access records of school transport decisions even if decision-makers leave the Council.
52. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.

## Decision

53. We find the Council at fault because it did not properly consider Ms X's concerns about the transport offered and delayed considering her appeal by three years. The Council should take the actions specified in paragraphs 50 to 52 to remedy the injustice caused. The Council has accepted our recommendations and we have completed our investigation.

## AGENDA ITEM

## REPORT TO CABINET

13 JULY 2023

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### **CABINET INFORMATION ITEM**

**Lead Cabinet Member - Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook**

#### **XENTRALL ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

#### **SUMMARY**

This annual report allows Cabinet Members to review the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership and it will demonstrate how Xentrall has delivered savings across the board whilst continuing to improve performance and customer satisfaction.

#### **REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT**

To allow Members to receive information about the progress of the partnership and acknowledge the continuing success of Xentrall and the savings it has achieved over the fifteen years since it was formed.

#### **DETAIL**

1. Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership, was established in May 2008 and is now in its sixteenth year. The Xentrall services are:
  - ICT (strategy and operations)
  - Transactional HR (payroll, pensions, recruitment, sickness absence)
  - Transactional Finance (creditors, debtors, banking, schools finance)
  - Design & Print (professional buyer, in-house design and print)
2. The original business case identified a number of efficiencies and benefits to be delivered resulting in initial savings of £7.4m over the original ten-year period of the partnership. The successful partnership arrangement has delivered all these plus additional efficiencies and benefits and significant additional savings as reported to Members over previous years. At the same time the quality and performance of services have not been compromised but improved, with both customer and staff satisfaction increasing over the life of the partnership.
3. This is a significant achievement for a public/public partnership and it compares very well to other private sector partnerships many of which have failed over the same period or been brought back in-house and for a variety of reasons. Both Councils have benefited both financially and through a continued programme of service improvements brought throughout the lifetime of the partnership.

## **VALUE FOR MONEY AND PERFORMANCE**

4. Since the formation of the partnership in 2008, the financial situation in both Councils has changed significantly as a result of reductions in local government funding and more recently with high levels of inflation. Throughout, Xentrall has continued to support both Councils in achieving a balanced Medium-Term Financial Plan. This has mainly been achieved through staff savings resulting from more efficient ways of working across the four service areas, as well as cost reductions arising from partnership joint procurement.
5. To accompany previous cost reduction exercises, all of the Xentrall services used to take part in national benchmarking schemes to ensure that service quality was not compromised and to confirm that a balanced approach was used to measure improvements and success. At that time these comparators confirmed the low cost of the services provided by Xentrall. Maintaining service provision alongside the pressures of the pandemic meant that these benchmarking activities were paused, however, post-pandemic, these national programmes have now ceased. In the absence of this comparator, Xentrall services will continue to monitor service performance and will remain alert to any new benchmarking programmes, should they arise.
6. Xentrall is also subject to various internal and external audit regimes which also confirm the good performance and governance of its services. Fifty-one of the Xentrall control checks undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit team during the year have achieved a green assessment, with just one other check categorised as amber. In addition, the Xentrall ICT service achieved a full three-year recertification in both Information Security Management and Quality Management System ISO standards and also was recertified for continued access to the Government's Public Services Network (PSN).

## **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

7. As part of Xentrall's balanced scorecard approach to performance management, partnership-wide customer satisfaction surveys historically have been undertaken every two years, and these involve canvassing service users and managers across both Councils. In addition, each of the Xentrall services seeks customer feedback and satisfaction levels as part of their daily service operations e.g. an ICT call closure, or the take-on of a new academy's payroll. The main two-year survey was last completed in June 2020 and both this and the daily surveys confirm high levels of satisfaction, with the main survey showing our highest average customer satisfaction across Xentrall of 4.5 out of 5 (equivalent of 90% satisfaction). Post-pandemic, the resumption of this customer survey is planned for 2023/24.

## **SUCCESSION PLANNING**

8. 2022/23 was a very significant year in terms of changes to the Xentrall Management Team. The retirement of the Finance Manager, the HR Manager, and the ICT Projects & Applications Manager, meant the loss of possibly one hundred years combined experience in their respective professions within the Councils, and this could have been a significant risk to the partnership. This combined with the resignation of the other and most senior ICT Manager (ICT Strategy & Operations Manager) earlier in 2022 could have formed the perfect storm.
9. I am pleased to report however that through a combination of succession planning, effective recruitment, documented standards and procedures, and a timely, cooperative and effective handover, a smooth transition has taken place, which has not impacted Xentrall services. The new management team are settling into their lead roles very well. They are getting to grips with the daily challenges of our continued service provision, together with planning future service and team developments.



## **2022/23 OPPORTUNITIES TAKEN & EXTERNAL BUSINESS RETAINED**

10. Xentrall continues to explore new opportunities for external business as and when these arise, which is in-line with the partnership's objective of tactically growing the business. Following the pandemic, 2022/23 felt like a more normal year, with some movement on academies as academies join multi-academy trusts (twenty-two gains and fifteen losses), and other existing customers retained. A new two-year agreement has been reached with Stockton maintained schools for the bursary service. These customers include:
- a) All Xentrall services to the Tees Valley Combined Authority
  - b) Finance and HR services to the South Tees Development Corporation
  - c) ICT services and finance system to Tees Active Leisure Ltd
  - d) ICT services to the North East Purchasing Authority (NEPO)
  - e) ICT hosting services to Northumberland County Council
  - f) ICT services to Theatre Hullabaloo in Darlington
  - g) Payroll services for 149 academy payroll groups and Finance services to twelve academies/trusts
  - h) Payroll to Richmond Citizen Advice Bureau
  - i) Payroll to twelve Middlesbrough and six Redcar & Cleveland schools
  - j) Payroll and Employer Support to Direct Payment Clients at Stockton
  - k) Bursary service to Stockton schools
11. Xentrall generated external annual income of over £1m continues to form a significant part of the overall Xentrall financial model and thereby reduce the Xentrall funding required by both Authorities.

## **2022/23 STOCKTON & DARLINGTON ACHIEVEMENTS**

12. As well as providing essential services to our external customers and generating income, Xentrall continue to be a critical element in the continued effective functioning of both Councils. A snapshot of some of the Xentrall activities and achievements is shown below.

### **Xentrall HR**

- Maintained service delivery to over 150 individual payrolls encompassing more than 17,000 staff.
- Continued with ongoing support to both Councils in changes to reporting to allow the monitoring Covid-related absences.
- Processed the annual pay award at short notice in November 2022, for both teachers and the council employees, which included back-pay.
- Year-end processing completed successfully within the required deadlines.
- Produced major reports required for; School Workforce Census, Social Work England and Gender Pay Gap.
- Procured a contract to allow the migration of the HR/Payroll system to the cloud version as the on-premise application will no longer be developed or supported by the supplier.
- Began project work on the implementation and migration to the cloud system.
- Implemented the use of document storage and overtime payments via the MyHR app to all schools and academies.
- Progress made with the configuration of 'My Team Changes', allowing the completion of leaver forms by managers through the MyHR app.

### **Xentrall Design & Print**

- Continued to support all service areas across both Councils by playing a vital role helping to support all the significant events throughout the year. All whilst managing a lack of available materials in the market and associated increase in costs. A snapshot of events being:

- Darlington Hippodrome Theatre: supporting marketing and signage material including the 'What's on' brochure and the key pantomime building window covers.
- Queen's Jubilee Celebrations, including promotional activities across both Councils (including general messages and advertisements along with bunting, party packs, plates, cups, napkins, bags and so on).
- Town Centre Development messaging across Stockton's six towns and Darlington (for key sites such as Stockton Swallow Hotel/Castlegate, Yarm Town Hall and Darlington Head of Steam Railway Museum and Darlington Library).
- SIRF (Stockton International Riverside Festival).
- Death of Queen Elizabeth II: key messaging in digital and print formats, garden of remembrance signage.
- 'Meet Mike' Stockton's new Chief Executive communication campaign.
- Darlington Fireworks.
- Stockton Sparkles and Norton Advent Trail.
- Darlington Dolphin Centre work to support marketing and signage material including the likes of 'Gym refurbishment' and main 'Pool redevelopment and closure'.
- Electoral voter information change to now require 'Photo ID to vote'.
- Alongside these prominent events, Design & Print have produced many day-to-day, but still vital items such as; Stockton Customer Service Awards, 1000s of Bus Stop Timetables across both Boroughs, Stockton's Council Tax Annual Billing printing, Darlington's Northumbria In Bloom, along with the continued production of Stockton-on-Tees News and One Darlington magazines and Learning and Skills prospectuses at both Councils.
- Daily print jobs also include; daily post, re-directional or volume copier/print work, Stockton agenda copying, payslips, bus passes, resident permits, Darlington garden waste packs and so on.

### **Xentrall Finance**

- Achieved year-end processing, system changes and reconciliations on Business World On (aka Agresso) to deadlines set by both Councils.
- New software implemented to aid the submission of payments through BACS.
- Stockton Income Management Upgrade to cloud hosted Pay360 system.
- Worked closely with the Darlington Systems Team in setting up new funds to allow taking online payments in the Webstore.
- Conversion and upgrade of Agresso reports to allow for older report decommissioning.
- Conversion of Horizons School to an Academy configuration in Agresso to allow for further expansion in 2023.
- Worked with Lingfield Academy to improve Agresso reporting allowing further growth of their school numbers using Agresso.

### **Xentrall Schools Finance**

- Continued to provide a well-regarded bursary service to our maintained Stockton schools, assisting Head Teachers in times when funding is often tight due to falling pupil numbers, combined with pressures around pay awards and utility costs. The service provides quality budget, budgetary control and forward planning materials to Stockton schools in order that they remain financially solvent.
- Agreed a new two-year agreement with the remaining eighteen Stockton schools to March 2025.

### **Xentrall ICT**

- Successful recertification to the government's secure Public Service Network (PSN) which allows secure transfer of data between Council and government systems.

- Preparation for the June external annual review of the ISO27001 (Information Security Management) and ISO9001 (Quality Management) certifications, both of which combined with the PSN certification feed into other corporate and external audits e.g. NHS.
  - Completed work with the National Grid and GCHQ to review and strengthen the resilience of the Council's power and communication infrastructure, "Project Yarrow", in the wake of the war in Ukraine and the resultant energy provision concerns.
  - Continued with the delivery of high levels of availability for ICT systems by completing scheduled maintenance for both data centres and the installation of new backup batteries within the UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) at Darlington. A new backup device for the main Darlington data centre was also installed, and a review of the main network links between both Councils was undertaken.
  - Continued to support the approach for flexible and agile working across Stockton & Darlington Councils with the completion of the annual laptop refresh programme for over 700 devices. A laptop specification review and volumes for the new financial year have also been completed. Device refresh in 2023/24 will be more than double as ICT start to replace laptops issued early in the pandemic.
  - Preparations and planning for Stockton's future move from Municipal Buildings to Dunedin House. This includes backup data centre and network moves, as well as ensuring the building's ICT serves the Council's agile workforce as they move across.
  - Completed a review of the Council's Anti-Virus solution which will result in a strengthened approach across both servers and laptops.
  - Continued to help deliver a programme of migration of data into Microsoft Teams across both Councils providing services with improved facilities for information management, governance and collaboration.
  - Completed a strategic review of the existing Microsoft licencing model with an aim to consolidate more ICT systems and gain increased efficiency and functionality in this area. An example being the migration to Teams Telephony. A project which has been underway in recent months.
  - Continued to monitor and enhance the Council's approach to ICT security and take action when alerted to external risks and threats e.g. Capita cyber-attack.
  - Preparations for the 3G mobile service switch-off and later the digital switchover in 2025 and a move away from the public analogue telephone network.
13. All Xentrall services support organisation-wide and service-based projects in both Councils through using technology and systems to improve all aspects of service provision and the delivery of efficiencies. ICT alone have completed thirty-two service-based projects across Darlington and Stockton during 2022/23. These have been wide and varied and have included a large number of upgrades and enhancements to systems, and the procurement and implementation of new systems such as the Darlington Town Centre Wi-Fi implementation, an electronic document and signature solution for Darlington tenancy agreements, contextual safeguarding file collaboration improvements in Stockton (using Microsoft 365 for better sharing and collaboration with external agencies) and upgrading the Stockton Planning Portal and supporting infrastructure.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023/24 ONWARDS**

14. As can be seen from the above, despite the internal and external challenges faced by the partnership, Xentrall continues to perform well and deliver developmental projects alongside its day-to-day services to both Councils and external customers. The negative impact on supplies caused by the pandemic and war in Ukraine is subsiding, but the additional pressure of inflation continues to be a concern, particularly at renewal points in external contracts.
15. Looking forward, Xentrall activities will include:

- a) Xentrall overall will continue to assist with both Council's approaches to agile methods of working and promote and exploit the various technologies we have to support this.
- b) HR will be undertaking the system migration from on-premise into the cloud. There will also be continued development and exploitation of the main ResourceLink system and the associated MyHR app for the benefit of both Councils and our academy customers. The team will also continue to engage and take on new academy business as and when opportunities arise.
- c) Finance will be continuing with their Payment Card Industry accreditation work. They will also be working with NEPO on a new banking contract. Behind the scenes the team will continue their work on Agresso upgrades for both the Academy customers and both Councils.
- d) As more of our data moves to be hosted in the cloud, ICT will continue to strengthen the security posture of both Councils and our external customers, with the introduction of new anti-virus technologies, as well as supporting information governance colleagues in the assessment and remediation of malicious threats or breaches to 3<sup>rd</sup> party systems external to the Councils. In addition, further exploitation of our investment in the Microsoft 365 suite of products will see new Office-based features becoming available to ICT users as well as improved tools and features for ICT analysts working behind the scenes supporting and securing systems. The work on preparing for Stockton's move to Dunedin House will continue with the ICT focus on flexibility and collaboration, built upon a layer of security and connectivity. Following initial success in Darlington, improved meeting and conference room technologies are being deployed wider across the Councils.
- e) Design & Print will continue to support both Councils, working closely with their respective Communications Teams and other services to ensure they all receive the solutions they need. The service will continue to look for cost savings in materials and production as well as maintaining its buying skills and intelligence when sourcing external services. Service improvements will also include web-based job, daily post and volume print/copy portals for user requests.

16. As with previous years, the continual service improvement mentality within Xentrall will be applied to leverage any further service improvements and/or savings for both Councils. Xentrall will also continue to assess new partnering and business opportunities, should these arise. This aligns with its business plan of tactically growing the business, which in turn helps to support both Council's Medium-Term Financial Plans.

**Name of Contact Officer: Ian Miles**  
**Post Title: Assistant Director (Xentrall Shared Services)**  
**Telephone No. 01642 527012**  
**Email Address: [ian.miles@xentrall.org.uk](mailto:ian.miles@xentrall.org.uk)**

## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO CABINET

13 JULY 2023

### REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

## CABINET DECISION

**Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook**

### MINUTES OF VARIOUS BODIES

#### SUMMARY

The attached minutes are for consideration by Cabinet.

#### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS

To enable Cabinet to view the minutes of various bodies.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the minutes of the meetings detailed in the appendices be received.

#### DETAIL

1. In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below are submitted to members for consideration:-

TSAB – 19 April 2023

#### COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

2. This report is not the subject of any Community Impact Implications.

#### CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

3. This report is not the subject of any Corporate Parenting Implications.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. Where applicable, as specified in the minutes.

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5. Where applicable, as specified in the minutes.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

6. This report is categorised as low to medium risk.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

7. Not applicable.

**Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney**  
**Post Title: Head of Democratic Services**  
**Email Address: jonathan.nertney@stockton.gov.uk**



## Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

Time: **9.30am – 12pm**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

### Minutes

#### Attendees

Name	Role	Representing
Karen Agar	Associate Director of Nursing Safeguarding	TEWV
Jane Bell	Administration Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Gordon Bentley	Senior Adult Safeguarding Officer	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Darren Best	Independent Chair	Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
Cllr Bob Buchan	Lead Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Jon Carling****	Chief Executive	Catalyst Stockton
Cllr David Coupe	Lead Member	Middlesbrough Borough Council
Paula Dewell	Detective Superintendent – Head of Safeguarding	Cleveland Police
Natasha Douglas	Healthwatch Manager	Healthwatch Stockton
Kate Duncan	Head of Safer Prisons & Equality	HMP Holme House Prison
Deb Fenny	Detective Chief Inspector	Cleveland Police
Kirsty Fletcher	Safeguarding & DoLS Development Officer	Hartlepool Borough Council
Kathleen Fitzwater	Named Nurse in Adult Safeguarding	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Lorraine Garbutt	Business Manager	TSAB Business Unit
Elaine Godwin	Admin Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Jean Golightly	Director of Nursing & Quality	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Jill Harrison	Director of Adult and Community Based Services	Hartlepool Borough Council
Neil Harrison	Head of Safeguarding & Specialist Services	Hartlepool Borough Council
Gina Hurwood	SAR Co-Ordinator	TSAB Business Unit
Alyson Longstaff	Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader	Durham Tees Valley Department for Work and Pensions
Graham Lyons	Service Manager – Adults & Health	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Amy Mahoney	Business Manager	TSAB Business Unit
Cllr Ann McCoy	Lead Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Jen Moore	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adults	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Ruth Musicka	Head of Access and Safeguarding	Middlesbrough Borough Council
Kay Nicolson	CEO	A Way Out
Cara Nimmo	Assistant Director for Adult Care Operations	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Cllr Mary Ovens	Lead Member	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Greg Purta	Safeguarding lead	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Lindsay Britton-Robertson	Assistant Director of Safeguarding	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Erik Scollay	Director of Adult Social Care	Middlesbrough Borough Council

Angela Storm	Data Analysis and Performance Monitoring Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Chloe Swash	Admin Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Stephen Thomas	Development Officer	Healthwatch Hartlepool
Robin Turnbull	Area Manager	Cleveland Fire Brigade
Gary Watson	Business Manager	South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

### Apologies

Name	Role	Representing
John Rafferty	Compliance Business Partner - Safeguarding	Thirteen Group
Sarah Bowman-Abouna	Director of Public Health	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Angela Connor	Assistant Director Adult Social Care/PSW	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Elsbeth Devanney	Group Director of Nursing & Quality	TEWV
Stephen Green	Associate Director of Risk and Clinical Governance	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Patrick Rice	Corporate Director of Adults and Communities	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Dr Hilary Lloyd	Chief Nurse	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
John Lovatt	Assistant Director	Hartlepool Borough Council
Judith Mackenzie	Inspector	CQC (Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar & Cleveland)
Elizabeth Moody	Director of Nursing and Governance	Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Julian Penton****	Development Officer	Hartlepower
Ann Powell	Head of Stockton & Hartlepool PDU	National Probation Service
Darren Redgwell	Head of Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland PDU	National Probation Service
Linda Sergeant	Project Coordinator	Healthwatch South Tees
Leanne Stockton	Business Manager	Hartlepool & Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership
Janet Alderton	Assistant Director of Nursing & Patient Safety	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Victoria Wilson	Assistant Director of Adult Care	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Ann Workman	Director of Adults and Health	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

### Absent

Name	Role	Representing
Mark Davis***	Chief Executive	Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Mike Fleet	Principal Lecturer (Programmes) Department of Nursing & Midwifery	Teesside University
Rachelle Kipling	Temporary Assistant Chief Executive	Office of Police & Crime Commissioner
Michelle Monty	Inspector	CQC Hartlepool
Peter Neal	CEO	Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency
Helen Richmond	Safer Custody and Equalities Hub Manager	HMP Holme House Prison
Katie Tucker	Inspector	CQC Hartlepool

\*Attends for specific agenda items only, \*\* Attends 2 times per year; \*\*\*Attends on behalf of MVDA, RCVA & Healthwatch South Tees, \*\*\*\* Attendance will be shared between Catalyst and Hartlepower



**Copies:** Chris Brown; Rebecca Duce; Caroline Gallilee; Emily Gibson; Suzanne Glass; Lorna Harrison; Nigel Hart; Kay McGowan; Suzanne Metcalfe; Judith Oliver; Laura Poppleton; Angela Pringle, Mike Sharman; Karen Sproston; Rachael Surtees; Lyndsay Waddington

<b>Agenda Item 1</b>	<b>Introductions and Apologies</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Chair
Darren Best (DB) welcomed members to the meeting. Cara Nimmo (CN) is representing Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council on behalf of Patrick Rice and Graham Lyons is representing Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council on behalf of Ann Workman and Angela Connor. DB passed on his congratulations to Amy Mahoney who has been appointed as the new TSAB Business Manager following a rigorous selection process.		

<b>Agenda Item 2</b>	<b>TSAB Strategic Business Plan 2022-25</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Angela Storm / Lorraine Garbutt
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**Progress Monitoring 2022-23 – Angela Storm**

At the start of the Strategic Plan period it was agreed to create a system for monitoring progress against the plan. A mid-point update was provided in October 2022 and the progress monitoring spreadsheet has now been updated and shared with members to show the position at the end of year one of the three-year plan. Good progress has been made and only four areas have not been fully achieved:

**Priority 1: Joint Working**

*1.1 Ensure Board partners work together in an effective manner to protect adults from all forms of abuse and neglect.*

This action had been delayed in relation to creating an aligned Policy & Procedure. The Team Around The Individual (TATI) task & finish group are reviewing this as part of their work. The deadline for completion is June 2023 so this action will be carried forward and implemented in year two of the plan.

*1.2 Consider and act upon the impact of new legislation on safeguarding practice, for example, Liberty Protection Safeguards, Domestic Abuse Act 2021.*

Work in relation to the Domestic Abuse Act has been completed, but the new legislation on Liberty Protection Safeguards will not be delivered under the existing government, so this item will need to be carried forward to a future plan.

*1.3 Engage and Collaborate with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Steering Groups, Health and Well-being Boards and Strategic Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked Group (VEMT) to deliver joint priorities and objectives.*

The work in relation to VEMT is being led by Cleveland Police, and whilst there have been some delays meetings are now taking place. John Lovatt from Hartlepool Borough Council attended the last meeting and representatives from each of the four Local Authorities (LA) will be identified to attend future meetings. An update on the Missing Adults work will be provided to Board later in the year. Progress in being made in these areas and will be carried forward to next year's plan.

**Priority 2: People**

All objectives have been completed.

**Priority 3: Communication**

All objectives have been completed.

**Priority 4: Services**

*4.4 Improve our performance monitoring processes and systems to obtain accurate, current and validated information.*

The PowerBi work has encountered some delays due to the availability of licences. The work is progressing and will continue in 2023-24.

Members agreed that the format of the Progress Monitoring Framework was well structured and clear, and that the inclusion of evidence against each objective provided assurance on the work that has been completed by the Board and future direction.

DB thanked Angela Storm for the work that has gone into compiling the Progress Monitoring Framework; noting that as the plan is being delivered over a three-year period it is realistic to expect that some areas will remain amber as the plan moves into its second year. In relation to the TATI review work it is sensible to carry this forward into the next year to ensure that the work is completed comprehensively rather than rushing to have it completed at the year end point. Under the joint working objective DB highlighted three areas for further work:

Exploitation – This has traditionally been led by Children’s services across Tees. The LAs and Cleveland Police have now agreed to lead on this. A Sub-Group for Adult Exploitation has been established and will feed into the main Tees Exploitation Group. Updates on this will be provided as the work progresses.

Missing Adults – Cleveland Police is currently going through a restructure which has created some delays with this work. An update is scheduled to be provided to Board members at the June TSAB meeting.

Partnership working – Discussions have been started with the Safeguarding Children Partnerships around developing a joint protocol. As this work progresses it may be expanded to include other partnerships.

### **TSAB Strategic Plan 22-25 Actions & Sub-Group Workplans – Lorraine Garbutt**

The Strategic Plan has been updated and amended for 2023-24 in line with discussions that took place during the Operational Leads and TSAB Development Sessions in February. Lorraine Garbutt (LG) highlighted the changes that have been made:

#### **Priority 1: Joint Working**

A new objective has been included to look at different operating models and consider how these could be used to enhance partnership working and information sharing. Actions have been updated in line with this change; The terminology in relation to TATI has been amended and a review of the Decision Support Guidance tools to consider the increasing complexity, risk and volume of safeguarding cases will be carried out. Opportunities will be explored to identify new ways of working with partners.

#### **Priority 2: People**

An objective has been added to provide opportunities for partners to share learning and best practice in all aspects of safeguarding adults work to help promote staff and public confidence. The wording in relation to the action around sharing the learning from reviews has been amended to state that learning should be shared at the earliest opportunity. This change is in response to discussions at the OLSG Development Session where members felt that there would be benefit in learning being shared prior to the conclusion of the review. An action has also been added to further develop methods to review learning from reviews to ensure it remains embedded in practice. Good news stories, innovative work and exceptional people should be identified and celebrated. The Communication and Engagement Sub-Group will lead on this action.

#### **Priority 3: Communication**

Discussion took place at both Development Sessions around TSAB documentation and the need for it to be clearly written and accessible. Some work has already been completed in this area, but it was felt that there is further work to do and the objectives have been updated to include this. Tools will be developed to help support adults who don’t wish to engage with services and stronger links will be formed with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE). Actions have been included for the Communication & Engagement Strategy to be reviewed to ensure it reflects the need to minimise the use of technical, professional language within public facing information and the TSAB Information Sharing Agreement will be reviewed to minimise the duplication of work across organisations and partnerships.

#### **Priority 4: Services**

The objective that was originally included in relation to Loneliness and Isolation has been removed, as it was felt that this did not fall within the remit of the Board. In place of this the Quality Assurance Framework and Multi Agency Audit documents will be updated to capture information in relation to Loneliness and Isolation to ensure that individuals are being supported. New objectives have been

included to provide opportunities to share information about innovative services and solutions for working with people with complex needs, and to work more closely with the VCSE sector to better understand the range of services they are able to provide. The actions have been updated in relation to the way that services subject to the Responding to and Addressing Serious Concerns protocol are recorded, particularly for providers that may have services in multiple LA areas, and also to improve links with the VCSE sector.

The workplans for each of the Sub-Groups have been updated and approved by the relevant Sub-Group chair. Any actions that fall outside of the remit of the Sub-Groups will be picked up by Board or the Statutory Partners.

Members agreed that more effort should be put into celebrating good practice and sharing the learning from this. Whilst appreciative enquiries are not undertaken the Multi Agency Audits do attempt to showcase good practice, and it was noted that there may be scope to do this in a more structured way. The QAF does include a section to highlight best practice, so this will also provide a method for sharing this information via the assurance reports.

DB concluded that the revised plan highlights the value of the discussions that take place during the Development Sessions and thanked LG for the work that has gone into incorporating the key elements into the plan.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. The QAF/Self-audit tool to be updated to include reference to seeking assurance on loneliness and isolation work	AS	30/04/2023
2. Consider reviewing the format of the Multi Agency Audit to further showcase areas of good practice	OLSG	04/05/2023

<b>Agenda Item 3</b>	<b>Update from VCSE</b>	<b>Presenter: Jon Carling</b>
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Following the initial discussions that took place during the TSAB Development Session Jon Carling (JC) provided an update of the work that is taking place within the VCSE Sector in relation to adult safeguarding. A meeting has taken place between the VCSE representatives, Kay Nicholson from A Way Out and Lorraine Garbutt. Four key areas were considered: Does the VCSE know how to identify a Safeguarding Concern? Do they know what to do in response to identifying a Concern? Are they communicating the right messages? And are they reaching the people they need to? The group felt that in all areas there was further work that could be done. In response to this they are planning an online event to take place in May/June with the aim of briefing as many organisations as possible on safeguarding issues and to raise awareness of the resources available to them. This event will then be followed up by face-to-face events in each LA area during July. The sessions will help to raise awareness of TSAB resources, promote the training that is available and encourage more Safeguarding Champions.

JC advised that the VCSE are keen to have a greater involvement with the Board. Their aim will be to raise awareness within the sector of issues discussed at Board, and to voice any concerns that may be raised. The VCSE are keen to have representation at Sub-Group level, particularly in the area of Communication and Engagement.

DB thanked JC for the update and the work that the sector are doing to build on the discussions that took place at the Development Session. DB advised that TSAB will be happy to support the VCSE with their work and also to gain a better understanding of how the voluntary sector can better assist within the system to provide support and help reduce risk, particularly in light of increasing volumes and complexities.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. VCSE membership at Sub-Groups membership to be determined	JC/AM	14/06/2023

<b>Agenda Item 4</b>	<b>Sub-Group Updates</b>	<b>Presenter: Sub-Group Chairs</b>
<b>Learning Training &amp; Development – Cara Nimmo on behalf of Patrick Rice</b>		

The Sub-Group last met on 30<sup>th</sup> March. The key areas for discussion were as follows:

- Terms of Reference (ToR) – The ToR were reviewed and no changes were proposed
- 2022-23 Training Budget – There was a slight underspend as some of the proposed training did not take place
- Me-learning – 2023-24 will be the final year of the existing contract for the e-learning provision. The tender process will need to start later in the year to appoint a provider
- Stalking Awareness Course – TSAB have agreed to joint fund a Digital Stalking Awareness Course with the Children's Partnerships
- Workplan – All actions on the 2022-23 workplan have been completed and the draft workplan for 2023-24 was approved
- Training Plan – The Training Plan for 2023-24 was approved and a copy was circulated with the agenda for this meeting for information. The budget is for £40,000 with an estimated spend of £35,800. Demand for all the existing courses remains high so these will continue. There will be a mixture of virtual and face to face training. Course content has been considered to identify the courses that benefit most from face-to-face delivery. The budget does leave some capacity for any additional training areas that may be identified from reviews.

LG advised that some figures on the budget, such as the development of a Trauma Workbook and Vicarious Trauma training, are estimated at this stage. Some of the capacity will be taken by the funding of the Stalking Awareness Course. The final cost for this will be known once the Safeguarding Children Partnerships provide clarity on the number of sessions required. Work is now starting to agree training dates with the providers and these will be shared once available.

#### **Operational Leads – Lorraine Garbutt**

The last meeting took place on 9<sup>th</sup> March and was well attended. Cara Nimmo will chair the next meeting in May, after which Amy Mahoney will chair the group.

- The Multi Agency Audit schedule for 2023-24 was agreed. Audit themes will cover Sexual Exploitation, Modern Day Slavery, Incidents Between Residents, Hospital Discharge, Domestic Abuse and Self-Neglect. Additional themes may also be included in response to reviews
- The workplan was reviewed and areas that need to be carried forward were identified
- Case Study Discussion – Housing  
The case study was submitted to the group during the planning for the Development Session but was carried forward to the March Sub-Group meeting for discussion. The case study highlighted the issues of sourcing suitable accommodation for individuals at risk, with all LA representatives echoing similar issues for complex individuals who may pose a risk either to themselves or others. The issue will be raised with the Anti-Slavery Network in relation to the Victim Care Pathway, and there was also a request for it to be raised with the Statutory Partners and brought to the attention of the Board. In response to discussion by the Statutory Partners they are arranging a meeting with representatives from the housing providers across Tees to discuss the issues and how they can be addressed. DB noted that this is an issue around the country and that it is a positive step for discussions to begin locally.
- Two Multi Agency Audit Reports were discussed and copies have been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. The audits took place in February with a theme around Self-Neglect. The key points from each were presented:

#### **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Multi Agency Audit Report – Greg Purta (GP)**

The audit found that there was good evidence of multi-agency input, additional information was shared by partners and that an assessment of needs and mental health were provided to the individual.

Areas that were done well included the case being discussed at Multi-disciplinary Team level prior to being escalated to TATI, Concerns around the individual's needs were shared with partner agencies in order to seek the best possible solutions, actions were completed in a timely fashion with action plans being agreed and followed, good evidence was provided and recorded to support discussion and wider issues, such as housing, were taken into account.

Areas for improvement were identified around information included on the TATI referral form, avoiding the use of abbreviations and ensuring that the Think Family approach is included in the review process.

The case is still open, but with the agreement of the individual is no longer subject to TATI. The risk has been reduced and is now supported and managed between partner agencies.

Members agreed that this was a good example of multi-agency working and how TATI can support an individual. It was also noted that exit strategies from TATI should be considered, as capacity needs to be made available for new cases to be considered. TATI has an important role to play in bringing organisations together and to ensure that they are working together to provide support, but once this is in place they should be able to manage risk going forward.

#### **Hartlepool Borough Council Multi Agency Audit Report – Kirsty Fletcher (KF)**

The audit evidenced that there was good representation from partner organisations, but consideration should have been given to inviting the individual's uncle to attend the TATI meeting as he was the main point of contact with the service user. The probation officer was not able to attend the initial meeting but has attended subsequent meetings.

Areas that were done well included good evidence on the recording of actions, timescales, and the people responsible, early engagement with the housing provider to prevent eviction, home visits by the Police and social worker at times to suit the individual, legal representation at TATI meetings and good evidence that the social worker remains involved.

Areas for improvement were in relation to the TSAB TATI referral form not being used. A reminder has now been sent to all staff.

DB noted the importance of ensuring that current versions of forms are in use and suggested that the Business Unit could set up an annual reminder process to ensure all members are using current documents.

DB thanked GP and KF for sharing the reports.

#### **Safeguarding Adults Review - Jill Harrison (JH)**

- **Progress Update – TATI Review**

Deb Fenny (DF) and Ruth Musicka provided an update on the TATI Review. As one of the recommendations from the Molly SAR a task & finish group was brought together to review the TATI process. Input from members of the group and benchmarking against other areas has resulted in the review being more complex than was originally anticipated. The purpose of TATI has been reviewed to highlight complexity, the referral form has been amended and a flowchart has been created to ensure that organisations have done all they can before referring a case to TATI. Closure is also being considered; at what stage it is appropriate and who would sign this off. The next meeting is scheduled for early May and the group are working towards a completion deadline of June. DF stressed the importance of ensuring that the review is done correctly and that the end result is fit for purpose for all stakeholders. DB thanked the group for their work and acknowledged the difficulties due to the complexity of the cases involved and the need to consider four LA areas. DB added that the work has been a good example of making sure that representation is right at the start of the process to ensure success.

- **DHR 5/21 –** The case was discussed by the SAR Sub-Group and it was agreed that it would be more appropriate for it to be reviewed under the DHR process. Workshops have taken place with the practitioners involved and the first draft of the report is being compiled by the author. Once this is received the findings can be shared.

- **Case 1/22 and 3/22 –** Both cases were referred following LeDeR reviews. Karen Rees has been appointed as the Independent Reviewer and will complete two separate SARs which will run alongside each other in terms of the timings so that common themes can be identified. The

Practitioners' Workshops will be held in June, with the hope to bring the 2 SAR Reports to the Board in October for approval. Following this there will be an additional piece of work to look at repeated themes and learning to understand the root causes and the system barriers and challenges that hinder being able to robustly address these complex areas.

- Case 6/22 – Chris Hogben has been appointed as Independent Reviewer. He has extensive experience in policing and was a Detective Chief Superintendent. He has written DHRs and reviews for NHS England and recently completed a thematic SAR for Hampshire. The agencies involved will be contacted in due course.
- Case 8/22 - TEWV are currently seeking an independent facilitator to lead a Serious Incident Review. The LeDeR is on hold due to recent changes in the LeDeR process which mean waiting until the outcome of the Coroner's Investigation is known. The SAR will pick up the multi-agency learning in the form of a Practitioners' Workshop. It was agreed to use a rapid review process for this case so that the learning can be identified as soon as possible. GP has kindly offered to lead this review.
- Case 10/22 – It was agreed at the last SAR Sub-Group meeting that the case met the criteria for a SAR. Next steps will now be discussed by the Sub-Group.
- Case 9/22 – The referral came via the LeDeR process, but the case did not meet the criteria for a SAR as the individual did not die due to abuse or neglect. This case dates back to the height of the pandemic and similar learning has been picked up through the Stephen LLR. Barbara Potter (LeDeR Reviewer) will liaise with the family.

Members complemented the SAR Sub-Group on the way that cases are being handled in a proportionate way to avoid duplication of effort and share learning as quickly as possible, taking into account a number of different agendas. JH advised that the Sub-Group are still facing issues in sourcing reviewers, and this will be a factor to consider in future when deciding on the best type of review to conduct.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Develop annual reminder process to remind members of the location of current forms and documentation.	BU	14/06/2023

Agenda Item 5	QAF Reports	Presenter: Paula Dewell / Ruth Musicka
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**Cleveland Police – Paula Dewell**

The report shows an improved position since the previous QAF with an overall RAG rating of green being achieved. Two areas within the QAF were rated amber in relation to learning from reviews and staff training. Recommendations have been added to the action plan to address these sections and a review of the Safeguarding Guidance will be carried out to create a separate Policy and Procedure. Four main actions were identified: Separation of the Safeguarding Guidance document, collating evidence in relation to information sharing, a review of the existing structure and process to better embed learning from reviews and share best practice and a review of internal processes for recording of training to provide assurance that training is effective and relevant. All actions are now being taken forward and it is hoped that the re-structure taking place within Cleveland Police will assist with these. Best practice was identified in relation to the Victims Code of Practice.

**Middlesbrough Borough Council – Ruth Musicka**

Overall MBC were rated green in all areas. Good evidence was provided and all the actions from the previous QAF have been completed and evidenced. The only area for action was around strengthening the process for sharing the learning from reviews with all staff. Areas of best practice were identified in relation to the Complaints Policy, the Strategic Plan including reference to protecting adults and references made to Safeguarding and TATI in the Community Safety Plan and training.

DB thanked PD and RM for their presentations, noting that green ratings are difficult to achieve and that

hearing the reports provides a good level of assurance.

<b>Agenda Item 6</b>	<b>Drug Related Deaths</b>	<b>Presenter: Jen Moore</b>	
<p>Jen Moore (JM) shared a presentation with members.</p>			
<p>JM advised that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) do not lead on drug related deaths. They are a partner in the review of drug related deaths and the information in the report has come from the Preventing Substance Misuse and Death Service. JM was alerted to the issue in relation to drug related deaths as six weekly meetings have now become three weekly due to the number of cases involved. JM added that any drug and alcohol related deaths over the last twelve months are recorded as suspected until they have been reviewed by the Coroner. Despite the figures being distorted during the COVID period the figures for all four LA areas and are showing an upward trend. An increase during the winter months would be expected, as poor health amongst drug users can make them more susceptible to winter illnesses.</p>			
<p>Drug death review meetings are attended by a range of organisations including housing, Cleveland Police, addiction services, health, the LAs, NEAS and Probation. The key themes from the review include homelessness and sofa surfing. Individuals are often known to one another. Some are known to Mental Health services whilst others are not known to any services. Where individuals are known to services, they are often unwilling to accept support, which is a common theme in relation to addiction. The drugs used include illicit street drugs, prescribed drugs, and alcohol.</p>			
<p>To try and address the issues an evaluation of the training provided to front line staff in South Tees is taking place and a briefing document will be shared with GPs as there is often an unwillingness to share information. Exploration of future housing developments will take place and a review of OT assessments is taking place to identify the most common days when deaths take place and to explore if medics at the Safe Haven site can support with mental health crisis.</p>			
<p>Future consideration is around the availability of Naloxone, which is currently carried by Police, hostel staff and paramedics; It will be considered if there are any other groups that would be suitable, information sharing with primary care and support with the review process. Also, to consider any national learning in relations to SARs and bereavement support for staff in approved premises.</p>			
<p>The Regional Drug Related Death meeting is due to take place and it will be useful to compare the themes from other areas. JM advised that Joanne Russell who leads on the review would be happy to come to a future Board meeting to provide further information.</p>			
<p>JG advised that ex-offenders on parole or probation will have been assigned a GP, so do have access to primary care but issues may still arise out of an unwillingness to engage with services. GB added that some of the issues with GPs involvement in reviews following a death is because of consent. Once an individual dies consent remains in place, so some GP's are requesting relatives to approve the sharing of information. Work is currently being done to improve this process. JG also noted that better recording may be responsible for making the problem appear larger than it may be.</p>			
<p>DB thanked JM for the presentation, adding that it was important for the Board to hear about this piece of work. DB suggested that making use of the regional and national SAR libraries to look at learning would be beneficial. It would also be useful to look at the situation elsewhere in the country, and to establish how much intelligence the police have around the types of drugs being supplied in the area. DB requested that Joanne Russell provide an update to Board in 6 months' time.</p>			
<b>Action Points</b>		<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1. Update on drug related deaths to be provided to Board		JM / JR	11/10/2023

<b>Agenda Item 7</b>	<b>Hartlepool Borough Council Peer Audit</b>	<b>Presenter: Jill Harrison</b>	
<p>An offer was made to LAs in 2022 to undertake a peer review in preparation for the forthcoming CQC inspection framework. HBC submitted a successful bid and the review took place in March 2023. HBC identified their reasons for requesting the review as the increasing volume and complexity of cases, the</p>			

impact this is having on the Safeguarding teams and the need for future resilience. Areas to be considered during the review were use of the Decision Support Guidance and screening in decision making, management structure in relation to increasing demands, TATI and Transitions. A scoping meeting took place ahead of the review to share relevant documents and meetings took place with operational staff, managers and partners. The review was completed by Teresa Bell, a former Director of Adult Social Care who is currently Independent Chair of SABs in North Somerset, Bromley and the Isle of Wight.

It was recognised that HBC faces a number of demographic challenges in terms of deprivation, health inequalities, high prevalence of health related conditions and the incidence of drug related deaths being twice the national average. HBC 's performance was good when compared nationally and there was good evidence of collaborative working. The report acknowledged areas of good practice and innovative working, noted the challenges that are being faced and highlighted areas for future consideration. A copy of the report for TSAB was shared with the agenda.

Issues identified for TSAB to consider included a review of the referral form and decision support guidance, challenges in relation to cross boundary referrals and whilst policy and practice are aligned across the 4 LA areas where possible there is also a need to consider local context.

DB thanked JH for the presentation, adding that this was a useful exercise in preparation for the CQC inspection, but also acted as a useful health check. From TSAB's perspective further work will need to be done around cross boundary referrals and ensuring that current versions of forms are being used.

<b>Agenda Item 8</b>	<b>National Safeguarding Adults Board Excellence Awards 2023</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Lorraine Garbutt	
Nominations for the National Safeguarding Adults Board Excellence Awards can now be made via the link on the agenda. The awards were a new initiative introduced in 2022 by the Business Managers network. In the spirit of sharing good practice and recognising achievement LG encouraged members to put forward nominations. The closing date is 15 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the winners will be announced during National Safeguarding Awareness Week in November. LG suggested that the work that Thirteen Housing have done to develop their interactive training module may be something that the Board may wish to put forward for nomination. DB requested that this be added to the agenda for the next meeting with the Business Unit.			
<b>Action Points</b>		<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1. Nominations for National Safeguarding Adults Board Excellence Awards to be added to the agenda for next meeting with the Business Unit		JB	16/05/2023

<b>Agenda Item 9</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> All	
GB advised of an issue raised via the Cleveland Anti Slavery Network. A number of Nigerian Females have presented to hospital in the late stages of pregnancy with no prior contact. A common theme in relation to this is partners in study or working within care settings. The Anti Slavery Network has asked for any local information in relation to this. No cases have been reported in North Tees, but some concerns have been raised by South Tees.			
The Board said farewell to LG who is retiring in April. DB passed on a big thankyou to LG who has been central to TSAB since its formation, highlighting that LG leaves the role with a strong team in place and that the work she has put in place can now continue to be built upon.			
LG thanked Board members and the Business Unit for their support, adding that everyone has been involved in the success of TSAB.			
<b>Action Points</b>		<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1. Enjoy a very happy retirement		LG	Ongoing



Next Meeting Date: **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023**  
Time: **9.30am – 12pm**  
Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

Minutes approved by Independent Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. J. S.', written in a cursive style.

Date: 26/04/2023

<b>Appendix 1 - Attendance Matrix</b>								
The table below reflects named members of the TSAB, although deputies have been shaded.								
<b>Company</b>	<b>16/02/2023</b>	<b>07/03/2023</b>	<b>19/04/2023</b>	<b>14/06/2023</b>	<b>13/09/2023</b>	<b>11/10/2023</b>	<b>13/12/2023</b>	<b>3</b>
Catalyst Stockton / Hartlepower	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
ICB	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	100%
Cleveland Fire Brigade	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	67%
Cleveland Police	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	100%
CQC Board Member (Mlbro, Redcar, Stockton) (committed to attend 2 meetings per year)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
CQC Board Member (Hartlepool)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Durham Tees Valley CRC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
DWP	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	67%
Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Hartlepool Borough Council	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	100%
HBC Lead Member	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	67%
Healthwatch Hartlepool	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	33%
Healthwatch South Tees	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	33%
Healthwatch Stockton	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
HMP Holme House Prison	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	67%
Middlesbrough Borough Council	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	100%
MBC Lead Member	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
Middlesbrough VDA / Redcar & Cleveland VDA	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	33%
National Probation Service Cleveland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	33%
North East Ambulance Service (attend for specific agenda items only)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
Public Health	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	33%
Office of Police & Crime Commissioner (committed to 2 meetings per year)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	67%
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
RCBC Lead Member	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	67%
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	100%
SBC Lead Member	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	67%
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	33%
Teesside University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
Thirteen Housing	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	67%
TSAB Independent Chair	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	100%
TSAB Business Unit	5	6	7	0	0	0	0	100%