

Date: Thursday 18 April 2024 at 4.30 pm

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

Cllr Robert Cook (Leader)

Cllr Pauline Beall
Cllr Nigel Cooke
Cllr Lisa Evans
Cllr Clare Gamble
Cllr Steve Nelson
Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE

AGENDA

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Evacuation Procedure | (Pages 7 - 8) |
| 2 | Apologies for Absence | |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest | |
| 4 | Minutes | |
| | To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 14
March 2024 | (Pages 9 - 12) |
| 5 | Minutes of Various Bodies | (Pages 13 - 42) |
| 6 | Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response - Final
Report of the People Select Committee | (Pages 43 - 106) |
| 7 | Powering Our Future - Programme Update | (Pages 107 - 150) |

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

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

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	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.
Contracts	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.
Land and property	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.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	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.
Securities	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

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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 14 March 2024.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Gamble (Cabinet Member), Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Cabinet Member), Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Mike Greene, Reuben Kench, Ged Morton, Eddie Huntington, Chris Renahan, Julie Butcher and Peter Bell.

Also in attendance:

Apologies:

CAB/80/23 Evacuation Procedure

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

CAB/81/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB/82/23 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting which was held on 15 February 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

CAB/83/23 Procurement Plan / Higher Value Contracts & Social Value Update Report

Consideration was given to a report that sought approval for the award of planned higher value contracts where the value exceeds the limit on officer delegated authority and which were either funded within the approved MTFP / Capital Programme or were subject to a bid for external funding.

The report also included an update on progress against the Social Value Policy approved by Cabinet last year.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contracts listed in Annex 1 of the report be approved.
2. Authority be given to the relevant Director or Assistant Director to make the specific contract award decision and any subsequent contract variation, annual inflationary uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decision in accordance with the delegations listed in Annex 1 of the report.

3. Progress be noted on social value.

CAB/84/23 Stockton-on-Tees Agreed Syllabus for Primary Religious Education (RE)

Consideration was given to a report on a recommendation from the Agreed Syllabus Conference to purchase a new primary RE syllabus.

SACRE was required to review the agreed syllabus every five years. Following consultation and review, the Agreed Syllabus Conference unanimously voted to put forward the following recommendation for approval by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that:-

1. A new agreed syllabus be purchased from RE Today, licensed for 5 years for all the primary schools that need it (42).
2. The package of support be purchased which will ensure that schools have access to the professional development and resources they require to deliver the syllabus effectively. (see Appendix 1 for detail)

CAB/85/23 Durham Lane Industrial Estate Redevelopment

Consideration was given to a report that provided Cabinet with an update on the vacant employment land at Durham Lane Industrial Estate that the Council purchased with Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) monies in July 2021 in order to safeguard the site and bring forward development. A preferred developer had been selected to deliver a business park, subject to completion of legal contracts. The report sought authority to dispose of the land to the developer.

In January 2020, Cabinet approved the acquisition of vacant, undeveloped employment land at Durham Lane Industrial Park at Market Value to safeguard strategically important employment land. The site was purchased in July 2021 for £2.8m using IGF monies. Durham Lane was a key element of the Council's 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.

Since July 2021, numerous site surveys along with an options appraisal had been commissioned in order to better understand the sites opportunities and constraints; essentially completing due diligence to make the site more attractive to a developer.

In summer 2022 Knight Frank were appointed as the Council's land agents following an engagement process. DWF were also appointed as the Council's legal advisors using the NEPO framework. It was agreed following advice from DWF that the site should be dealt with as a land disposal as The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 would not apply, but that certain conditions should still be included as part of the land transaction to ensure the Council's aspirations for the site are delivered and to minimise risk to the Council.

Knight Frank marketed the site on behalf of the Council to attract a developer. They advised on the strategy and produced a marketing brochure which was supported by an SBC Design Code for the site. The site was marketed between May and July 2023 via a mailshot to potential developers and agents, Knight Frank, EG Propertylink,

Rightmove Commercial and Invest Stockton-on-Tees websites, and in the Estates Gazette, accompanying website and dotmailer to their subscriber list which boasts UK coverage. The advert had a really good response with 28 enquiries received, with several requests for access to the Data Room which held detailed information on the site including the topographical, archaeological, drainage, flood, ground investigation and ecological surveys that had been completed since SBC purchased the site.

Interested developers were requested to submit an initial bid proposal for the site by 12th July 2023. 5 Expressions of Interest bid proposals were submitted for consideration which Knight Frank considered a good response. The 5 bid proposals were shortlisted to two by SBC, Knight Frank and DWF based against a criteria of requested information to demonstrate the bidders financial resources, track record and proposed delivery of a scheme at Durham Lane. A period of competitive dialogue and interviews took place in October, and in November a developer was selected as the Council's preferred development partner.

The preferred development partner was recommended by Knight Frank as they can demonstrated their ability to develop on a magnitude similar to Durham Lane and had a knowledge of end users of a scale and size from outside the North East which would be beneficial to attract to the site. The developer's ambitions were also more aligned with the Council's in terms of removing obstacles to efficient development, improving the offer of the estate and they aimed to achieve BREEAM excellent rated buildings. They had a strong 'in-house' and external professional team and the financial information provided also demonstrated that they were the stronger company with greater financial resources to call upon than most of the other parties. Detail of the preferred developer partner was commercially sensitive and was included at Exempt Appendix A of the report. It was proposed that the land was drawn down to the preferred development partner under the terms set out in the Development Agreement.

The preferred developer was working with the Council and key partners, at risk, to better understand Durham Lane's opportunities and constraints and develop the masterplan. An Exclusivity Agreement had been signed with the preferred developer until 31st March 2024 whilst the legal contracts were being drawn up. They had committed to submitting a planning application soon after the agreement was signed and intended to deliver the project on a phased basis. They had committed to defraying £3m IGF grant monies by March 2026 on infrastructure improvements to unlock the land for development.

Initial Heads of Terms had been provisionally agreed by both parties and lawyers were working to complete a Development Agreement. The detail was commercially sensitive and included as Exempt Appendix A.

The development of the strategically important, vacant employment land at Durham Lane will attract inward investment, support existing business growth and allow the Council to realise additional economic value as a result of job generation and social value through our partnership approach with the preferred developer.

The Council was 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 was being delivered through embedding strong Social Value policies through our partnership approach with the preferred developer. Social Value was an ability to determine and measure what was created as added value through a contracts and

commissioning processes, considering more than just the financial transaction but what added benefits the Council wished to achieve.

The preferred developer had committed to delivering social value objectives and would be required to prepare an Employment and Skills Plan.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The disposal of land at Durham Lane Industrial Estate be approved on a phased basis to the preferred developer, in accordance with the details outlined in this report and Appendix A and in accordance with the Development Agreement subject to recommendation 2 below.
2. Delegate authority be given to the Assistant Director - Inclusive Growth and Development in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, to agree the detailed terms of the disposal and the Development Agreement.
3. Cabinet note that any money received from the sale of the land is required to be spent in line with the TVCA IGF criteria.

CAB/86/23 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CAB/87/23 Durham Lane Appendix A Exempt

At this point in the meeting Cabinet discussed the exempt information that was associated with the Durham Lane Industrial Estate Redevelopment item.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

18 JANUARY 2024

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:-

TVCA Cabinet – 15 December 2023

TSAB – 11 October 2023

SSP – 20 September 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



Minutes

TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday 26th January 2024 at 10am

Teesside Airport Business Suite, Teesside International Airport, Darlington

<u>ATTENDEES</u>	
<u>Members</u>	
Mayor Ben Houchen (Chair)	Tees Valley Mayor
Councillor Stephen Harker	Leader, Darlington Borough Council
Councillor Mike Young	Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Leader, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Robert Cook	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Siobhan McArdle	Chair, Tees Valley Business Board
<u>Officers and Others in Attendance</u>	
Julie Gilhespie	Group Chief Executive, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Emma Simson	Acting Group Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Gary Macdonald	Group Director of Finance & Resources, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Tom Bryant	Director of Infrastructure, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Helen Kemp	Head of Business & Skills, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Mike Greene	Director of Corporate Services, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Denise McGuckin	Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council
Ian Williams	Chief Executive, Darlington Borough Council

John Sampson	Managing Director, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Guy Close	Governance & Scrutiny Manager, TVCA
Alan Weston	Head of Transport, TVCA
Sally Henry	Governance Officer, TVCA
Apologies	
Clive Heaphy	Middlesbrough Council

TVCA 27/23	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies received and noted as above.</p>
TVCA 28/23	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Mayor Houchen declared an interest in his capacity of Chair of STDC Board, MDC Board and HDC Board.</p> <p>All Local Authority Leaders declared an interest in the:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management Strategy; • Adoption Of Investment Plan, Budget 2024-25 And Medium-Term Financial Plan; • Transport Programme. <p>Cllr Brown declared an interest in his capacity as a STDC Board member. Cllr Young declared an interest in his capacity as a HDC Board member. Mayor Cooke declared an interest in his capacity as a MDC Board member</p>
TVCA 29/23	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.</p>
TVCA 30/23	<p>MAYOR'S UPDATE REPORT</p>

	<p>The Chair introduced a report providing a general update on the key activities of the Mayor and Combined Authority since the last Cabinet meeting.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>No comments or questions were received.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the update.</p>
<p>TVCA 31/23</p>	<p>TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25</p> <p>Cabinet members were presented with the Authority’s Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies for the financial year 2024/25. The Capital Strategy incorporates within it the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.</p> <p>The Group Chief Executive highlighted that there was an error in the numbering within the recommendations of the report which would be rectified. She also highlighted that the processes within recommendation 3 of the report also applied to the South Tees Development Corporation and this had been omitted from the report but would be amended.</p> <p>Cabinet was invited to ask questions or comment on these items. No comments or questions were received.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet approved:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the Treasury Management, Investment and Capital Strategies for 2024/25; (2) the Revised Treasury Management limits incorporating potential future borrowing requirements for strategic economic regeneration projects for both Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC) and Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC) (£75m each) and for the other three Tees Valley Local Authorities (£75m each) representing a total facility of £375m. (3) the approach to financing for Tees Valley Local Authorities, Middlesbrough Development Corporation, Hartlepool Development Corporation and South Tees Development Corporation strategic economic regeneration projects as set out at Appendix 4; (4) the delegation of authority to TVCA statutory officers to conduct the appropriate due diligence procedures and processes and make the final TVCA investment decisions in terms of financing the strategic economic regeneration projects. <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the following as set out in Appendix 4: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the TVCA Group borrowing and Investment position;

	<p>(2) the TVCA Treasury Management, Capital and Investment strategy position;</p> <p>(3) the respective roles of TVCA, Tees Valley Local Authorities, MDC, HDC and STDC in the Group Treasury Management arrangements going forward set out at Appendix 4;</p> <p>(4) the risks and associated risk management plans, controls and processes that will be operating to ensure that the Authority is securing value for money in the provision of appropriate finance solutions across Tees Valley Local Authorities, HDC and MDC to achieve their objectives whilst safeguarding public funds.</p>
<p>TVCA 32/23</p>	<p>ADOPTION OF INVESTMENT PLAN, BUDGET 2024-25 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN</p> <p>Cabinet members were provided details of the high-level financial allocations within the Investment Plan and provided the final Budget for consideration and approval.</p> <p>Cabinet were advised that consultation on the draft budget has taken place both with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Tees Valley Business Board members.</p> <p>The Overview & Scrutiny Budget Consultation document was circulated with papers. Cabinet were advised that the last meeting of the committee had not been quorate so the report could not be approved. It was therefore being presented to Cabinet by the Group Chief Executive.</p> <p>The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Ian Haszeldine, commented that the meeting to review the Budget with TVCA Officers was excellent and committee members had a very detailed question and answer session with senior offices of TVCA.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke asked why there was no increase in salaries despite the recent Director appointment and the increase in capacity of the Transport Team. He was advised that staff time can be charged to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) existing and future allocation and it will not affect the core budget.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke also enquired how the second round CRSTS will be split between revenue and capital. He was advised that this is to be agreed with Government, but that it was expected to be weighted to capital.</p> <p>He further commented that it would have been helpful for members to have had the opportunity to be consulted on in the same way that the Business Board and Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been. The Chair advised</p>

	<p>that pre-agenda briefings for Cabinet members could be arranged in future if required.</p> <p>Cllr Harker enquired why there was a split between borrowing and reserves noted in paragraph 5 of the report. He was advised that estimates for the schemes were factored into the investment plan and assumptions were made about when the schemes may start and finish. Funds not spent during a particular financial year are therefore moved forward into the next financial year.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. approved the final Budget for 2024-25. ii. Noted the pay policy statement 2024-25
<p>TVCA 33/23</p>	<p>TRANSPORT PROGRAMME</p> <p>Cabinet members were presented with a paper which set out the proposed transport programme to be delivered with the second round City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS2) published indicative allocation of £978m.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Councillor Harker, as Chair of Transport Committee, provided the following views from the Committee Members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues from each LA welcomed projects in their patch - there are necessary and welcome projects listed in the plan. • Members queried the development and approval of the programme in advance of TVCA receiving Government guidance over how the CRSTS2 funding can be used and the detail of the revenue and capital split. It was noted that TVCA believe demonstrating to government that there is agreement on the strategic priorities provides the opportunity to influence government in developing the guidance. Transport committee expressed concerns about the possible consequences of parts of the plan falling outside the scope of the final guidance. • Members were reassured to hear that TVCA recognise the financial positions of the LA's and there is no expectation from TVCA that LA's will have to find match funding, funding contributions or ongoing revenue contributions for the programme. It was noted that capital and revenue requirements will be considered in the business case development. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the outcome

of business case appraisals will be reported to Cabinet and there will be ongoing monitoring and reporting.

- The additional maintenance revenue is welcomed, and desperately needed, but it will not address the maintenance backlog. Concern was expressed that the expectation from Government is that existing maintenance levels must remain the same and the new maintenance money is additional and to be spent on maintenance only. This assumption effectively means a static budget for highway improvement schemes in local authorities until the end of the CRSTS2 period. With the impact of inflation, this is effectively a reduction in spending power and a cut in budget over the term of CRSTS2. TVCA officers responded that the working assumption is that the combined CRSTS2 and maintenance funding will provide the local authorities with a significant uplift in budget. Furthermore, the CRSTS2 local authority allocation is flexible so can be spent on maintenance or improvements.
- Members expressed concern about maturity and accuracy of the cost estimates and risk allowances given the impact of inflationary pressures over the long duration of the whole programme. TVCA officers responded by highlighting that the cost estimates are considered robust for the stage of project development and have been independently challenged. As projects develop further work will be done to refine cost estimates.
- Despite the fact that the constitutional requirements have been met in the production of the report, the ability for LAs as part of the Combined Authority to steer, contribute and inform the formation of such an important programme and report is felt to have been poor. The Chair highlighted that the proposed transport programme delivers on the Strategic Transport Plan and builds upon the investment to date. TVCA officers added that there is a robust evidence base, which has been independently challenged, that has informed the programme.

The Chair reassured Cabinet members that there is no expectation from Local Authorities to fund any of the projects and that reports will be presented to Cabinet going forwards on progress.

Councillor Bob Cook asked if Portrack Relief Road is still under consideration as part of the programme. TVCA officers confirmed that the funding allocation is to progress the A19 New Tees Crossing scheme, but that at the point when a delivery strategy is being considered, then consideration can also be given to the potential delivery of Portrack Relief Road.

Councillor Alec Brown stressed the importance of connectivity in East Cleveland and highlighted that previous feasibility work had been done on the East Cleveland rail project. TVCA officers highlighted that previous work was desktop in nature and did not go into the required level of detail on deliverability and cost. It was highlighted that the funding allocation is for feasibility work only, which would provide the required level of detail to enable an informed future decision.

Councillor Stephen Harker queried the next stage of work on Darlington Northern Link Road, including the preferred route alignment. TVCA officers and the Mayor highlighted that previous work had identified a preferred route alignment, but that the assumptions that led to this conclusion will need to be revisited given the time that has elapsed since the work was completed. Councillor Stephen Harker then asked about prioritisation across the programme. The Mayor responded by saying that the necessary development work would be progressed on all projects and the intention was to deliver the programme in its entirety. It was noted that the regular reporting into Cabinet will provide members with an overview on the programme as it develops.

Mayor Chris Cooke commented that it would have been helpful to see the detail on the A19 New Tees Crossing. The Mayor responded that local authority officers already have this detail and the report is intended to provide a summary for Cabinet.

Councillor Mike Young offered his support for the programme and welcomed the level of investment.

The Chair thanked officers from all the Local Authorities for their constructive interaction with the process and commented that he was pleased to see Local Authority Leaders at the public consultation event.

Siobhan McArdle commented that the Business Board welcomed the inclusivity of the programme as connecting people to employment and other opportunities was critical.

It was highlighted that the Freeport Board had sought confirmation that the South Bank scheme includes the entrance to the Freeport, including road improvements, access and parking. It was confirmed that the scheme does include those elements.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

- i. Approved the proposed transport programme totalling £1bn, as detailed in paragraph 12, to be delivered with the second round City

	<p>Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS2) indicative allocation of £978m.</p> <p>ii. Delegated authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to progress delivery of business cases for each project within the approved funding allocations. In accordance with the Tees Valley Assurance Framework, the approval of business cases is delegated to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Chief Executive, in consultation with the Tees Valley Management Group, and the Tees Valley Combined Authority Section 73 Officer and Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>iii. Noted that the outcome of all business case appraisals will be reported to Cabinet and there will be a twice-yearly update report to Cabinet and Transport Committee on the programme.</p> <p>iv. Noted that where an individual project cannot be delivered within the funding allocation set out in this report or the business case does not demonstrate value for money, then this will be reported back to Cabinet for a decision on how to proceed.</p>
<p>TVCA 34/2023</p>	<p>Members of the public submitted questions in advance of the meeting and these questions, along with answers, are published on TVCA's website</p>
	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>TBC</p>



Minutes

TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday, 15 March 2024 at 10.00am

Teesside Airport Business Suite, Teesside International Airport, Darlington

These Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next Cabinet meeting and are therefore subject to amendments.

<u>ATTENDEES</u>	
Members	
Mayor Ben Houchen (Chair)	Tees Valley Mayor
Councillor Stephen Harker	Leader, Darlington Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Leader, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Carrie Richardson	Deputy Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Robert Cook	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Siobhan McArdle	Chair, Tees Valley Business Board
Officers and Others in Attendance	
Julie Gilhespie	Group Chief Executive, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Gary Macdonald	Group Director of Finance and Resources, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Tom Bryant	Director of Infrastructure, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Helen Kemp	Head of Business and Skills, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Mike Greene	Director of Corporate Services, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Ian Williams	Chief Executive, Darlington Borough Council
John Sampson	Managing Director, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Guy Close	Governance and Scrutiny Manager, TVCA
Sally Henry	Governance Officer, TVCA

Apologies	
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Emma Simson	Acting Group Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Clive Heaphy	Managing Director, Middlesbrough Council
Denise McGuckin	Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council

TVCA 35/23	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received and noted as above.</p>
TVCA 36/23	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Mayor Houchen declared an interest in his capacity of Chair of STDC Board, MDC Board and HDC Board.</p>
TVCA 37/23	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.</p>
TVCA 38/23	<p>MAYOR'S UPDATE REPORT</p> <p>The Chair introduced a report providing a general update on the key activities of the Mayor and Combined Authority since the last Cabinet meeting.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Councillor Bob Cook welcomed the announcement from government on the Investment Zones. He commented that, as confirmed by the Mayor at the December meeting of Cabinet, he was pleased that there was a full commitment to work with Stockton in the delivery of the Investment Zone. A focus on care and medical technology in the Stockton based Care and Health Investment Zone enabled us to establish a regional facility, with significant opportunities to increase productivity across digital and the care/health sectors – both of which had high growth potential. Over one third of all Tees Valley digital business were already based in Stockton-on-</p>

	<p>Tees, giving it a strong and existing cluster from which to build. The Care and Health sector was the largest employment sector in Tees Valley, with digital skills shortages already impacting recruitment and productivity.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the update.</p>
<p>TVCA 39/23</p>	<p>TEES VALLEY REVIEW</p> <p>Cabinet was provided with an update on the Independent Review into the Tees Valley Combined Authority’s oversight of the South Tees Development Corporation and Teesworks Joint Venture (Teesworks Limited). They were also advised of the process for implementation of the recommendations within that report.</p> <p>The Chair thanked officers of the Combined Authority along with all the Local Authorities for the work that has gone into the process so far and advised that it was the intention to adopt changes and make some robust improvements. There had been some concern expressed surrounding timelines. The Secretary of State had indicated that he expected progress within six months.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke expressed concern that the final proposals would be presented to Cabinet without any opportunity for members to input. He was assured that all Cabinet members were to be invited to attend workshops where members will be fully briefed on progress and their views could be incorporated. It was the officer’s job to advise and make proposals, but it was the member’s role to determine whether the proposals were accepted.</p> <p>A project plan was currently being formulated which was to include all actions and dates.</p> <p>Councillor Harker enquired whether clarification from government had been requested relating to the deficiencies in legislation referred to in the report.</p> <p>He was advised that those recommendations were not for us but were a recommendation for government from the review team. It was however agreed that the Group Chief Executive would contact government to seek clarification.</p> <p>Cabinet was also advised that an independent lawyer was being appointed to assist with identifying any areas where renegotiating with the JV partners may be possible and to lead those negotiations so that they were being led by an independent party.</p>

	<p>Siobhan McArdle enquired at which point in the process would the Business Board become involved. It was agreed that a workshop for the Business Board was to be built into the process once Cabinet and the other TVCA Committees had reviewed the recommended actions.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cabinet noted the response to the Secretary of State and the action plan within it; ii. Cabinet noted the recommendations for His Majesty’s Government within the report; iii. Cabinet endorsed the proposed process to respond to the recommendations from the Tees Valley Review report, detailed in Paragraph 5 of this Report iv. Cabinet approved the Terms of Reference for the Statutory Officers Working Group; v. Cabinet approved the process of oversight by TVCA Cabinet and its statutory committees detailed in Paragraph 11 of the report; vi. The Group Chief Executive contact government to seek clarity on the deficiencies in legislation referred to in the report; and vii. TVCA include a workshop for the Business Board into the action plan.
<p>TVCA 40/23</p>	<p>QUARTER 3 BUDGET REPORT AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE</p> <p>Cabinet was provided an update on the financial position of the Combined Authority for the period ending 31 December 2023 and presented a revised Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).</p> <p>Gary Macdonald highlighted the key points to note.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Councillor Bob Cook enquired whether the Airport MTFP could be included in future reporting to Cabinet. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that advice was to be sought from the Monitoring Officer in relation to Local Authority airport Board directors sharing board papers with colleagues within their own Local Authority.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke enquired why the Adult Education Budget remained at the same level and was advised that inflationary rises for allocations were not provided. If more funding was required to deliver what was initially indicated, it needed to be brought through the delivery plan process.</p> <p>Councillor Harker enquired why the Innovation and Clean Growth was only 21% of initial outturn. It was explained that the programme was part of the hub so was often in arrears as they had robust procedures of checks and</p>

	<p>balances throughout the region. The financial profile was behind rather than the delivery. Gary Macdonald advised he has requested further information from the Net Zero team regarding the outturn forecasts and agreed to circulate to Cabinet once it was available.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cabinet notes the quarter 3 outturn position for 2023/24; ii. Cabinet notes the revised Medium-Term Financial Plan; iii. TVCA’s Monitoring Officer to be consulted regarding the airport board members sharing board papers with Local Authority colleagues; and iv. Further information on Net Zero outturn forecast to be circulated to Cabinet once available.
<p>TVCA 41/23</p>	<p>REFERRAL FROM STDC BOARD REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF SITE MANAGEMENT COMPANY</p> <p>Cabinet members were provided a request from the South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) Board for TVCA to approve the establishment of a wholly owned subsidiary of STDC to deliver STDC’s site management obligations.</p> <p>S212(2)(a) of the Localism Act 2011, grants STDC the power to establish a body corporate with the consent of TVCA.</p> <p>At its meeting on 29 February 2024, STDC approved plans for site management which included the establishment of a wholly owned subsidiary to manage its obligations for maintenance of the Teesworks site in accordance with RICS regulations for management of service charges to tenants.</p> <p>Cabinet was therefore asked to give TVCA the authority to establish a wholly owned subsidiary to take forward the site management plans set out in the STDC Board Report dated 29 February 2024, a copy of which was attached to the report at appendix 1.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Councillor Bob Cook enquired about the governance structure and was advised that this was to be circulated to Cabinet members.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cabinet approved the establishment by STDC of a wholly owned subsidiary to undertake site management obligations; and ii. Governance structure to be circulated.

<p>TVCA 42/2023</p>	<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FINAL REPORTS</p> <p>Cabinet was advised that Councillor Ian Haszeldine, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, had intended to present the reports but unfortunately had to submit apologies.</p> <p>Guy Close, Governance and Scrutiny Manger, presented the final reports on behalf of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>At its meeting on 14 July 2023 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee established two separate Sub-Committees to undertake in-depth scrutiny activity and report back its findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The first Sub-Committee was set-up to review the area of buses (attached as appendix one to the Cabinet report) with a particular focus on identifying whether TVCA decisions and policies were improving bus services for the residents of the Tees Valley.</p> <p>A second Sub-Committee was setup to review the South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) (attached as appendix two to the Cabinet report) with the key aim to better understand the relationship that exists between STDC and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA).</p> <p>It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had approved the recommendations within the reports which had been presented to Cabinet to endorse.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>The Chair commented that they were good pieces of work and thanked those officers who were involved.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet endorsed the Overview and Scrutiny reviews into a) Buses; and b) South Tees Development Corporation, as set out in appendices to the report.</p>
<p>TVCA 43/2023</p>	<p>TRANSPORT PROGRAMME UPDATE</p> <p>Cabinet was provided an update on the Transport Programme, previously approved by Cabinet on 26 January 2024. The programme was to be delivered with the second round City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS2) published indicative allocation of £978m.</p> <p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p>

	<p>Councillor Harker requested an update on recruitment within the transport team. He also asked whether the level of reporting will ramp up as schemes commenced. He was advised that three additional staff had been recruited to date and that interviews were scheduled to recruit three further officers. An informed decision was to be taken once projects were underway as to whether there was sufficient capacity. He was further advised that governance arrangements were to be established and included in further reporting to Cabinet.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke enquired whether a decision had been made on the capital/revenue split. He was advised that discussions with government were still ongoing, but it was likely to be capital weighted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Notes the update on the development of the CRSTS2 programme as detailed in paragraph 1; and ii. Notes the funding strategy to facilitate development work on the CRSTS2 programme in 2024/25 as outlined in paragraph 3.
<p>TVCA 44/2023</p>	<p>The Governance and Scrutiny Manager reported that members of the public had submitted over thirty questions in advance of the meeting. Those that pertained to items on the agenda, along with answers had been published on TVCA’s website.</p> <p>Other questions were to be automatically dealt with through the Freedom of Information (FOI) process.</p>
	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – To be confirmed.</p> <p>The Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone round the table and wished them luck going forward.</p>

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Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 13th December 2023**

Time: **9.30am – 12pm**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

Minutes

Attendees		
Name	Role	Representing
Janet Alderton	Assistant Director of Nursing & Patient Safety	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Jane Bell	Administration Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Gordon Bentley	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adults	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Kevin Bradshaw (Part)	Supported Living Manager	Beyond Housing
Cllr Bob Buchan	Lead Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Jon Carling****	Chief Executive	Catalyst Stockton
Mayor Chris Cooke	Lead Member	Middlesbrough Council
Elsbeth Devanney	Group Director of Nursing & Quality	TEWV
Mike Fleet	Principal Lecturer (Programmes) Department of Nursing & Midwifery	Teesside University
Ami Fraser (Part)	Access and Safeguarding Lead Officer	Middlesbrough Council
Elaine Godwin	Admin Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Jill Harrison (Deputy Chair)	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
Chris Hogben (part)	Independent Reviewer	
Amanda Kelton (Part)	Key Worker	Middlesbrough Council
Alyson Longstaff	Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader	Durham Tees Valley Department for Work and Pensions
Amy Mahoney	Business Manager	TSAB Business Unit
Cllr Ann McCoy	Lead Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Caroline McGlade (Part)	Detective Superintendent	Cleveland Police
Sam Midgley	Project Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Beverley Murphy	Chief Nurse	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Carolyn Nice	Director of Adults and Health	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Kay Nicolson	CEO	A Way Out
Julian Penton****	Development Officer	Hartlepower
Patrick Rice	Corporate Director of Adults and Communities	Redcar & Cleveland 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

Helen Wilson	Superintendent	Cleveland Police
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Apologies		
Name	Role	Representing
Richard Baker	Assistant Chief Constable	Cleveland Police
Darren Best	Independent Chair	Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
Angela Connor	Assistant Director Adult Social Care/PSW	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Kati Cowley	Safer Custody and Equalities Hub Manager	HMP Holme House Prison
Mark Davis***	Chief Executive	Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Paula Dewell	Detective Superintendent – Head of Safeguarding	Cleveland Police
Natasha Douglas	Healthwatch Manager	Healthwatch Stockton
Jean Golightly	Director of Nursing & Quality	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Dr Hilary Lloyd	Chief Nurse	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
John Lovatt	Assistant Director	Hartlepool Borough Council
Jen Moore	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adults	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Cara Nimmo	Assistant Director for Adult Care Operations	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Ann Powell	Head of Stockton & Hartlepool PDU	National Probation Service
John Rafferty	Compliance Business Partner - Safeguarding	Thirteen Group
Darren Redgwell	Head of Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland PDU	National Probation Service
Erik Scollay	Director of Adult Social Care	Middlesbrough Borough Council

Absent		
Name	Role	Representing
Sarah Aspinall	Inspector	CQC (Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar & Cleveland)
Cllr Lisa Belshaw	Lead Member	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Sarah Bowman-Abouna	Director of Public Health	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Lindsay Britton-Robertson	Assistant Director of Safeguarding	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Kate Duncan	Head of Safer Prisons & Equality	HMP Holme House Prison
Dean Johansen-Berg		Healthwatch South Tees
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
Karen Sheard	Deputy Chief Nurse	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Nicki Smith	Associate Director of Safeguarding	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Leanne Stockton	Business Manager	Hartlepool & Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership
Katie Tucker	Inspector	CQC Hartlepool
Gary Watson	Business Manager	South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

*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

Agenda Item 1	Introductions and Apologies	Presenter: Chair
<p>Deputy Chair, Jill Harrison (JH), welcomed members to the December meeting.</p> <p>A number of apologies have been received and will be recorded within the minutes.</p> <p>JH started the meeting by passing on congratulations to Thirteen Housing who were successful in winning the Innovation Champions Award at the National Safeguarding Adults Board Excellence Awards.</p>		

Agenda Item 2	Safeguarding Adult Review	Presenter: Chris Hogben
<p>Chris Hogben (CH) joined the meeting to provide a summary of the Bernadette Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR). CH acted as Independent Reviewer and Author for the SAR, and was joined in the meeting by the appointed family Key Worker.</p> <p>CH provided an overview of the Terms of Reference and Methodology used for the review, a summary of family involvement, the background to the case and details of the practitioners' workshop sessions that took place. The presentation concluded with the key themes that were identified leading on to a number of questions for the Board to consider.</p> <p>Julian Penton noted that issues in relation to silo working and information sharing have been a recurring theme in reviews over a period of time, and queried if there was a piece of work that practitioners could carry out in order to address this. JH acknowledged that this is an issue that has been identified nationally, and despite organisations having protocols in place, there is still a fear over data protection when passing information to other agencies.</p> <p>Jon Carling queried if the Community and Voluntary Sector could have a greater role to play in providing support, particularly over weekends or out of working hours. In this review CH agreed that although there may have been opportunities for the voluntary sector to help support Bernadette her reluctance around engagement may still have prevented this.</p> <p>A copy of the Overview Report and Learning Briefing were circulated with the agenda for approval. Both documents have been shared with the organisations involved for sign off and legal checks. Feedback was received from the Probation Service, and the necessary amendments have been made. No queries were raised by members so both documents were taken as approved.</p> <p>The report will now be shared with the Coroner and the Key Worker will continue to support family through the publication. There is conflicting information on Bernadette's date of birth, with this being recorded as either 9th or 19th January. In order to be sensitive to these dates, and allowing time for the Christmas break, the proposed publication date is Monday 29th January 2024. If any members have concerns regarding the publication date, please let the Business Unit know.</p> <p>With support from the Business Unit CH is happy to provide a recorded Powerpoint presentation to help disseminate learning from the SAR. The aim will be to have this available by the publication date.</p> <p>JH thanked CH for his work on the review, noting the positive feedback from the staff that were involved in the process. Thanks were also passed to the Key Worker who has supported the family through the process and to Gina Hurwood for her support.</p>		

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Advise Business Unit of any issue in relation to the Bernadette SAR publication date	All	15/01/2024

Agenda Item 3	Missing From Home - Update	Presenter: Caroline McGlade	
<p>Caroline McGlade (CM) attended the June TSAB meeting to give a presentation on the work that Cleveland Police were doing in relation to Missing From Home (MFH). An agreed action from the June meeting was for CM to provide a 6 month update to the Board.</p>			
<p>CM shared a presentation with members detailing the current MFH figures across Tees as of the end of October 2023. The presentation gave a comparison of figures for the month of October and for the previous 12 month period. A copy of the presentation will be shared with the minutes of the meeting.</p>			
<p>The number of incidents involving missing adults and the number of high risk incidents involving missing adults have both shown a decrease during the October period, whilst the figure for the 12 month period has shown an increase in both cases. The repeat incident rates involving adults missing from home is decreasing which suggests an increasing trend in first time missing from home adults. This creates a greater challenge as these incidents are harder to problem solve.</p>			
<p>A significant number of adults go missing from care settings and Cleveland Police have identified a number of key themes in relation to this. It is anticipated that some of the work being done in relation to Right Care Right Person (RCRP) will help to address some of these issues.</p>			
<p>Work has been done to look at different models in use across the country in order to improve the service, and from this the Cleveland Police Improvement Model has been created. MFH currently falls within the work of the response policing teams and takes up a considerable amount of their time. On average Cleveland Police are managing a similar volume of MFH cases as some of the Metropolitan services. The improvement model is subject to funding but proposes to increase the existing team from 1 sergeant with 4 staff to 1 sergeant and 12 staff which will provide capacity to support the response teams, particularly in relation to the medium risk MFH cases. Higher risk cases would remain with the response teams. It is hoped that within 12 months this model will help to reduce the figure and allow a bid for further resources. Cleveland Police have recognised the value of including partner resources within their MFH hubs and are open to suggestions for ways to take this forward. The first multi-agency problem solving meeting around adult missing from home has now taken place in Cleveland and demonstrated good partnership working. Cleveland Police would like to continue to improve the mental health pathways that result from Public Protection notices to ensure that individuals receive the necessary support.</p>			
<p>The first partnership meeting in relation to RCRP took place at the end of November. Four sub-groups have been created to take the work forward, with CM leading on the Partnership element. CM encouraged members to consider the National Partnership Agreement in the context of their own organisations to identify any commissioning gaps or problems that may need to be considered. The next partnership meeting is taking place on 24th January and will start to look at the problem solving aspect. Any members that are not currently represented would be welcome to attend.</p>			
<p>JH thanked CM for the update and noted the positive link with the RCRP work, and encouraged participation from any partner organisations that are not already involved.</p>			
<p>Councillor Ann McCoy queried if the reduction in figures for the October period may be a result of RCRP, and people having the opinion that police would no longer respond to incidents of MFH. CM advised that the RCRP meetings that have taken place have given the opportunity to bring to the fore existing TEWV policies that staff may not have been aware of. The reduction in calls to the control room may be a result of staff now being more aware of existing processes that are in place.</p>			
<p>JH requested that a further update is provided in 6 months time unless there are any issues that emerge prior to then and that the Board will be happy to assist with engagement if required.</p>			
Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline	
<p>1. Missing From Home presentation to be shared with the meeting minutes</p>	<p>BU</p>	<p>02/01/2024</p>	
<p>2. Update on Missing From Home to be provided in 6 months time</p>	<p>BU/CM</p>	<p>12/06/2024</p>	

Agenda Item 4	TEWV – Update on Inspection Framework	Presenter: Beverley Murphy	
<p>TEWV have provided updates to the Board previously in relation to their Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection. Chief Nurse, Beverley Murphy (BM), attended the meeting to provided members with a presentation on TEWV’s progress.</p>			
<p>The CQC inspection process commenced in March 2023 across a number of services, looking at the quality of service and the executive leadership. The draft report was received in July and final publication then took place on 25th October. Whilst the overall rating has remained unchanged there are a number of positive changes behind this. When compared to the previous inspection the current ratings are now more predictable across all services, providing assurance to the public that when accessing services, they are more likely to have a good experience of care. Of the six core services inspected three ratings remained the same and three ratings improved.</p>			
<p>From the inspection a number of Must Do and Should Do Actions were identified, with Must Do Actions signifying regulatory breaches. Only 2 Must Do Actions were identified across the community inspection of Adult Mental Health teams, 1 for older adult inpatients and 1 for the ALD community. BM stressed that the rating of Requires Improvement does not mean an unsafe service, but a number of learning themes have been identified around staffing, training, supervision and physical health monitoring to improve the consistency of safe provision of care. Some changes need to be made around complaints and Duty of Candour in relation to serious incident processes. A number of improvements have already been made and TEWV are now working towards maintaining these. The CQC recognised that the organisation has changed culturally with care being more evident and person centred, good multi-disciplinary and governance teams in place and that all staff recognised TEWV’s vision and Strategic Direction.</p>			
<p>The presentation detailed the process for Improvement Plan Reporting and listed all of the Must Do and Should Do Actions. BM advised that a number of these have already been completed. A number of Should Do Actions were in relation to Safeguarding. In response to these TEWV will continue to raise awareness of the safeguarding standards and as the organisation moves to a new electronic recording system (CITO) in February 2024 there will be a number of forms included to improve the quality and consistency of working. The Safeguarding Public Protection Team will receive reports on compliance with the standards to ensure that TEWV are practising as required across all services. Work is already underway to strengthen safeguarding links across the organisation and to continue to support staff via supervision, training, and resources.</p>			
<p>The improvement plan is governed with a system in place to receive the actions, work them into the care groups and report on progress to the Quality Assurance Committee and the NHS England Quality Board. The Board of Directors receive reports on progress and have the opportunity to challenge if actions are not delivering.</p>			
<p>JH thanked BM for the update and requested that a further update is provided when appropriate.</p>			
Action Points		Action Owner	Deadline
1. Further update on TEWV Inspection Framework to be provided when appropriate		BU/BM/ED	TBA

Agenda Item 5	Q2 Performance Report	Presenter: Angela Storm	
<p>The Q2 Performance report is the first report to be shared with Board members using the Power BI system. The report has not been shared with the agenda, but Angela Storm (AS) advised that she is working with the IT and Information Governance teams to create a secure workspace where all members, including those without a Power BI licence, can access the data and interactive dashboard. The reports will be published in an App and AS will circulate a link to enable members to access this.</p>			
<p>The new format aims to replicate the previous reporting style.</p>			
<p>Strategic Aims:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Working – Information on the Multi agency audits that have taken place, the number of cases referred into High Risk Adult Panel (HRAP) (Previously Team Around the Individual) and the percentage of individuals satisfied with their outcome. 			

- People – Figures are provided for the number of people that have accessed the Board’s training provision and the number of Safeguarding Adult Review notifications considered within the period.
- Communication – The number of individuals asked about their desired outcome and figures for social media and website activity, reflecting the amount of work carried out during National Safeguarding Adults Week (NSAW).
- Services – Progress with the Non-Statutory Partners QAF process and the number of Care Providers subject to the Responding to and Addressing Serious Concerns process.

Performance Indicators:

Three out of the four Performance Indicators are being met and the report now includes a breakdown by Local Authority area. AS advised that this provoked good discussion within the Performance, Audit and Quality Sub-Group meeting and helps to provide confidence that work is being done in any areas that may not be meeting the target.

Concerns & Enquiries:

The number of Concerns has increased during the reporting year. Some of the reporting mechanisms and the way that Concerns are recorded in the systems have changed which has impacted on the overall figure. Concerns leading to a Section 42 Enquiry has seen an overall decrease. The Power BI dashboard allows this information to be broken down by Local Authority area. The main categories of abuse remained as Physical, Neglect and Acts of Omission, Financial, Domestic Abuse and Self-Neglect. Again, the dashboard allows this information to be broken down further by Local Authority area, location of risk and source of referral.

Comparison to Previous Year:

The type, location and source of risk can be split by Local Authority area and filtered by both age and gender to give a clear picture across Tees. The data is similar to both the previous quarter and the previous year, with no significant changes to highlight.

Outcomes:

Action was taken in the majority of enquiries. In over half of concluded Section 42 Enquiries the source of risk was known to the individual. Risk was removed or reduced in the majority of cases. In most cases individuals were asked about desired outcomes and these were achieved.

Multi Agency Data:

Multi Agency data still needs to be incorporated into the Power BI reporting system. For this quarter Multi Agency data has been compiled using the old reporting style and a copy of this will be circulated with the minutes.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Multi Agency data to be circulated with the minutes	BU	02/01/2024

Agenda Item 6	Sub-Group and Task & Finish Group Update	Presenter: Sub-Group Chairs
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Safeguarding Adults Review Sub-Group – Jill Harrison

Sunderland SAB SAR notifications – A briefing note was circulated with the agenda for information. This item was discussed at the recent Statutory Partners meeting and a number of questions were raised around concerns when the host Local Authority does not commission a service but has Safeguarding responsibility. Members were asked to carry out checks as to whether there are any other individuals from across Tees placed with the provider in Sunderland. Darren Best will be making contact with the Sunderland SAB Chair in terms of their oversight of the named care provider.

Update on SAR Thematic Report (ASE) - Mapping of appropriate housing and support services for victims of Adult Sexual Exploitation (ASE) was raised at the recent Adult Exploitation Task & Finish Group as well as the challenges around data gathering linked to exploitation. The ASE Learning Briefing has been drafted and circulated to relevant colleagues with a specific request to voluntary sector colleagues to seek feedback from service users and support groups. Kay Nicholson updated that representatives from the

STAGE project were in Parliament for the Changing the Narrative event around ASE and linking the policy and influencing work to the Victims and Prisoners Bill. An amendment was added to the Bill to consider a definition of ASE and they are working with local MPs to progress this further.

A number of documents were circulated with the agenda for approval:

- James Action Plan – Progress has already been made on several of the actions.
- MDT Guidance – The guidance has been reviewed considering learning from the James SAR.
- SK Action Plan - Progress has already been made on several of the actions. Elements of learning from the Whorlton Hall SAR have been incorporated where appropriate.

A range of SAR documents were also attached to the agenda for approval, with changes highlighted in yellow.

- Notification Form
- Learning Reviews & Processes Linked to Incidents of Serious Harm or Death
- Initial Chronology
- Recommendation Summary
- Family Leaflet

All documents have been aligned to the revised SAR Policy & Procedures. A new TSAB webpage has been created: *Learning Reviews and Processes Linked to Incidents of Serious Harm or Death*. Members were asked to confirm if they are happy with this wording and Local Authority leads were requested to check that Public Health are happy with the Drug and Alcohol Related Death Reviews.

JH advised that the Business Unit have received a number of SAR Notifications in error that should have been Safeguarding Concerns. There is a clear process in place for raising a concern and JH requested that members remind colleagues of this. The SAR form is only to be used for SAR referrals.

No queries were raised by members so all documents were deemed to be approved.

Operational Leads Sub-Group – Amy Mahoney

The Sub-Group last met on 16th November. Key items of discussion were:

- Concern Forms on Local Authority websites and whether a more consistent approach could be taken. Some host the Concern Form, some direct to the TSAB website and some provide details for their First Contact Team. Members were asked to review their own website to ensure that the process is clear. Work has also been done on the TSAB website to ensure the process for reporting abuse is clear.
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council presented a case study in relation to safeguarding procedures that had been used to address an issue that was more of a care management issue. This prompted a lot of discussion and a number of actions were taken away, including the sharing of contact details with other organisational teams to ensure that feedback could be provided.
- HRAP, which was launched on 6th November, and the ASE Toolkit which was launched during NSAW were discussed and members were asked to share across their networks.
- The Unseen Care Sector Report highlighting concerns around abuse and exploitation of workers in care settings was discussed. Members were asked to raise the concerns discussed and share intelligence with their commissioning and management teams.
- Guidance for the Child Carer Pathway for Domestic Abuse was discussed with a plan to promote this further.
- An update was provided on the Policy, Procedures and Practice work. A number of documents have now been reviewed.
- Annual Consultation Survey – This closes on 31st January and members were encouraged to promote further. A copy of the link will be shared with the minutes from this meeting.

Middlesbrough Borough Council (MBC) Multi-Agency Audit Report on Hospital Discharge – Ami Fraser

Ami Fraser presented the report from MBC’s Multi Agency Audit.

The key findings from the enquiry were:

- Only Local Authority and James Cook University Hospital (JCUH) partners were involved in the enquiry.
- A Matron report was completed, which explored all of the areas of concern and highlighted actions and learning. This report was shared with MBC, and this was highlighted in the audit as good practice.
- The District Nursing Service acted quickly to support the service user and the care home staff.

What was done well:

- The S42 had been processed without delay, leading to a very prompt response to the Concern.
- Following the concerns being raised, the care home received the service needed the day after the referral was submitted.
- The service user’s wife was involved throughout and felt reassured at the end of the process.
- An Investigation report completed by JCUH was sighted as part of the audit process. Those involved in the audit felt that the actions taken by health staff were positive and also felt it was good practice to share this report with the Local Authority.

No areas were highlighted for improvement.

Outcome:

The service user received a swift response through the District Nursing Team and the issues were resolved.

JH thanked AF for presenting the report and noted that the audits provide a good opportunity to share examples of good practice and positive learning.

Performance, Audit and Quality Sub-Group – Angela Storm on behalf of Erik Scollay

The Sub-Group last met on 27th November and the following items were discussed:

- An update was provided from the September and October TSAB meetings.
- Each Local Authority presented their Q2 Performance Report which prompted good discussion around the way that Concerns are reported. Hartlepool Borough Council have moved away from recording No Further Action and now report as Other. The Sub-Group will look further at ways to record what happens to Concerns that don’t meet the criteria for a S42 Enquiry but are then progressed via different routes.
- The Q2 TSAB Report was presented using Power BI and an update was provided on progress. Each Local Authority currently provide data in Excel format, but from Q3 will start to use Power Bi as the reporting mechanism. Further work needs to be done on how to include the narrative that accompanies the data.
- An update was provided on the Non-Statutory Partners QAF process.

There was no update from the Communication and Engagement Sub-Group and the Learning, Training and Development Sub-Group as they have not met since the October Board meeting.

JH commented that it is good to see that No Further Action is being considered in order to provide assurance that other routes are taken in these cases.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Members to remind colleagues of the process for raising a concern	All	02/01/2024
2. Link to annual survey to be shared with the minutes	BU	02/01/2024

Agenda Item 7	QAF Evaluation Reports	
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A number of Non-Statutory Partners have completed the QAF process and attended the meeting to provide a summary of the findings.

Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB) – Robin Turnbull (RT)

CFB received a green rating from the audit process. CFB deliver services in 3 key areas – Prevention which includes fire safety visits, school education etc, Protection which helps Business communities through fire safety regulations and emergency response. Key findings from the process were:

Good link to Safeguarding within Cleveland Fire Brigade’s strategic plan. The plan was reviewed last year and received good feedback from the inspectorate.

Good work in relation to the cascading, and the sharing of the learning from SARs which has continued to take place within the organisation. CFB ensure that learning from any incidents or SARs are cascaded to the right audience.

Good practice was identified in the following areas:

Street Link Work - Operational crews attend incidents in remote locations during unsociable hours and may encounter people sleeping rough. In these circumstances, the StreetLink application is used by either the operational crews or Flexible Duty Officer(s) to send an alert to local support services.

Regional Fire Group Talks - CFB regularly attends incidents in neighbouring fire authority areas, such as County Durham and Darlington and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services. In the event of operational crews identifying any safeguarding concerns in neighbouring fire and rescue service geographic areas, mechanisms are in place to ensure that a referral is made to other local authority areas, if necessary.

Training - CFB attended four accidental dwelling fires during the 2022/23 reporting year where a resident lost their life as a result of a fire. Following comprehensive internal debriefs and learning reviews a number of actions were established, one of which involved additional training for operational crews on delivering a Safer Home Visit and types of referrals to be submitted. Home Safety Officers, Community Advocates and the Brigade’s safeguarding lead officer all delivered training to raise awareness throughout the organisation, in addition to training materials provided through the Brigade’s Learning Management System.

RT thanked the Business Unit for their support in completing the process.

Thirteen Housing – Angela Storm on behalf of John Rafferty

AS noted that as with CFB, the submission from Thirteen Housing was made by colleagues completing the process for the first time. In both cases they found the process to be beneficial.

Thirteen made an excellent submission that was easy to navigate, which was commended by the evaluation group. Thirteen were also commended for the work around their Interactive Training Tool which received the award at the National Safeguarding Adults Board Excellence Awards. Thirteen’s proactive approach to safeguarding was demonstrated within the submission by the new policies that they have introduced. One area for improvement was identified in relation to linking new policies with existing ones in order to make them easier for colleagues to apply.

Beyond Housing – Kevin Bradshaw (KB)

This is the second time that Beyond Housing have completed the QAF process and KB noted that it provides a good opportunity to reflect on practice and to have it reviewed by the evaluation group. Beyond Housing received a rating of amber which they felt to be a true reflection, as they acknowledge that they still have work to do in some areas. The submission included pieces of work completed throughout the year, including a renewal of the existing Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, and also took into

consideration the existing action plan for their first submission. The recommendations from the submission along with an internal audit have been used to formulate a new action plan.

Key points were identified in relation to sharing the learning for SARs and Reviews. Although they do have an agreed process for this it is not formally documented within any of their procedures. It was evidenced that all front-line colleagues undertake formal training and induction in respect of safeguarding, including the “Something’s Not Right” alert process. Case management is currently completed manually which is recognised as being labour intensive. Work is underway to move to an automated system.

Areas of good practice were noted around the mandatory reporting tool that must be completed for each home visit, and before cases are closed two fields need to be completed around any concerns in relation to the customer or property. This would then trigger a flag for follow up work if required. Monthly audits are carried out to ensure that any alerts are acted upon with 24 hours and that referrals are made to the Local Authority within 48 hours where applicable.

A further action was identified in relation to the Code of Conduct. Guidance will be introduced on Professional Boundaries and training will be provided to accompany this.

JH thanked the organisations for their presentations and to those involved in the process. JH noted that submissions are open and honest and are being viewed as a learning opportunity to reflect on good practice and identify areas for future work.

Agenda Item 8	Any Other Business	Presenter: All
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A number of documents were included on the agenda for information:

- Right Care Right Person: Cleveland Police Structure – this is provided in response to an action from the October meeting.
- Learning from Regional & National SAR: Whorlton Hall – The report considers learning from a Tees perspective, and members are welcome to share this with colleagues.
- North East SAR Champions Network: Diabetes Awareness and Links to Safeguarding Adult Reviews – Diabetes was identified as a theme within the SAR annual report and a link is included to a webinar session that took place during NSAW.
- NENC ICB LeDer Annual Report 2022-23 – Any questions in relation to this should be forwarded to Jen Moore.
- Information Sharing Agreement – Members are requested to provide signatures if they have not already done so.

The TSAB Development Day is taking place on 14th February at the River Tees Watersports Centre. If there are any items that members would like to have included on the agenda these should be forwarded to the Business Unit.

Neil Harrison advised that the Business Unit are compiling a report from NSAW and also reminded members that the Annual Survey is still open and requested that it is shared where possible.

JH thanked attendees for their time and contributions to the meeting and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Signatures to be provided for the ISA where still outstanding	All	02/01/2024
2. Development Day agenda items to be forwarded to the Business Unit	All	02/01/2024
3. Annual Survey to be shared where possible	All	31/01/2024

Next Meeting Date: **Wednesday 14th February – Development Session**
 Time: **9.30am – 1pm**
 Venue: **River Tees Watersports Centre**

Minutes approved by Deputy Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Hamson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Date: 21/12/2023

Appendix 1 - Attendance Matrix								
The table below reflects named members of the TSAB, although deputies have been shaded.								
Company	16/02/2023	07/03/2023	19/04/2023	14/06/2023	13/09/2023	11/10/2023	13/12/2023	7
Catalyst Stockton / Hartlepower	2	1	1	1	2	1	0	86%
ICB	2	2	3	1	2	3	1	100%
Cleveland Fire Brigade	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	86%
Cleveland Police	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	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	1	1	1	71%
Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Hartlepool Borough Council	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	100%
HBC Lead Member	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	71%
Healthwatch Hartlepool	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	29%
Healthwatch South Tees	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	57%
Healthwatch Stockton	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	57%
HMP Holme House Prison	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	71%
Middlesbrough Borough Council	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	100%
MBC Lead Member	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	71%
Middlesbrough VDA / Redcar & Cleveland VDA	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	14%
National Probation Service Cleveland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	14%
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	1	1	1	1	100%
Public Health	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	43%
Office of Police & Crime Commissioner (committed to 2 meetings per year)	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	57%
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	100%
RCBC Lead Member	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	57%
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	100%
SBC Lead Member	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	57%
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	86%
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	29%
Teesside University	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	29%
Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	100%
Thirteen Housing	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	57%
TSAB Independent Chair	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	86%
TSAB Business Unit	5	6	7	6	7	6	7	100%

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

18 APRIL 2024

**REPORT OF PEOPLE
SELECT COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member: Leader – Cllr Bob Cook

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COST OF LIVING RESPONSE

SUMMARY

The attached report presents the outcomes of the People Select Committee's review of Cost of Living Response.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023-24. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the People Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That findings from this review will inform the development of the Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan/Strategy as part of the 'Powering Our Futures' programme. This will be coordinated with partners and will advocate the importance of lived experience
- 2) That the Council continues to work with schools and governors to address the issues around the affordability of school uniform and provide options to expand the provision of pre-loved uniforms are explored, through devising an action plan clearly outlining the steps to be taken to address these issues. The action plan will be shared with the Committee and progress reported as part of the wider recommendations. In addition, the Council will meet with Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones.
- 3) That the income maximisation service is widely promoted through Stockton News and social media channels as a means of assisting residents with debt management and financial difficulties.
- 4) That, building on the success of previous staff drop in sessions around Cost of Living this targeted approach continues where there is a need.
- 5) That, building on the existing success of the work undertaken, to continue to build on best practice from across the country working alongside the LGA.

DETAIL

1. The attached report outlines the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response. The review has considered the key components of the cost of living approach adopted by the Council at a time of increasing service demands, for both advice and support. Consequently, it has explored the possibility to develop change, and, if appropriate, grow the Council's services around the cost of living work to support more residents in the Borough.
2. The Committee has taken evidence from Council Officers, Bright Minds Big Futures, and following partners/organisations:
 - Thrive Teesside, Catalyst
 - Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network
 - Unite the Union
 - Local Government Association
 - Tees Credit Union
 - Stockton & District Advice & Information Service.

In addition, the Committee visited two The Bread and Butter Thing Hubs during the course of the review.

3. Following approval by Cabinet, an action plan will be submitted to the Select Committee for their endorsement.
4. The report as attached was approved by the select committee and summarised evidence presented to the Committee over the preceding months. Progress has continued and many of initiatives referred to are now operational, as outlined below:

The Bread & Butter Thing

TBBT is now live at five venues across the Borough allowing residents to enjoy high-quality food shopping at lower costs to help boost financial resilience.

A maximum of 80 households can register for each venue and, currently, you can register to shop at:

- Teesside Vineyard Church, Thornaby (Mondays)
- Salvation Army, Stockton (Tuesdays)
- New Life Family Centre, Billingham (Wednesdays)
- Redhill Family Hub, Roseworth (Thursdays)
- Newtown Community Resource Centre, Stockton (Fridays)

Here to Help

Following the success of previous Here to Help events held across the Borough, we are excited to announce that planning is underway for a large-scale event to be held on Saturday 20 July 2024 in Stockton Town Centre. The focus of this event will be families and young people. As well as providing advice and support this event will offer a range of activities for residents to enjoy.

5. Currently, individual schools have established their own schemes to assist parents or carers with the cost of school uniform, including the availability of pre-loved uniforms. Assistance with school uniform costs vary across schools so it is advisable to check a school's website for specific information on uniform cost support. Several [clothing banks](#) across the Borough also stock pre-loved uniform and social media groups have been created for the purpose of offering pre-loved school uniforms. An updated mapping exercise of pre-loved uniform provision and support with school uniform costs across the Borough will be conducted as part of the action plan for this review.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

6. The review has highlighted how the existing challenges associated with poverty and inequality across the Borough have been compounded by the ongoing cost of living situation. The reviews recommendations seek to respond to persistent concerns and ensure that residents continue to be sufficiently supported.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no corporate parenting implications identified at this stage.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no legal implications identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. The review 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

11. All wards will be affected by the recommendations.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

12. None.

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People Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response



Final Report February 2024

People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD

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Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Marilyn Surtees (Chair)
Councillor Paul Weston (Vice Chair)
Councillor Michelle Bendelow
Councillor Ian Dalgarno
Councillor John Gardner
Councillor Niall Innes
Councillor David Reynard
Councillor Hugo Stratton
Councillor Barry Woodhouse

Acknowledgements

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

Cllr Bob Cook, Leader of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Haleem Ghafoor, Strategic Lead (A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees), Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Margie Stewart-Piercy, Community Engagement and Consultation Manager, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
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Sophie Haste, Community Engagement Officer, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Vicky Nightscales, Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF), Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Vanessa Housley, Service Lead Education and Wellbeing, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
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Jill Douglas, Assistant Director – Corporate Services, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Lorraine Dixon, Assistant Director – Customer and Digital Services, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Tracey Herrington, Manager, Thrive Teesside
Clare Branson, Project Coordinator for the Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network, Catalyst
Jon Carling, Chief Executive, Catalyst
Rose Doran, Senior Advisor, Local Government Association
Lee Williams, Chief Executive, Tees Credit Union
Sharon Bailey, Unite the Union
Ian Bartlett, General Manager, Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS)

Rhys Stephens, Money Advice Manager, Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS)
Sprouts Community Food Charity
Salvation Army, Stockton
Annie Pluse, The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT) Partnerships Coordinator
Nicola Cole, The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT)

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Foreword

Following the People Select Committee's review of Cost of Living Response, we are pleased to present the Committee's final report.

The review provided a comprehensive overview of initiatives introduced and partnership working by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in response to the ongoing Cost of Living situation. The Committee has been reassured that residents and Council employees had been sufficiently supported.

Our recommendations seek to respond to the continuing issues highlighted during the review of expensive school uniforms and debt management. They also provide a commitment to develop an anti-poverty strategy to cement the Council's long-term coordinated approach.

We would like to extend our thanks to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers , the LGA, and officers from the Councils key partners, for their contributions to this review. We would also like to thank The Bread and Butter Thing hubs for providing a valuable insight in to one of the ways residents were being supported and the ongoing need for this service.

Cllr Marilyn Surtees - Chair



**Councillor
Marilyn
Surtees
Chair–
People
Select
Committee**



**Councillor
Paul Weston
Vice-Chair–
People
Select
Committee**

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

This review will contribute to all areas of the Council Plan 2023-2026 vision:

A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm.

This means the Borough will be a place where:

- people live in cohesive and safe communities
- people are supported and protected from harm
- people live healthy lives

A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive.

This means we will enjoy:

- great places to live and visit
- clean and green spaces
- rich cultural experiences

A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed.

This means that the Borough will have:

- a growing economy
- improved education and skills development
- job creation and increased employment

A Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

This means that we will make sure that we provide:

- financial sustainability and value for money
- dedicated and resourceful employees
- strong leadership and governance
-

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

The North East Child Poverty Commission has stated that almost two in five children in the North East (38 per cent) are living in poverty, rising to almost half – 47 per cent – of North East children living in a household with an under five.

The consequences of inequalities are significant and impact on quality of life, life chances and life expectancy. There are affluent areas alongside disadvantaged areas in the Borough. Nine of the Borough's 26 wards are in the 10% most deprived in the country and there is an average male life expectancy gap of 21 years between the most and least deprived areas.

Currently, the rising costs of food, fuel and other essentials are combined with this existing disadvantage and vulnerability with households being placed under significant pressure. In the short term, this leaves those residents at risk of hardship and poor wellbeing as well as reduced opportunities in the long term.

In response to the ongoing cost of living crisis, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has introduced a number of initiatives (for example the Cost-of-Living on-line HUB / Warm Spaces / Food Aid Fund) to support the Borough's residents.

This review will build on the 'Scrutiny Review of the Cost of School Uniform' which was undertaken in 2020 and the recommendations of the 'Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty' undertaken in 2022.

This review would consider SBC's response to ensure the Council effectively supports the current and emerging needs of its residents, whilst also evaluating its current approach to inform/provide a steer for ongoing and future activity.

As detailed in the 13 July Cabinet report "Powering Our Futures – Delivering People, Place Economy", the Council is committed to the development of an Anti-Poverty Action Plan (to be co-developed with partners and those with lived experience). The plan will focus on how the Council can help prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty. This review will inform the development of this plan.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- How has Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) responded to the ongoing cost of living crisis both internally and by working with external partners and agencies?
- How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff? Can this be improved?
- How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?
- What are the main 'cost of living' issues facing residents? How have these changed over time?
- How do 'cost of living' issues vary across the Borough?
- In what ways has the cost of living crisis impacted on staff retention and recruitment?
- How have SBC staff been supported if they are struggling financially and mentally as a result of the cost of living crisis?
- What can the Council learn from the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector?
- How will the 'Powering our Future' programme support the delivery of the Council's cost of living response?

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

This review would consider the key components of the cost of living approach adopted by the Council at a time of increasing service demands (for both advice and support). Consequently, it would seek to explore the possibility to develop, change and, if appropriate, grow the Council's services around the cost of living work to support more residents in our Borough.

1.0 Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Cost of Living Response.

In response to the ongoing cost of living crisis, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has introduced a number of initiatives (for example the Cost-of-Living on-line HUB / Warm Spaces / Food Aid Fund) to support the Borough's residents. This review has built on the 'Scrutiny Review of the Cost of School Uniform' which was undertaken in 2020 and the recommendations of the 'Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty' undertaken in 2022. This review has considered SBC's response to ensure the Council effectively supports the current and emerging needs of its residents, whilst also evaluating its current approach to inform/provide a steer for ongoing and future activity.

As detailed in the 13 July 2023 Cabinet report, "Powering Our Futures – Delivering People, Place Economy", the Council is committed to the development of an Anti-Poverty Action Plan (to be co-developed with partners and those with lived experience). The plan will focus on how the Council can help prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty. This review will inform the development of this plan.

This review has considered the key components of the cost of living approach adopted by the Council at a time of increasing service demands (for both advice and support). Consequently, it has explored the possibility to develop, change and, if appropriate, grow the Council's services around the cost of living work to support more residents in the Borough.

The Select Committee 's key findings were as follows:

- Poverty in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees is a long-term issue which has been exacerbated by the ongoing cost of living situation. There is a notable disparity in life expectancy across the Borough, with a difference of 21.1 years for males and 17.1 years for females. 9 of the Borough's 26 wards are in the 10% most deprived in the country.
- The Council's Cost of Living response has included both immediate short-term interventions and long-term strategies. This approach has gained recognition from the Local Government Association (LGA) and praise from external partners in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. It has also been recognised by being nominated for an APSE award.
- Examples of the Council's Cost of Living response include: the online 'Here to Help Hub', which provides information on benefits, advice and support available; the 'Cost of Living Booklet', which is updated quarterly and available online and in print; quarterly newsletters, energy crisis support; and the establishment of Warm Spaces (Community Spaces) in partnership with the VCSE sector. There are also a wide range of other projects to meet any emerging needs, for example The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) work, employee support, work around Child Poverty etc.
- As part of the review, site visits were arranged to two TBBT hubs, Victoria Park Community Hall, Thornaby and The Salvation Army, Stockton. This provided Members with the opportunity to speak to staff, co-ordinators and volunteers and witness the bag preparation and packaging processes prior to collection from members of the public. Members who attended acknowledged the importance of

this initiative in alleviating some of the financial pressures residents are currently facing in light of high food prices.

- During the review, an additional online session was held to receive evidence from an LGA representative on local authority management of the Cost of Living situation. It was evident that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council was leading the way on many aspects of this work. However, it was noted that the challenges around this will continue to grow. Therefore, it is important to continue to provide support to those affected by the Cost of Living.
- The importance of 'lived experience' has been repeatedly highlighted throughout this review. It has been evidenced that, as the Cost of Living situation has developed, services across the Borough have noted that the demographics of those seeking helping and support has changed. For example, there has been increase in those with mortgages or residents from more affluent wards approaching the Council and agencies for help.
- Debt advice and debt management has been a consistent and prevailing theme throughout the evidence gathering process. It is necessary to consider the value that income maximisation support can have in providing one solution to this problem.
- The continuation of issues with the affordability of school uniform has been discussed at length and this is an area where long term intervention will be needed if school uniform policies across the Borough remain restrictive.
- The stigma associated with poverty and receiving support has been raised. However, innovative approaches to reducing this stigma have also been evident, particularly support provided to young people and families through schools.
- In response to the Cost of Living situation, the Council's Customer Services team has been the first point of contact for concerned residents approaching the Council. The volume of calls received, and level of residents in deep distress, has significantly increased since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic. This has impacted on call response times, staff retention, recruitment, training, and the mental wellbeing of Customer Services staff. In response, additional support and training has been put in place for Customer Services staff.
- A range of benefits and initiatives are available to all Council staff members. Targeted support and training have also been provided to staff across the Council. Worthy of note, work with the Council's Community Service staff on men's health and wellbeing has resulted in the achievement of an LGC Award for Best Wellbeing Initiative. This targeted approach could possibly be extended to other areas of the Council where there is a need.
- This review has demonstrated the integral role of the Council's Cost of Living response, and its continued partnerships with external organisations, in supporting residents through the ongoing cost of living situation and the development of the Council's 'Powering Our Futures' initiative. It is essential that the Council continues to maintain and foster relationships with the VCSE sector to provide the best possible solution for residents during these unprecedentedly challenging times.
- As stated above, it is apparent that Cost of Living challenges will continue to grow and evolve. Therefore, the need to continue to develop this work is necessary.

Conclusion

This review has highlighted how the existing challenges associated with poverty and inequality across the Borough have been compounded by the ongoing cost of living situation. Additional challenges have arisen through the widening demographic of those affected by the cost of living. However, the evidence submitted has confirmed that the Council's proactive approach has provided a comprehensive response and resulted in regional and national recognition. The contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector in mitigating the effects of poverty must not be underestimated and the continuation of partnership working is essential for future strategic planning.

Consequently, the review's recommendations seek to respond to persistent concerns (such as the affordability of school uniform and debt management) and provide a commitment to develop an anti-poverty strategy to cement the Council's long-term coordinated approach. Ensuring that residents and Council staff continue to be sufficiently supported is integral in this endeavour.

Recommendations

1. That findings from this review will inform the development of the Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan/Strategy as part of the 'Powering Our Futures' programme. This will be coordinated with partners and will advocate the importance of lived experience.
2. That the Council continues to work with schools and governors to address the issues around the affordability of school uniform and provide options to expand the provision of pre-loved uniforms are explored, through devising an action plan clearly outlining the steps to be taken to address these issues. The action plan will be shared with the Committee and progress reported as part of the wider recommendations. In addition, the Council will meet with Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones.
3. That the income maximisation service is widely promoted through Stockton News and social media channels as a means of assisting residents with debt management and financial difficulties.
4. That, building on the success of previous staff drop in sessions around Cost of Living this targeted approach continues where there is a need.
5. That, building on the existing success of the work undertaken, to continue to build on best practice from across the country working alongside the LGA.

2.0 Introduction

2.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Cost of Living Response.

2.2. In response to the ongoing cost of living crisis, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has introduced a number of initiatives (for example the Cost-of-Living on-line HUB / Warm Spaces / Food Aid Fund) to support the Borough's residents. This review has built on the 'Scrutiny Review of the Cost of School Uniform' which was undertaken in 2020 and the recommendations of the 'Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty' undertaken in 2022. This review has considered SBC's response to ensure the Council effectively supports the current and emerging needs of its residents, whilst also evaluating its current approach to inform/provide a steer for ongoing and future activity.

2.3. As detailed in the 13 July 2023 Cabinet report, "Powering Our Futures – Delivering People, Place Economy", the Council is committed to the development of an Anti-Poverty Action Plan (to be co-developed with partners and those with lived experience). The plan will focus on how the Council can help prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty. This review will inform the development of this plan.

2.4. It was envisaged that a review of cost of living response could potentially lead to the following efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

- This review would consider the key components of the cost of living approach adopted by the Council at a time of increasing service demands (for both advice and support). Consequently, it would seek to explore the possibility to develop, change and, if appropriate, grow the Council's services around the cost of living work to support more residents in our Borough.

2.5 The Committee undertook the following key lines of enquiry:

- How has Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) responded to the ongoing cost of living crisis both internally and by working with external partners and agencies?
- How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff? Can this be improved?
- How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?
- What are the main 'cost of living' issues facing residents? How have these changed over time?
- How do 'cost of living' issues vary across the Borough?
- In what ways has the cost of living crisis impacted on staff retention and recruitment?
- How have SBC staff been supported if they are struggling financially and mentally as a result of the cost of living crisis?
- What can the Council learn from the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector?
- How will the 'Powering our Future' programme support the delivery of the Council's cost of living response?

2.6 The Committee received evidence from Council Officers, Bright Minds Big Futures, Thrive Teesside, Catalyst, Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network, Unite the Union, Local Government Association, Tees Credit Union, Stockton & District Advice & Information Service.

2.7 In November and December 2023, site visits to two of The Bread and Butter Thing Hubs were arranged. The Hubs were located in Victoria Park Community Hall, Thornaby and Salvation Army, Stockton.

2.8 Recognising the increasing pressures on the Council's finances, it is imperative that in-depth scrutiny reviews promote the Council's policy priorities and, where possible, seek to identify efficiencies and reduce demand for services.

3.0 Background

- 3.1. Further background information in relation to this scrutiny topic includes:

His Majesty's Government, *1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils/1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024-household-support-fund-guidance-for-county-councils-and-unitary-authorities-in-england>

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, *Cost of Living Support webpages*. Available at: <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/cost-of-living-hub>

4.0 Evidence

A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees: Background Presentation

4.1 Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) is the Council's strategic framework to reduce inequalities, address the underlying causes of poverty whilst focusing activity on our most deprived neighbourhoods.

Key statistics

4.2 In the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, the average male life expectancy is 77.4 years. It is lowest in the Stockton Town Centre Ward (67.4 years) and highest in the Ingleby Barwick East Ward (84.1 years), a difference of 21.1 years.

4.3 The average female life expectancy is 80.4 years. It is lowest in the Stockton Town Centre Ward (71.8 years) and highest in Ingleby Barwick East Ward (90.3 years), a difference of 17.1 years.

4.4 The under 75 mortality rate from all causes (2018-2020) in the Borough is 395.3 compared to the rate for England 336.5. This is a directly age-standardised rate per 100,000 population.

4.5 19% of the population live with a limiting long-term condition compared with 21.6% in the North East. The percentage is highest in Stockton Town Centre (27%) and lowest in Ingleby Barwick West (8%).

4.6 7.5% of the local population aged 18-24 (965) are claiming out-of-work benefits against 4.6% nationally.

4.7 23.9% of the local population aged 16-64 are economically inactive against 21.4% nationally.

4.8 24.3% of children in the Borough are living in poverty compared with 15.1% nationally (after housing costs).

4.9 There are 560 children in the Council's care, a rate of 132 per 10,000 children, compared with a national rate of 67.0 per 10,000 children.

4.10 The following examples demonstrate Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's ongoing work in reducing inequalities:

- Delivered Council Tax Rebates and Discretionary payments made to residents.
- Delivered 3 rounds of the Household Support Grant.
- Provided energy saving schemes and advice services delivered i.e. Warm Homes Healthy People.
- Delivered the Holiday Activities Fund and Free School Meals initiatives.
- Supported residents via our Welfare Assistance programmes i.e. Back on Track.
- Worked with partners to deliver Household Health Checks.
- Provided employment and training support through our Training & Employment Hub.
- Supported families through our network of Family Hubs.

- Valued the VCSE sector (worked collaboratively with Catalyst, SDAIS and Moneywise to deliver/support essential services).
- Tackling poverty –Community Partnerships.

The Cost of Living situation

4.11 The pandemic has left many households in the Borough facing financial difficulties. The current cost of living situation led to many in the Borough facing new challenges. The impact of the cost-of-living situation led the Council to take immediate steps to support its residents.

4.12 The Council's key areas of focus have been the Energy Crisis, Food Crisis, Employee Engagement, Employee Upskilling, Child Poverty and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Cost of Living response

4.13 Examples of the Council's cost of living response include the Cost of Living Hub, Here to Help booklet, Warm Spaces (Community Spaces), and the Food Aid Fund.

Community Spaces: Warm Spaces in Stockton-on-Tees

4.14 Warm Spaces are inclusive, non-judgemental spaces where the Borough's residents can go to get warm, take part in activities, receive support and advice, avoid social isolation, reduce their anxiety about the cost of living and generally stay well.

Food Aid Fund

4.15 Organisations, groups and schools involved in the food aid fund include:

Amal Project Teesside
A WAY OUT Charity
Challoner House Community Centre
Groundwork NE & Cumbria
Iron Guidance Charity
NiteLight CIC
Purple Rose Stockton
The Moses Project
Thornaby Food Bank | Chad's Pantry
Stockton Baptist Church
Mill Lane Primary School
BCT Aspire CIC
Billingham Town Council
Norton Methodist Church
Salvation Project
St John the Baptist Primary
Yarm Wellness
High Clarence Primary School
Friends of Ropner Park
ReGenerate-Hope For Autism
Portrack Baptist Church
Billingham and Stockton Borough Foodbank
North East Migration Project
Teesside Vineyard Church

Thornaby FC Women
Oxbridge Lane
Community Grocery Ragworth
St Therese of Lisieux Parish
Billingham South Primary School
Bowesfield Primary School

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

4.16 CSR activity can support immediate priorities, such as work to tackle the problems arising from the ongoing cost of living challenges. An example of this is provided in a video on the Warm Spaces initiative which can be accessed via the following link: <https://vimeo.com/838617168/6a9bfc9770>

Child Poverty

4.17 The Council's work on child poverty includes feeding into service issues affecting children in poverty as a result of the Cost of Living situation and exploring possibilities around breakfast club provisions, the Child Poverty Fund, promotion of HAF services etc.

4.18 The Council also provides representatives at the North East Child Poverty Commission.

4.19 A previous Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty has also been undertaken and an action plan has been agreed by the Children and Young People Select Committee.

Employee Support

4.20 Cost of Living support drop-in sessions have been provided for employees across the organisation and a forthcoming roadshow has also been planned.

Employee Upskilling

4.21 A video has been created to provide employees of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council with information on Cost of Living support that is available for themselves and residents across the Borough. The course aimed to provide employees with the wide range of support options available, useful links and details on how to help our residents with Cost of Living related matters. The video can be accessed via the following link: https://vimeo.com/794893327/8938a2c5ee?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&wner=117080616

Other Cost of Living projects

4.22 The following examples demonstrate partnership working to support residents during the cost of living situation:

The [A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees](#) team have also partnered with Tees Active Leisure to offer discounted leisure sessions from Monday 28 November (term-time only) including swimming for £1.50 at Thornaby Pool (Mondays 1.30pm to 2.45pm, Tuesday to Friday 1.30pm to 3pm) and soft play for £1.50 at Billingham Forum (Monday, Wednesday and Friday – 10.30am to 11.30am and Tuesday and Thursday – 1.30pm to 2.30pm).

Home Alone, Elf and Frozen 2 among free films for movie lovers at warm space this winter

Stockton Arc is offering a string of great films to watch as families stay warm during the cost of living crisis

WHAT'S ON By Jamie Smith
16:44, 23 NOV 2022

Bookmark     Comments

Catalyst

4.23 Catalyst have been working alongside partners to address inequalities and have secured a bid to the National Lottery Fund which is directly aimed at reducing inequalities. Catalyst is also currently recruiting a FSOT Co-ordinator. Catalyst's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Directory also gives details of over 300 organisations in the (VCSE) sector in Stockton-on-Tees.

Cost of Living –next steps

4.24 Planned activity includes an ongoing quarterly newsletter for all employees and partners and work to develop the Cost of Living Hub. An up to date Cost of Living booklet will also be developed.

4.25 Cost of Living events are scheduled across the seven Community Partnership areas through a task and finish project between September 2023 and March 2024.

4.26 Cost of Living Network meetings are held bimonthly with Senior Officers from across directorates to ensure that the work reflects current priorities. Related projects include the Databank Project which will be developed to support the most vulnerable.

4.27 The Council has been nominated for an APSE award for Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative.

4.28 Work is ongoing on an Anti-Poverty Action Plan to be agreed by Cabinet/Council in 2024. An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment Toolkit is also being developed.

The Bread and Butter Thing

4.29



Introducing The Bread and Butter Thing



*** Save over £20 a week on your shopping**
*** New hub opening: 1.30pm, Tuesday 12 September**
At The Salvation Army, Palmerston Street,
Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1NU



4.30 Opening in September 2023:

- Salvation Army, Palmerston Street, Stockton, TS18 1NU –Tuesdays @ 1.30pm [launches Tuesday 12 September]
- Victoria Park Community Hall, Peel Street, Thornaby, TS17 6HL –Mondays @ 1.30pm [launches Monday 18 September]

4.31 Discussions are ongoing with community partners and volunteer networks with a view to establishing the remaining three hubs by December 2023:

- Newtown Community Resource Centre, Durham Road, Stockton, TS19 0DE –Wednesdays @ 1.30pm

- St Andrew’s Methodist Church, Hardwick, TS19 8PH –Fridays @ 1.30pm
- Community venue in Billingham East (TBC) –Thursdays @ 1.30pm

4.32 It was confirmed that The Bread and Butter Thing scheme would be accessible to all residents who needed to access the hubs. The hub locations were selected based on evidence of where there was the greatest requirement for the service.

Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP)

Warm Homes Healthy People in Stockton-on-Tees

Are you, a friend or neighbour, struggling to keep your home warm?

Warm Homes Healthy People can help.

Cold temperatures can have a serious impact on your health and are linked to a number of health conditions including respiratory disease, strokes, falls and flu. Keeping warm and healthy during the cold weather can help keep illness away.

You could qualify if you are the homeowner, are in receipt of a means-tested benefit and if you are any of the following:

- 65 or over and in receipt of a means tested benefit
- Under 65 and in receipt of a means tested benefit as well as one of the following:
 - In receipt of disability benefits
 - have a long-term illness made worse by the cold,
 - Live with a child (under 5) who has a long-term illness made worse by the cold
 - Living with a dementia condition

We can help with:

- Free boiler repairs
- Emergency Heating
- Energy debt advice and welfare benefits advice and assistance
- Advice and support to help keep you healthy and more able to cope with cold weather

From 1 July to 30 September as part of the warm homes healthy people scheme we are offering free boiler servicing to residents across the Borough, to qualify you must meet the criteria detailed above.

For further information call 01642 528215 or visit www.stockton.gov.uk/energy-saving-schemes

For emergency heating you can contact Cleveland Fire Brigade direct on: 01429 874063.

For further advice and support you can contact Stockton District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS) direct on: 01642 633877.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, HVE, Culture and Leisure, Cleveland Fire Brigade

4.33 The Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) programme is a collaboration of partner organisations, managed by the Council’s Environment Team to deliver interventions that support affordable warmth and contribute to reducing fuel poverty. The funding comes from Public Health.

4.34 These assistance measures are targeted at the most vulnerable households, particularly those with the highest needs and whose health and wellbeing is more likely to be negatively impacted without intervention.

4.35 The programme is currently running for the thirteenth time, the main programme runs from October to March each year.

4.36 This year, the Council has also introduced a handyman initiative which will identify small energy efficiency measures which can be undertaken when visiting properties. These measures include providing LED lightbulbs, draft excluders, window repairs etc which all contribute to energy savings. The Council has also provided a proactive summer boiler servicing scheme, which runs from June to September.

4.37 The programme accepts self-referrals as well as referrals from front line workers who have identified concerns for the health and well-being of vulnerable persons through lack of heating and poor housing conditions.

4.38 A household experiences fuel poverty if they are on a low income and face high costs of keeping adequately warm and ensuring other basic energy services. Fuel poverty is driven by three main factors: household income, the current cost of energy and the energy efficiency of a home.

4.39 One in five UK households containing dependent children experienced fuel poverty in 2020. Rates of fuel poverty have increased since summer 2021, largely due to the increasing cost of fuel, which is predicted to continue to rise. By January 2023, it is estimated that 66 per cent, or 18 million households, in the UK will be in fuel poverty unless there are effective interventions to prevent this.

4.40 Homes that are cold due to fuel poverty exacerbate health inequalities. Cold homes can cause and worsen respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia, hypothermia and problems with childhood development. In some circumstances, health problems may be exacerbated to a degree that they may cause death.

4.41 In 2019, it was estimated the NHS spends at least £2.5 billion per year on treating illnesses that are directly linked to cold, damp and dangerous homes. Cold homes and fuel poverty contribute to the phenomenon of excess winter deaths. England saw an estimated 63,000 excess winter deaths in 2020–21. Estimates suggest that some 10 per cent of excess winter deaths are directly attributable to fuel poverty and 21.5 per cent are attributable to cold homes. England's excess winter deaths index is higher than the Northern European average.

Rates of Fuel Poverty

4.42 The estimate for Stockton-on-Tees 12.9% (10,816 households). The Estimate for North England 14.4% In the Tees Valley the estimates are:

- Darlington - 13.4%
- Hartlepool - 14.6%
- Middlesbrough 16.6%
- Redcar & Cleveland 14.3%

4.43 Stockton fuel poor households range from 30.5% in a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) (12C) in Mandale & Victoria down to 3.4% in an Ingleby Barwick LSOA (23E).

What has been delivered?

4.44 Warm Homes Healthy People is the longest investment in an intervention Public Health have made. The scheme is popular with Elected Members, and all the staff delivering the scheme go out of their way to be as "flexible" as possible with customers. The officers receive regular commendations from customers.

4.45 Since 2012, the Council has supported 4,024 households across the Borough. 1156 boiler services/repairs have been conducted. 117 replacement boilers have been installed. This summer the Council's offer of boiler servicing to prevent winter breakdowns is very popular and has currently been taken up by 59 homes.

4.46 Stockton & District Advice and Information Service's (SDAIS) work on income maximisation has brought £5,364,446 of previously unclaimed benefit entitlement to vulnerable people across the Borough.

4.47 Warm Homes Healthy People continues to adapt to customers' needs and for season 13 (the current season) the Council has reduced the qualifying age criteria to 65 from 75.

4.48 In response to the Cost of Living crisis, the Council used a saving to commission SDAIS to deliver their element of the scheme during the spring and summer 2023. Savings from previous years have also been used to provide a new handyman service, when visiting properties to identify any other measures that can be provided to make the home more energy efficient. The Council also commissions SDAIS to deliver support dementia clients and their carers.

4.49 WHHP leaflets had been produced for those who did not have access to the internet. Information on the WHHP scheme was also included in Stockton News, and leaflets were distributed to a wide range of community spaces.

4.50 Those who used the WHHP scheme were mainly homeowners, however the Council was committed to assisting anyone in need. Cleveland Fire Brigade also provide emergency heating services, including electric heaters and blankets.

4.51 The Council dealt with every request directly through the WHHP scheme and Heating Ventilation Electrical Building Services (HVE Services) colleagues assisted with the installation of replacement boilers, if necessary.

4.52 Responses to requests were dealt with as soon as possible, and usually within twenty-four or forty-eight hours. Replacement boilers were usually installed within a week of a request. The Council ensured that residents were not left in a vulnerable.

Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF)

4.53 In October 2023, Select Committee received evidence from a Council Community Engagement Officer and Bright Minds Big Futures' (BMBF) Head of Community Safety.

4.54 BMBF had been involved in several projects in response to the ongoing issues associated with the cost of living. This included work with Tees Credit Union to develop a money management training programme for young people. The programme was available for schools, and youth groups. An online resource was also available. The programme was tailored for different age groups. Two schools have already utilised the programme.

4.55 The Borough's Member of Youth Parliament had been involved in the campaign for free school meals.

4.56 The Council's Community Engagement Team and BMBF have worked with three local primary schools to establish community pantries. This involved working with children for 6 weeks and activities included meal planning and soup making. The pantries were set up as a fundraising initiative for the school to remove the stigma of families accessing it as a food bank. Families were able to purchase 5 items for £1. Leaflets including information on further support available across the borough were included in each food pack.

4.57 A further example of BMBF's work in response to the Cost of Living was the 'pay as you feel' teddy bear stall at the Stockton Sparkles event. Donations of teddy bears were received, and young people were able to purchase a bear for a price they could afford or name a bear if they were unable to purchase a bear.

4.58 BMBF tried to be as inclusive as possible, and the group supported its young volunteers by providing food at group meetings and events and paid for travel expenses.

4.59 The 'pay as you prom' saving scheme was discussed as an option to assist parents and carers with planning for end of school proms.

Thrive Teesside

4.60 In October 2023, the Select Committee received evidence from the Manager of Thrive, Teesside, a local organisation.

4.61 The 'grassroots anti-poverty charity' was established in 2007, and was originally based in Newtown, Stockton and was now based in Norton. The charity worked with people on a one-to-one basis and focussed on the importance of lived experience.

4.62 Thriving Women, a project which was designed to give local women a voice through poetry was highlighted. A collection of poetry and essays was published as part of this project.

4.63 National anti-poverty work included involvement in the APLE Collective (founding member) and Poverty 2 Solutions.

4.64 Thrive worked to give a voice to people who felt silenced in local and national debates.

4.65 It was reported that the ongoing cost of living situation had exacerbated existing poverty issues. There had been an increase in mortality and long-term illnesses for those living in disadvantaged communities.

4.66 It was also reported that within the past twelve months, Thrive had experienced an increase in people asking for advice about debt, deductions in benefits, rent arrears, and problems with school costs, such as school uniform and school trips. Mothers had increasingly commented that they felt inadequate as parents because they could not provide for their children.

4.67 Some parents and carers could no longer afford to fund paid activities for children which they had previously struggled to afford.

4.68 Thrive had also experienced an increase in requests concerning mortgage difficulties. Staff were not trained to provide targeted mortgage support but assisted with referrals and signposting.

4.69 It was commented that the Cost of Living situation was also linked with an increase in issues with mental health.

4.70 A lack of access to online platforms increased some people's difficulties with accessing services and support.

4.71 Persistent cuts to local authority budgets across the country was raised as an issue of concern.

4.72 Further information on this organisation and its projects is available via the Thrive Teesside website, which can be accessed via the following link: <https://thrive-teesside.org.uk/>

4.73 In response to the evidence received, the Committee questioned if there was anything that the Council could do to improve its cost of living support. The importance of retaining printed leaflets and promoting information in print and in person as well as online was highlighted. It was also noted that ward Councillors were in a unique position to engage with residents and ask what specific support they needed.

4.74 The addition of toiletries was suggested as an improvement for the 'The Bread and Butter Thing' initiative.

4.75 Council officers confirmed that Thrive Teesside would be involved in the Council's anti-poverty strategy to ensure that the importance of lived experience was included.

School Uniforms Update

4.76 As requested, in November 2023, the Committee received an update on school uniform guidelines and the work of the Council in this area.

School Uniform: Scrutiny Recommendations

4.77

- 1) That Academy Trusts and Governing Bodies of Stockton Schools be asked to review their school uniform policies as a matter of urgency in consultation with parents and children taking account of the DfE advice to give the highest priority to cost.
- 2) That school governing bodies and leadership teams review the support they provide to families struggling to meet uniform costs taking account of the ideas and initiatives in place across Stockton schools gathered as part of this scrutiny exercise.
- 3) That all support provided by schools is clearly published on school websites alongside their uniform policies.
- 4) That improved co-ordination/ signposting of community and school-based support is co-ordinated through the new Community Partnerships.
- 5) That Government is urged to pass legislation to put the DfE best practice guidance on a statutory footing and support is sought from local MPs towards this end.
- 6) That the findings from the scrutiny review and the best practice from the school survey be shared with all Stockton Schools and reinforced at appropriate forums.

DfE policy on school uniform

4.78 The DfE produced statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms which schools must have regard to when developing and implementing their school uniform policy.

4.79 This guidance requires schools to publish their uniform policy on their website. The published uniform policy should be easy to understand and, where a school has a school uniform, should:

- clearly state whether an item is optional or required
- make clear if the item will only be worn at certain times of the year (for example, if it's summer or winter uniform)
- make clear whether a generic item will be accepted or if a branded item is required

- make clear whether an item can only be purchased from a specific retailer or if it can be purchased more widely, including from second-hand retailers.

4.80 *“It is for the governing body of a school to decide . . . what (the school uniform policy) should be. This flows from the duties placed upon all governing bodies by statute to ensure that school policies promote good behaviour and discipline amongst the pupil body. It is also for the governing body to decide how the uniform should be sourced. The Department strongly encourages schools to have a uniform as it can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.”*

Best Practice and Resources

4.81 The School Uniforms Guide, produced by the Child Poverty Action Group can be accessed via the following link:
https://cpag.org.uk/system/files_force/files/page/Final-School-Uniforms-Guide_0.pdf

Content of the School Uniforms Guide

4.82 The School Uniforms Guide covered new legislation, advice on updating school uniform policies and setting up a pre-loved school uniform shop. Promoting pre-loved uniform provision and case studies are also included within the guide.

Considerations

- 4.83 The following considerations should be noted regarding the updated legislation and guidance on school uniform policies:
- The impact of stipulating variations in uniform
 - Avoiding frequent changes to minimise financial impact
 - How the costs affect different groups of pupils
 - The views of parents and pupils
 - Avoiding additional uniform requirements for extra-curricular
 - The use of branded items is kept to a minimum
 - Parents are not required to purchase multiple expensive items
 - Contracts and arrangements with suppliers help parents get value for money.

Questions for governors/ trustees

4.84

- 1) Based on this information, what changes should be made to our uniform policy to ensure that it is affordable to families and reflects the circumstances of the communities we serve?
- 2) How are stakeholders –including pupils and their families –being consulted on our uniform requirements? Have we been proactive in seeking views from all groups?
- 3) What are parents telling us about the impact of our uniform policy on them?
- 4) Does the information/data on compliance with our uniform policy suggest any issues with affordability and inclusivity?
- 5) How do we support families to comply with our uniform policy and ensure that issues of non-compliance are dealt with sensitively?
- 6) How do we positively promote our second-hand uniform provision and remove any stigma parents may attach to it?
- 7) How are we using good procurement practice and developing relationships with uniform suppliers to ensure costs are kept low?

Poverty Proofing the School Day (Children North East)

4.85 Further information on Poverty Proofing the School Day, and contact details for the regional officer, are below:

Lorna Nicoll
Poverty Proofing the School Day Team Manager
Children North East
07809215387
Lorna.nicoll@children-ne.org.uk
@povertyproofcne
www.povertyproofing.co.uk

Dissemination

4.86 Policy changes and best practice guidance have been circulated to headteachers and senior leaders at the termly Closing the Gap sessions, Education Matters, and Pupil Premium Leadership training forums.

4.87 Information has also been disseminated to school governors at half termly briefings and Pupil Premium Governor training sessions.

4.88 Updates to school uniform policies have also been included on agendas at wider forums, such as the Education Improvement Service, Cost of Living network, Child Poverty and Fairer Stockton. Council Officers have also worked with Catalyst on this area.

4.89 In response to evidence received, The Committee raised concerns about a perceived general lack of support from school governors to make school uniforms more affordable. It was acknowledged that the Council was restricted in its influence on academies and free schools.

4.90 For maintained schools, an annual check of school websites was undertaken by Council officers to ensure that schools were compliant with current legislation and school uniform policy was included in this check.

4.91 Officers explained that the crucial role of school governors was to challenge and support school policies. Officers agreed that this was a continual process and regularly updated governors on school uniform and the promotion of 'pre-loved' uniforms. The Council also continued to run its termly 'Closing the Gap' sessions to ensure governors remained well informed.

4.92 Catalyst had carried out an online mapping exercise to catalogue the different services available to recycle uniform and purchase/obtain pre-loved uniforms. The possibility of opening a pre-loved uniform shop in Stockton Town Centre had also been discussed.

Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network: Stockton-on-Tees Community Food Leaflets
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4.93 Stockton-on Tees Food Power Network has produced six-page information leaflets including details of Foodbanks, pantries, free or low-cost hot food options currently available in the Borough. The leaflets have been viewed 20,000+ online. The interactive map has been viewed 12,000+ times online.

4.94 A copy of the latest leaflet (October 2023) is attached as appendix 1.

Catalyst/ Food Power Network

4.95 Catalyst is the VCSE infrastructure organisation for Stockton-on-Tees with 205 members, but the services are available to all VCSE partners. In 2022/23, Catalyst held 60 1:1 appointments (funding and other support), ran 24 training courses, facilitated 43 forums and represented the sector on 9 strategic Boards. The organisation also sent a weekly e-bulletin to 1000+ subscribers and disbursed £1,200,000 to the VCSE sector.

Partnerships

4.96 Catalyst’s partnerships include:

- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, NHS, PCC
- Food Power Network
- Community Mental Health Transformation (Lived Experience Forum)
- Youth United Stockton Alliance
- Health and Well-Being Forum
- Stockton Climate Action Network
- Volunteer Coordinators Group
- Roseworth Big Local
- HEP/HAF Providers Network
- Youth Providers Network

What is the Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network?

4.97



Community pantries in Stockton-on-Tees Borough – usage statistics

4.98



(Sept 22 - Aug 23)

Average number of visits experienced by all **community pantries**:

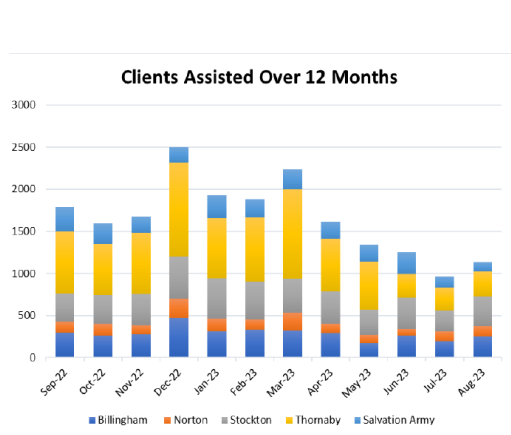
3615 visits per month, average

Trends in demand

- ↑ Increase after Christmas (Jan)
- ↑ Increase after new school term starts (Sept/Oct)
- ↓ Reduction throughout the summer holidays (July/Aug)

Foodbanks in Stockton-on-Tees Borough – usage statistics

4.99



Average number of clients supported with food parcels per month by **all foodbanks in the Borough**
Sept 22- Aug 23:

1660 clients supported per month

Trends in demand

- ↑ Increase during and after Christmas (Dec/Jan)
- ↑ Increase at end of summer holidays, and new school term starts (Aug/Sept)
- ↓ Reduction before and during *first half* of summer holidays (June/July)



Providing additional support for food support services

4.100 In Summer 2023, a local pilot scheme was launched for a local produce donation scheme with Oxbridge & Spennithorne allotments. The aim was to establish a produce donation scheme. This enabled allotment holders to donate their surplus produce to local causes. Accessible donation boxes were provided, and the scheme included buy-in and promotion by Stockton Allotment Association. Donations were collected and delivered weekly by volunteers using the Stockton Food Power Network electric van.

4.101 Approximately 50 large crates of fresh produce were donated to Sprouts & Hebron Church Foodbank between July and September 2023. By Catalyst's estimations, this donation supplemented 500 food parcels. The project was praised and named a success by the allotment association and a repeat of the scheme was approved for next summer.

Food support services & the Cost of Living Stockton: How food support services support residents with the Cost of Living (CoL)

4.102 Foodbanks offer crisis-point support to residents feeling the acute effects of the Cost of Living. (62% of referrals to Catalyst's three local *Trussell Trust* foodbanks are due to 'rising costs of essentials'). Community pantries and Bread & Butter Thing Food Hubs offer longer-term support, while reducing reliance on foodbanks. They alleviate the burden of rising costs in the Borough's communities.

Support to the VCSE Sector

4.103 For the Reducing Inequalities Support Fund, £156,000 allocated to 12 organisations to reduce inequalities. This fund is part of the Reducing Inequalities Project which aims to reduce health inequalities in Stockton-on-Tees. £30,000 is to be distributed across 2 years and groups can bid for up to £1000. This fund allows organisations to expand an existing project by either launching in a new area or increasing capacity for new people to attend. So far, £7500 has been distributed, including to community pantries, a martial arts group, and local Men's Sheds.

Grantfinder online tool

4.104 Local organisations can come in for an appointment to look for funding for projects and core funding. Examples include a food bank moving to larger premises and looking for ways to subsidise costs for service users. Catalyst's online 'Grantfinder' tool enables organisations to search for funding.

Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Coordinator –Tackling inequalities

4.105 The following projects are included within the remit of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Coordinator:

- Community Spaces
- Thornaby Warm Welcome
- Clarendes –Working Group and Support
- Here to Help Events and Stockton Wellbeing Festival
- Reducing Inequalities National Lottery Project -12 organisations
- Linking organisations together
- Information sharing via mailing list
- Fun Fridays in John Whitehead Park
- Developing a Bike Recycling Initiative
- Supporting the development of a Volunteer Driver Scheme

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)/ Holiday Enrichment Programme

4.106 The Holiday Enrichment Programme has provided free activities including trips, experiences, and most importantly hot meals, snacks and additional food to go home with to over 2,500 young people across summer. This eased the financial burden for families and helped with the pressure of not only food poverty but the cost of childcare/days out. All of these are continuously rising with the Cost of Living crisis.

4.107 The number of non Free School Meal families accessing our services increased by 10% from Summer 2022 to Summer 2023 and is continuously increasing. This shows the need in provision for those on the breadline and not currently claiming benefits. Young people are using HAF as a gateway to further free/ low-cost provision

in term time, with providers offering those they identify as significantly in need additional support and membership into their clubs.

Roseworth Big Local

4.108 Through the Roseworth Big Local project funding has been obtained for a Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) Worker to support the local residents. Support has also been provided to the Eastern Ravens afterschool club & holiday programmes for non free school meals children. Funding has also been provided for an Eastern Ravens Trust Link Worker to support and direct to services of young families. Other achievements include funding a Community Garden through Cultivate Tees Valley, supporting young people to attend the National Young Carers Festival, the mobilisation of Kiara Hall Community Space, supporting St Chad's & Community Pantry and awarding Rosebud Grants – Hardwick & Roseworth Scouts.

Roseworth
Big Local

Roseworth Big Local Advice Service

Housing costs are going to increase a lot this year, and with other prices going up as well, making sure you can manage your bills is more important than ever. To help, Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (Citizens Advice) has set up a new Advice Service to give you specialist and independent advice.

The Advice Service is:

- Independent
- Free
- Confidential
- Impartial



Call us now and we will:

- telephone you back with free and independent advice
- make an appointment for you to see an adviser
- arrange a Home Visit as necessary

 Stockton & District Advice & Information Service

Roseworth Big Local
Advice Line
Tel: 01642 626135



Charitable funding sources in 2022-23

4.109 A Food Power Network Coordinator has been funded through the National Lottery & County Durham Community Foundation. Grants of approximately £1500 have been brought in by the (Stockton Food Power Network) SFPN Project Coordinator to buy food and for food-related projects. Various Lottery grants have also been secured to support community needs.

4.110 In terms of foodbanks & community pantries, Catalyst have worked with the Trussell Trust and businesses and have received public donations, supermarket surplus and other donations. Volunteers have assisted with roles as van drivers, community pantry and foodbank personnel, and in Citizens Advice. Clothing donations have been received for uniform schemes and for charities collecting winter clothes.

Conclusions

4.111 The Cost of living remains a significant priority for partners in Stockton. Foodbank & pantry donations have significantly reduced. It has become more difficult to recruit and retain volunteers for food support services. Additional collective promotion has also been required. Foodbanks, community pantries and The Bread and Butter Thing are complementary.

4.112 On average, at least 4428 individuals are supported every month by foodbanks, community pantries and the Bread and Butter Thing in the Borough. Many are also supported by free/low-cost hot food services, such as lunch clubs. Compared to last year, local Trussell Trust foodbanks are experiencing 30% increase in new clients, and 50% decrease in donations. In the first half of 2022 compared to 2023, community pantries are experiencing an approximately 18% increase in visits. There is huge amounts of activity in VCSE sector and statutory organisations which is being effectively coordinated.

What can the Council learn from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector?

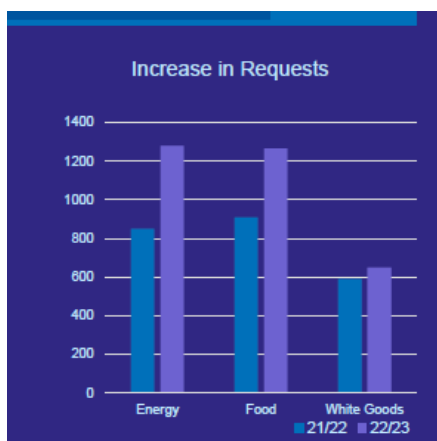
4.113 The VCSE sector includes small, focused organisations with a reach into specific demographic groups with specific needs –not ‘hard to reach’. The VCSE sector has access to volunteers, and to funding streams which others don’t, making the sector very efficient and effective. The sector is also good at engaging with, and disseminating information to, partners and communities, and building trust. Collaborative and partnership working is particularly effective in the Borough. The VCSE sector is grassroots, agile, and can identify gaps and respond quickly and creatively.

Stockton on Tees Borough Council: Welfare Support Approach in response to The Cost of Living

4.114 In November 2023, the Select Committee received a presentation from the Council’s Head of Revenue, Benefits and Welfare.

The Impact of The Cost of Living

4.115 In 2022/23 there was a record demand for advice and support. The Council received 11,600 requests for support versus 9,600 in 2021/22. Demand had increased for food, energy, and white goods. Housing debt was also increasing. Every ward in the Borough has been impacted by the Cost of Living situation.



Financial Support

4.116



2022 Financial Support at a Glance

4.117 In 2022, 17,000 households were assisted with Council Tax Reduction. 7,500 were assisted with Housing Benefits and 679 awards were granted as Discretionary Housing Payment. There were 1,200 food awards and 325 white goods awards. In terms of energy, 814 residents were supported, plus vouchers were provided to 17,000 households.

Income Maximisation

4.118



2022 Income Maximisation at a Glance

4.119 In 2022, there were 1173 Basic Benefit Checks, 501 Applications for Welfare Benefits, 74 Decisions overturned at appeal and £3.6m additional income raised for residents.

Internal and External Partners

4.120 Internal partners include Adults, Childrens, Fairer Stockton on Tees, Housing.

4.121 External Partners include Infinity Partnership, Stockton District Advice and Information Service, Department for Work and Pensions, Money and Pensions Service and social and private landlords.

Engaging with Residents and Staff

4.122 The following methods are used to engage with residents and council staff:

- Newsletters, KYIT
- Website, Social Media
- Stockton News, Press Releases
- Using Data for Direct Awards
- Targeted Campaigns
- Referrals from Partners
- Staff Cost of Living Events
- Merged Service – council tax collection, benefit and support
- Large Employer Events
- Outreach Worker
- Event Attendance
- Care Home Drop In

Employment & Training Hub

4.123 In November 2023, the Select Committee received a presentation from the Council's Economic Development Manager and Employment and Training Hub Manager.

Skills & Employment: Employment & Training Hub

4.124 Over 500 people have been into work since the Hub launched in Feb 2022
Large Recruitment Events, over 300 attendees per event
Sector Based Work Programmes –Care Academy
'Work Ready Wednesday' support

Hub on Tour Pilot

4.125 The aim of the Hub on Tour Pilot was to reach residents across the Borough and events were held in 10 locations across the Borough, including cafes, churches and schools. Locations were selected to partner with the existing 'warm spaces' provision. The pilot will be extended over the winter 2023/2024. The offer included CV support, advice, interview tips, and promotion of the hub delivery. In total, over 70 people registered via the 'Hub on Tour'.

New Portal

4.126 The portal, which launched in July 2023, allows residents to access support 24/7. The facilities for residents included CV upload function, vacancy search and apply online. The portal also allows residents to register and search for courses and provides resources and advice. Businesses can upload their vacancies directly. There have been over 5000 'hits' since the portal launched.

Working with businesses

4.127 Employment and Training Hub staff work with businesses on what the hub can offer and have also hosted larger recruitment campaigns utilising the hub. Staff also work with residents to get them 'job ready'.

What's next?

4.128 Future plans for the Hub include the creation of 3 full time roles and an expansion of the 'Hub on Tour' & Community offer. The Hub's recruitment framework and portal are also to be developed.

Learning and Skills: Cost of Living Response

4.129 In November 2023, the Committee received evidence from the Council's Adult Learning and Skills Manager.

Service Overview

4.130 In 2022/2023, there were over 3600 adult learning enrolments. Apprenticeship Funding amounted to £200,000 which equated to over 60 apprentices. Multiply Funding amounted to £300,000 which equated to over 300 enrolments. £1.6 million was granted from the Tees Valley Combined Authority for the Adult Education Budget, of which £675,000 was allocated to Adult Skills and £940,000 was allocated to Learning for Inclusion.

Learning for Inclusion

4.131 Funding was ringfenced to Local Authorities focused on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate. The aim was to widen participation and transform people's destinies as well as to improve confidence and a willingness to engage in learning. The initiative aimed to address the specific needs of adults within a Local Authority area such as isolation, social exclusion, mental health and well-being and to improve and develop stronger community engagement. It also provided an opportunity for learning that supported voluntary and third sector organisations to adults in disadvantaged areas.

Cost of Living Responsive Courses

4.132 Cook The Costs was a collaborative SBC and community partnership course, which provided one-pot and slow cookers to residents and taught them the skills and knowledge to produce cheap yet nutritious meals. More than 20 courses were held across warm spaces / community venues including Family Hubs such as Billingham, Stockton, Redhill and Thornaby.

4.133 Other catering and nutrition courses designed to support people manage their budgets in response to rising food and energy costs included Air Fryer Recipes, Family

Dinner Favourites on a Budget, Festive Cooking on a Budget and Skills to Pay The Bills.

Wider Examples of Inclusive Courses

4.134 Health and Wellbeing Programmes included:

- Live Well – Stay Well
- Man Made – Wellness for Men
- Art for Wellbeing
- Mindfulness and Meditation
- ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages
- Community Interpreting – supporting community integration
- Steps into Volunteering

Wider Examples of Skills Courses

4.135 An example of a Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs) was the Care Academy delivered in partnership with the Employment and Training Hub with guaranteed interviews linked to local job vacancies.

4.136 Examples of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in priority sectors qualifications are:

- Health and Social Care
- Diploma in Care
- Medication in Adult Care
- Mental Health
- Dementia Care
- English, Maths and ICT Courses to support core life and work skills

Cost of Living Future Plans

4.137 Future plans include work to address digital poverty through work with the Hope Foundation to facilitate access to FurbedIT programme for learners to access laptop/tablet device. Work with national charity, Good Things Foundation, is also planned to facilitate access for learners to access national data bank (6-12 months). Work with Teesside University is also planned to deliver a Skills pilot to provide learners with digital skills to use devices and access services.

Local Government Association(LGA) Presentation

4.138 In November 2023, the Committee received a presentation from a representative of the Local Government Association (LGA) during additional evidence gathering session held via Microsoft Teams.

4.139 An assessment of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) Cost of Living work had been undertaken. This encompassed Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and Catalyst projects, Case Studies for LGA – warm spaces and support for children, Child Poverty action plan / scrutiny review, and Local data and research e.g. North East Child Poverty Commission.

4.140 It was stated that SBC was already a sector-leader, and needed to consider how it could accelerate learning and delivery. Therefore, what other councils were doing, how cost of living issues were changing needed, and the priorities for the public sector and LGA were to be considered. It was also important to keep informed of national policy, case studies and research.

4.141 Other areas to consider in terms of cost of living support included moving from 'crisis' to 'prevention' and whether responses needed to be time limited or long term. It was also necessary to understand where cost of living response sat within the council's overall strategic approach to community leadership and service delivery and if there were any new approaches which could be delivered.

4.142 Cross-cutting and strategic considerations included putting equality and financial / economic / social wellbeing at the heart of council services - without 'boiling the ocean'. The value of lived experience was also noted. Service planning such as utilising Community Hubs, referral pathways and ensuring that there was 'no wrong front-door' was also highlighted. Of course, a balance between an need with a longer-term plan had to be sought and funding and resources were also integral to strategic planning.

4.143 Other specific areas highlighted included income maximisation and benefit take-up and the role of the local government in the welfare system. Linking financial wellbeing to housing, employment, health was also highlighted.

4.144 The LGA's Cost of Living work included employment and benefits for disabled people; fair and effective debt management; the future of 'local welfare'. It was argued that it was essential to keep inequality on the agenda and learn from the past and it was hoped that national government would provide guidance on a long-term and strategic approach to poverty prevention.

4.145 It was noted that the LGA was a cross-party organisation, so its message on issues, such as the Cost of Living, did reflect the views of the public sector as a whole.

4.146 It was expressed that it was expected that the current fall in inflation would lead to a 'national narrative' that the Cost of Living crisis was over but this narrative was not reflective to experiences 'on the ground'.

4.147 Measures to deal with the Cost of Living should not be described as short-term fix because the situation was more complex and some of the associated problems are 'entrenched'.

4.148 Difficult decisions must be made in the public sector and Councils are having to look at the resources already available because funding has been reduced.

4.149 The LGA advocated that Councils approached the Cost of Living Situation with an increased lived experience/people centred approach.

4.150 Councils across the country varied in their approach to the Cost of Living. Some Councils embedded support/resources within every service whereas others had created dedicated Cost of Living teams.

4.151 The Committee were reminded that the LGA website includes a 'Cost of Living Hub'.

Tees Credit Union

4.152 In November 2023, the Committee received evidence from the Chief Executive of the Tees Credit Union during an additional evidence gathering session held via Microsoft Teams.

4.153 It was noted that an increasing number of employed, as opposed to unemployed, residents had been applying for loans from the credit union.

4.154 There had been an increase in applicants for the hardship fund.

4.155 There had been an increase in arrears from customers and the union had put aside additional money to cover this.

4.156 The union had been doing a lot of work to stop loan sharks in the local area and it was highlighted that it was important to inform the public that the credit union should be used instead of loan sharks.

4.157 It was acknowledged that individuals did not feel comfortable talking about arrears but the credit union urged customers to get in touch because there were processes in place to support people in managing their debts.

4.158 SBC was recognised as the best Council that the Credit Union worked.

4.159 The work of SBC staff in encouraging staff members to open savings accounts via the salary sacrifice scheme was commended.

4.160 The issue of memberships numbers declining was raised. Roughly 899 members had been lost across the Moneywise organisation in the previous year. The organisation was trying to reach workers in different industries for payroll savers, for example, social care workers, taxi drivers, local small businesses.

4.161 The Committee confirmed its commitment to signposting residents to the Tees Credit Union to assist with increasing membership numbers.

SBC: Customer Services and Digital

4.162 In December 2023, the Committee received a report on the Cost of Living work of the Council's Customer Services and Digital teams.

4.163 ***How has Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) responded to the ongoing cost of living crisis both internally and by working with external partners and agencies?***

Customer Services and Digital and Web Teams have responded through the coordinated provision of services, promotion and signposting customers. This has been achieved through working in strong partnership with internal Council services and external partners and agencies, particularly colleagues in Libraries and Information, Revenues and Benefits and Fairer Stockton on Tees.

Customer Services

4.164 In response to customers who come through via the Customer Contact Centres, Telephone lines and email, Customer Services provide direct support and promote and signpost customers to various support schemes, services and charities as follows:

- We have worked in partnership with the Money Advise Network to train our Customer Service Advisors to enable us to directly refer customers who would benefit from this advice
- Assisted customers to apply for extra support who are adversely affected by the change to Council Tax support schemes.

- Increased support for customers to complete financial statements and make payment arrangements for Council Tax where they are struggling to pay
- Eligibility checks, advice and guidance for Warm Homes Healthy People (Summer and Winter Schemes)
- Provide support and advice regarding Household Support Fund
- Supported customers to obtain the Energy rebate payments
- Promotion and signposting to Warm Spaces (Community Spaces)
- Promotion and guidance for the Big Community Switch
- Promotion of the 'Bread and Butter Thing', including posters in Customer Service Centres
- Promotion of the Infinity Financial Inclusion Leaflet (Available in centres)
- Signposting to the Citizen's Advice Bureau where appropriate
- Signposting to the Stockton on Tees Food Power network
- Signposting and promoting Billingham Town Council food vouchers at Christmas, free meals for children, Period poverty, uniform exchange
- Signposting to the following pages on the Council website:
 - o Food Insecurity and Poverty Webpage
 - o Cost of living support Webpage
 - o Fairer Stockton on Tees Webpage

Digital Services

4.165

- Development and implementation of online booking solutions for Holidays Are Fun (HAF) working with Children's Services and Catalyst to deliver solutions for providers and parents.
- Development and implementation of online Household Support Fund Solution
- Development and implementation of online sign-up solution for Warm Spaces (renamed to community spaces).
- Development and implementation of a GOSS template to allow search and filtering solution and introduction of mapping to identify locations of Warm Spaces

4.166 ***How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff?***

- KYIT
- Stockton News
- SBC Website
- Cost of living support intranet page
- Cost of living Newsletter
- Social Media
- Communication via Management meetings
- Email signature promotion
- Advertisement boards in town centres
- Seasonal Newsletters

4.167 ***Can this be improved?***

- MyCouncil - Newsletter
- Use TVs in Customer Service Centres to promote help and advice
- Targeted messages on phones lines during hold periods

4.168 What are the main 'cost of living' issues facing residents? How have these changed over time?

- Change to the Council Tax scheme has impacted on residents
- Rent Increases
- Mortgage increase
- Council Tax increase
- Food
- Energy Bills
- Fuel prices

4.169 In what ways has the Cost of Living crisis impacted on staff retention and recruitment?

The job role of a Customer Service Advisor has changed significantly since before the pandemic. Staff are supporting more customers with their mental health and financial situations as well as their service enquiry. Call handling times and call wait times have increased as a result.

Staff sometimes find it difficult to switch off after work often thinking about calls they have dealt with during the day.

There has been an increase in customers saying they are going to harm themselves.

We have experienced a high turnover of Customer Services staff who deal with Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Back on Track and Welfare Support. This has had an impact on our capacity to respond to customers and as a result call wait times have increased.

4.170 How have SBC staff been supported if they are struggling financially and mentally as a result of the Cost of Living crisis?

Staff have been provided with training to help them deal with customers in crisis and distress.

Staff have been signposted to the MIND service and encouraged to attend the Council's personal resilience training.

Staff have been granted additional short breaks to help relieve the pressure of the difficult conversations with customers.

SBC: Human Resources

4.171 In December 2023, the Committee received evidence relating to the work of the Council's HR team on employee benefits and support. The Council employees around 3,200 people, and two thirds of those employees live in the Borough.

4.172 How has Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) responded to the ongoing cost of living crisis both internally and by working with external partners and agencies?

The Council has been working with external partners to provide employees with a number of initiatives and employee benefits to assist employees, not only with the current cost of living crisis, but for a number of years. The Council continues to build on these initiatives and provide additional employee benefits.

Details of these and the benefits and the impacts that they can have for employees have been circulated.

4.173 How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff? Can this be improved?

In relation to employees, the new benefits and initiatives are communicated via:

- KYIT
- Employee benefits leaflet
- Attending team meetings across the authority
- Attending service away days
- Employee Engagement Days
- Digital Screens in Depots

The Council continues to assess other options to communicate with its employees.

4.174 In what ways has the Cost of Living crisis impacted on staff retention and recruitment?

Recruitment is a major issue across the whole Council and this began post-covid as many people reassessed their priorities. The number of people applying for each role dropped significantly and we have had to change our approach to recruitment to attract candidates. We have done this by changing our advertisements, advertising more in social media and working with the Employment & Training Hub to promote our roles.

Retention of staff in some areas is a challenge as organisations pay more than Stockton, for example, HGV drivers can earn more working for a private haulage company or an agency than we pay for a refuse driver. This is the same in children's social care where social workers are paid significantly more through an agency. Whilst we do pay recruitment and retention payments for some roles, this is not sustainable. The delay in the agreement of the NJC pay award has not helped the cost of living crisis for employees, but this has now been agreed and will be paid to employees in November pay.

4.175 How have SBC staff been supported if they are struggling financially and mentally as a result of the cost of living crisis?

The Council has a counselling services provided through Teesside Mind and Vivup can provide financial wellbeing support. The Vivup website also signposts employees to financial help through Ask Bill.

Tees Credit Union can provide loans to employees at a reasonable rate. HR Advisors are aware of these services and if they are involved with an employee, they do signpost them to the service. Managers are also aware and can offer support. Work has also been undertaken with community services on men's health and wellbeing which included financial wellbeing. The Council has recently won the LGC Award for Best Wellbeing Initiative.

A table outlining Employee Benefits and Initiatives is attached as appendix 2.

Unite the Union

4.176 In December 2023, the Committee received evidence from the Regional Officer, Unite the Union.

4.177 It was noted that there had been an increase in signposting to mental health services.

4.178 There had also been an increase in enquiries regarding loans over the past few years.

4.179 It had been reported that lower paid workers, especially cleaners, had been undertaking more than one job. There were also reports that those with more than one job still needed to use foodbanks and pantries.

4.180 SBC, as an organisation, provided a 'good level of support' compared to other organisations.

4.181 At one of its offices, the union provided help with CV writing, interview techniques and suits and makeup were available for those in need to use for interviews.

4.182 Upcoming projects included a workers uniform exchange and a baby equipment bank.

4.183 Unite Community was highlighted as a community initiative to campaign for a more equal society.

Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS): **Cost of Living Crisis**

4.184 In December 2023, the Committee received a presentation from representatives from the Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS).

4.185 **How has SBC responded to Cost of Living by working with external partners and agencies?**

The Council has undertaken income maximisation work with SDAIS and Infinity partners, resulting in £1,349,799 of unclaimed benefits being secured between Oct and Dec 2022. The Council has also worked with SDAIS to establish the Schools Advice Project which has been rolled out to 6 schools so far. In addition, through the Community Spaces Development project an extra £10,000 has been secured by SDAIS from energy suppliers. Other examples include, inter-agency referrals between The Council's Welfare Support team and SDAIS (more than 18 other departments) and the Older Persons Advice Project in partnership with Home Care Support services.

4.186 **How has advice and support been communicated to residents and SBC staff?**

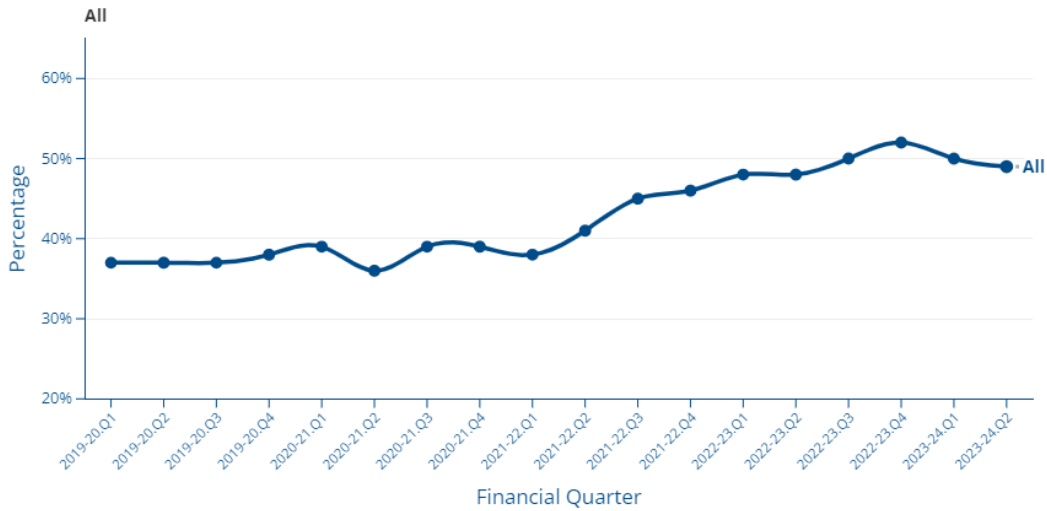
Information material has been circulated, such as the Cost of Living Support booklet, in venues such as banks/building societies. Material on Winter Wellbeing Support and Energy costs has also been circulated.

Advice and support have also been provided to residents at Here to Help events and market stalls, including a stall managed by SDAIS and SBC Environment team. Direct communication has been provided to SDAIS clients on assistance such as the Household Support Fund. The Infinity & Housing, Neighbourhood & Affordable Warmth Partnerships have also been utilised.

It was noted that SBC's response to the cost of living situation was far better than other Local Authorities.

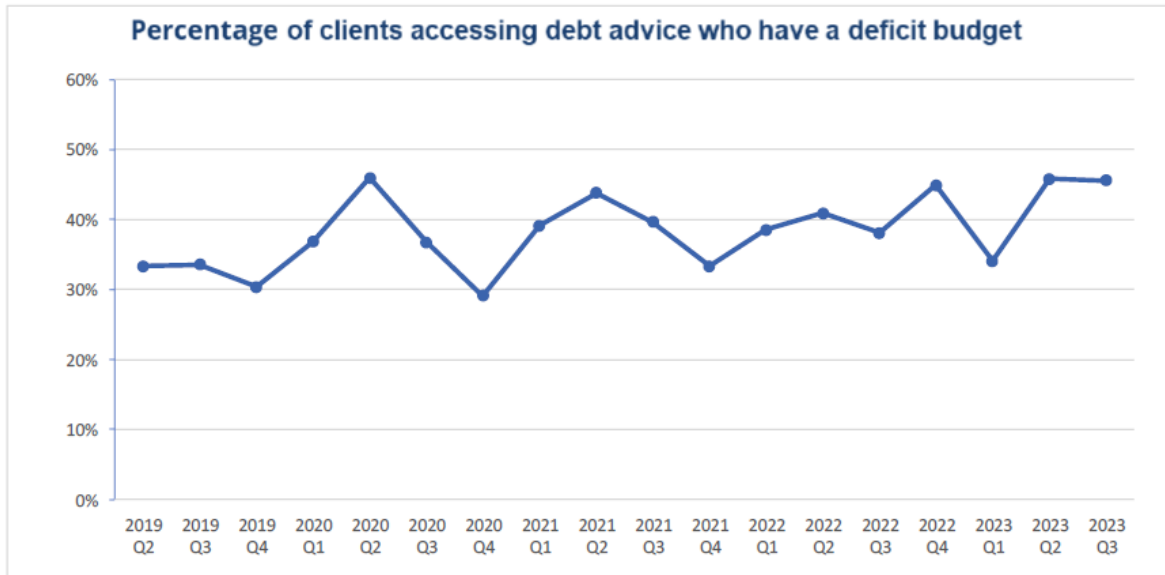
National Picture

4.187 The graph below depicts the percentage of clients accessing debt advice who have a deficit budget. Half of the people SDAIS help with debt advice are in a negative budget. Someone is in a negative budget when their necessary expenditure exceeds their income.



Local Picture

4.188 The local picture shows similar trends to the national picture but with more dramatic variations, this is probably due to smaller numbers. In most recent quarters, 46% of clients have a deficit budget.



How do Cost of Living issues vary across groups?

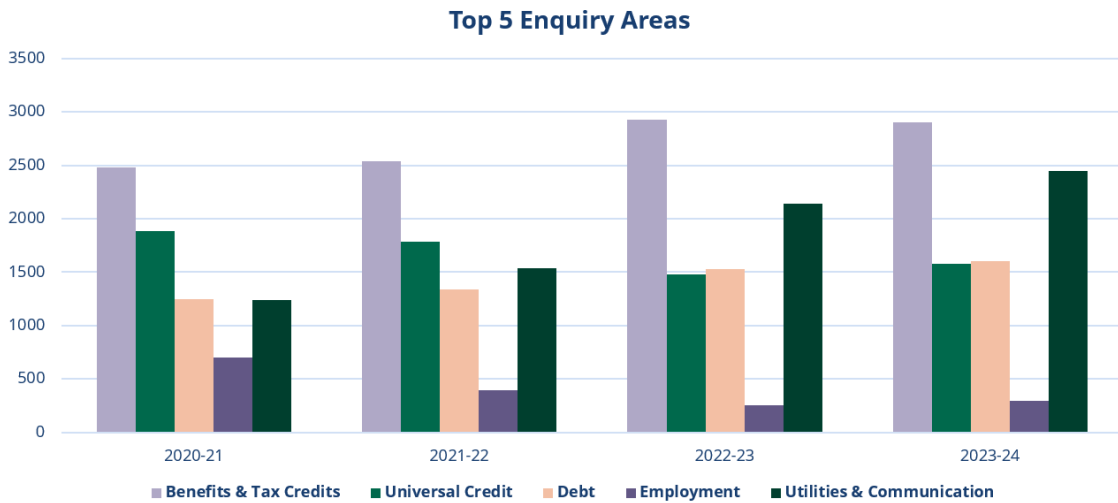
4.189 Graphs providing data on average monthly surplus among debt clients by group are attached as appendix 3.

Local Picture

4.190 Of those in deficit, the average amount of the deficit is £218per month. The average monthly income is £1,409. The average monthly rent is £479 compared to £381 per month in 2019-20 (this is a 25% increase). The average grocery spend is £365 compared to £284 in 2019-20 (this is a 28% increase).

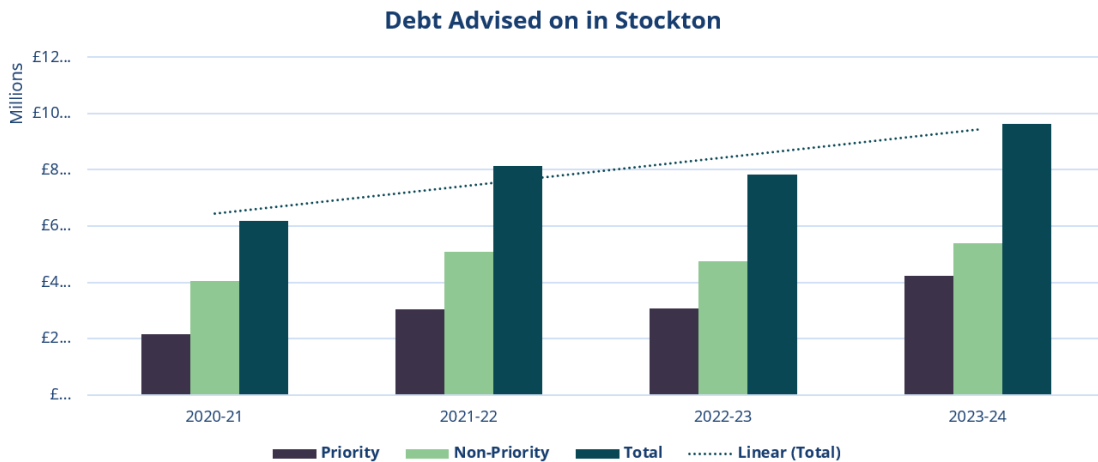
Local Picture – Top 5 Enquiry Areas

4.191 In 2021-2022, utilities (i.e. energy) overtook debt as the third biggest enquiry area. 2022-2023 was the busiest ever year for utilities, overtaking Universal Credit as the second biggest enquiry area. The complete 2023 data is incomplete but utilities are still on track to be the second biggest enquiry area.



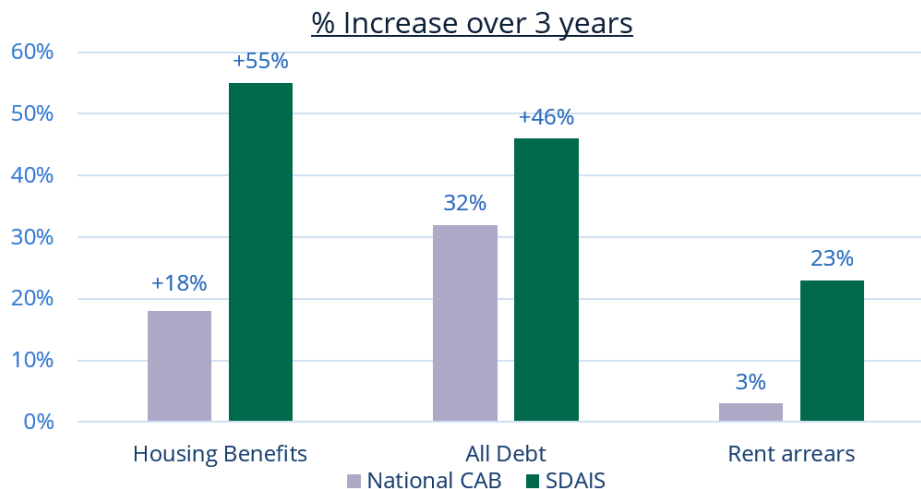
Debt Advised on

4.192 Already this year, SDAIS has seen more priority debt than any time in the last 4 years. The total projected debt is £9.6million, which is over £1million higher than any previous year.



**Cost of Living – sample enquiries
National v Local Increase over 3 years – Q2**

4.193



How have SBC staff been supported through Cost of Living crisis?

4.194 SBC staff have been able to access SDAIS's Specialist Debt Casework Service and SDAIS have spoken to staff at support events. Fuel Vouchers (£162,330 of Fuel Vouchers were provided in 2022/23 as well as Data Vouchers. SBC staff also have access to SDAIS Welfare Benefits, Energy + Housing advice services. An SDAIS and Mental Health Hub co-location is also available.

What can SBC learn from VCSE (benefits of joint SBC/VCSE working)?

4.195 The VCSE sector can access funds that are not available to SBC. The benefits of independent support provision were also highlighted. The VCSE sector has access to local communities but partnership working can provide complimentary and supplementary services.

Other Issues

4.196 In terms of income maximisation for 2022/23, £1,179,000 had been confirmed but £5,947,000 was expected. The amount of Debt Assisted with in 2022/23 totalled £7,828,058. Referral is key to assisting the public. There is an increasing need for the public to be provided with targeted help and support.

4.197 The Committee thanked SDAIS for their work in assisting residents and providing an invaluable service. SBC staff were commended for referring members of the public to a specific contact at SDAIS and other services for help and ensuring that they received direct support.

Site Visits

4.198 In November and December 2023, site visits to two of The Bread and Butter Hubs were arranged. The Hubs are located in Victoria Park Community Hall, Thornaby and Salvation Army, Stockton.

4.199 The site visits provided a valuable opportunity for Members to view the preparation process of grocery bags (delivery of goods and packaging) and to speak to volunteers and The Bread and Butter Thing staff.



5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 This review has highlighted how the existing challenges associated with poverty and inequality across the Borough have been compounded by the ongoing cost of living situation. Additional challenges have arisen through the widening demographic of those affected by the cost of living. However, the evidence provided has confirmed that the Council's proactive approach has provided a comprehensive response and resulted in regional and national recognition. The contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector in mitigating the effects of poverty must not be underestimated and the continuation of partnership working is essential for future strategic planning.

5.2 Consequently, the review's recommendations seek to respond to persistent concerns (such as the affordability of school uniform and debt management) and provide a commitment to develop an anti-poverty strategy to cement the Council's long-term coordinated approach. Ensuring that residents and Council staff continue to be sufficiently supported is integral in this endeavour.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend:

- 1. That findings from this review will inform the development of the Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan/Strategy as part of the 'Powering Our Futures' programme. This will be coordinated with partners and will advocate the importance of lived experience.**
- 2. That the Council continues to work with schools and governors to address the issues around the affordability of school uniform and provide options to expand the provision of pre-loved uniforms are explored, through devising an action plan clearly outlining the steps to be taken to address these issues. The action plan will be shared with the Committee and progress reported as part of the wider recommendations. In addition, the Council will meet with Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones.**
- 3. That the income maximisation service is widely promoted through Stockton News and social media channels as a means of assisting residents with debt management and financial difficulties.**
- 4. That, building on the success of previous staff drop in sessions around Cost of Living this targeted approach continues where there is a need.**
- 5. That, building on the existing success of the work undertaken, to continue to build on best practice from across the country working alongside the LGA.**

APPENDIX 1 - Stockton-on-Tees Community Food Leaflets (Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network)



Foodbanks

and other food resources in Stockton-on-Tees



Scan with phone camera to view interactive map

Please double check with the organisation before travel, as details are subject to change. Usually, foodbanks require a referral from an organisation. Like the Stockton District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS): 01642 633877

Billingham & Stockton Foodbank, Stockton Central <i>(referral essential)</i>	Open Wednesdays & Fridays, 10am - 1pm.	Proof of identification is required when collecting a food parcel, such as a letter with recipient's name and address. <i>Hebron Church, Corner of Vicarage Street & Bishopton Street, TS19 0AJ. Telephone: 07535 865140</i>
Billingham & Stockton Foodbank, Norton Central <i>(referral essential)</i>	Open Mondays & Fridays, 12.30pm - 2.30pm.	Proof of identification is required when collecting a food parcel, such as a letter with recipient's name and address. St Michael's & All Angels Church, Imperial Avenue, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 2EN. Telephone: 07854 108393 Email: nortonfoodbank@gmail.com
Billingham & Stockton Foodbank, Billingham Central <i>(referral essential)</i>	Open Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11 - 2pm.	Proof of identification is required when collecting a food parcel, such as a letter with recipient's name and address. 4-6 West Precinct, Billingham Town Centre, Billingham, TS23 2NH. Telephone: 07583 575522 Email: info@billinghamstocktonborough.foodbank.org.uk
Salvation Army Stockton Foodbank, Stockton Central <i>(referral essential)</i>	Open Mondays & Fridays, 9 - 12pm	Palmerston Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1NU. Telephone: 01642 617629 Email: stockton.citadel@salvationarmy.org.uk
Thornaby Foodbank, Thornaby <i>(referral essential)</i>	Open Thursdays, 12pm - 1pm	Thornaby Baptist Church, Thorntree Road, Thornaby, TS17 8DH. Donations can be left directly on Wed 10.30 - 12pm & Thurs 10-12 noon. (Other drop off points are available, please message their Facebook page for more details). Telephone: 07469 920606 Email: thornabyfoodbank@gmail.com
NiteLite free monthly stall, Stockton Central (no referral required)	First two Mondays of every month, 11am - 1pm	Free food, toiletries & hygiene essentials. First two Mondays of every month, 11am-1pm (except bank holidays, date is moved to the following Monday). On Stockton Highstreet, opposite Darlington Building Society. Telephone: 07790627499 Email: info@nitelightcic.co.uk
The Salvation Project, Thornaby Methodist Church (no referral required)	Open Wednesdays 1-2pm	Help with food, toiletries, adult & child clothing/footwear and other household items, when available. Wednesdays food bag pick up at 1-2pm, community group with hot food & drinks at 4 - 5.30pm. Telephone: 07934 409010. Email: salvationproject@outlook.com. Stanstead Way, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DZ

Leaflet updated: October 2023

Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network

SFPN@catalyststockton.org



Community pantries & Ecoshops

Offering low-cost food items in Stockton-on-Tees



Please double check with the organisation before travel, as details are subject to change. Community pantries & ecoshops do not require a referral, just come along. Items are sold at discounted price.

Arlington Park EcoShop, Ropner	Open Thursdays, 11 - 1pm	Arlington Park, Adderley Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3GT Telephone: 07970 088003 or 07980 808920. Email: amalprojectteesside@gmail.com or info@littlesprouts.org.uk
Stockton Hope Community Larder, Hardwick	Open Wednesdays, 11 - 1.30pm	St. Andrews Methodist Church, Hardwick Rd., Stockton-On-Tees, TS19 8PH. Telephone: 07810 521255 Email: glynnis01@hotmail.co.uk
Sprouts Community Shop, Thornaby	Open Wednesdays, 10 - 12pm	Food, toiletries, clothes and kitchenware. Community Shop (behind Victoria Park Community Hall), Peel Street, Thornaby, TS17 6HL. Telephone: 07980 808920. Email: info@littlesprouts.org.uk
Pantry in the Park, Billingham	Open Mondays, 10 - 12.30pm	Open Mondays 10 - 12.30pm (on bank holiday Mondays, moves to Tuesday 10-12pm). John Whitehead Community Hub, John Whitehead Park, Billingham, TS23 2DD. Telephone: 01642 551171. Email: info@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk
Holy Rosary Community Pantry, Billingham	Open Fridays, 1 - 5pm	The Medway, Sidlaw Road, Billingham TS23 2EP (building in between Holy Rosary Church and Holy Rosary School). Telephone: 07757 062798
Ragworth Community Grocery, Newtown	Open various days, see detail	Mon & Tues 9.30am - 4.30pm, Wed 9.30am - 7pm (Wed 9.30-4.30pm in summer holidays), Thurs & Fri 9.30am - 4.30pm. The Shack, Dover Road, Ragworth, Stockton, TS19 0JU. Telephone: 01642 925115. Email: ragworth@communitygrocery.org.uk
St. John the Baptist Community Swap Shop, Newtown	Collection system	(For families of the school only) Collection system, see their Facebook page: <i>St John The Baptist school community swap shop</i> : St John's Way, Ragworth, Stockton on Tees, TS19 0FB Email: cate.taylor@hotmail.co.uk
Norton Methodist Church Pantry, Norton	Open Sundays 12.30 - 1.30pm	Pantry in building behind Church. 439 - 445 Norton Rd, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS20 2QQ. Telephone: 01642 533379. Facebook page for updates: www.facebook.com/nortonmethodist
Norton Grange Community Pantry, Norton	Open Wednesdays 12 - 2pm	64 Somerset Rd, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS20 2ND. Telephone: 07881 940592 Email: Kelly.Potts@groundwork.org.uk
Chad's Pantry, Roseworth	Open Thurs 9 - 11.30am & Sun 9 - 10.30am.	St. Chad's Church, Ragpath Lane, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 9AY. Telephone: 07729 794222 Email: lana.green354@btinternet.com
Challoner House Community Pantry, Yarm	Open Fridays 1 - 4pm	Challoner House Community Centre, Challoner Road, Yarm, TS15 9DS
Mill Lane Primary Community Pantry, Stockton Central	Fridays 2.30 - 3.30pm, term-time only	(For families of the school only) . Mill Lane Primary School, Wellington Street, Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland, TS18 1QX. Telephone: 01642 860055 Email: milllane@sbcschools.org.uk
Living Proof Pantry, Stockton Central	Open various days, see detail	Sat from 5pm, Sundays 2- 4pm, Mon- Wed from 5pm. 21 Prince Regent Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1DB. Telephone: 07496 571125 Email: rccgjpssc@gmail.com

Leaflet updated:
October 2023



Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network



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The Bread & Butter Thing

Food hubs offering groceries at a discount



Scan with phone camera to view interactive map

The Bread & Butter Thing food hubs do not require a referral. To access, you need to sign up via their text message system - see below.

What is the Bread & Butter Thing?

Bread and Butter Thing food hubs offer groceries at a discounted price. They are a new food support service in Stockton-on-Tees.

At Bread & Butter Food Hubs, residents can buy three bags of fruit and vegetables, chilled food, and cupboard staples for £8.50. It is estimated this helps save around £25 compared with buying the items elsewhere.

How do I access the new hubs?

Interested residents can register as members for free.

All you need to do is text 07860 063304 with a full name, postcode and which hub you would like to collect from.

Once registered, you will receive a text message 48 hours before your hub's 'service day' each week, asking if you would like to shop there. You then simply reply to the message to confirm if you would like to access the hub.

Prices at the hubs are as follows:

Single bags with a condensed offer are priced £5
Standard three-bag family packages are £8.50
Large family six-bag packages are £17

Cash, card, NHS Healthy Start credit & Aspen cards are all accepted as payment upon collection.

Bread & Butter - Food Hub locations
(two additional venues to be confirmed later in 2023)

Sprouts Community Shop, Thornaby	Every Monday at 1.30pm	Community Shop (behind Victoria Park Community Hall), Peel Street, Thornaby, TS17 6HL. Telephone: 07980 808920. Email: info@littlesprouts.org.uk
Salvation Army Stockton, Stockton Central	Every Tuesday at 1.30pm	Salvation Army Stockton, Palmerston Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1NU. Telephone: 01642 617629. Email: stockton.citadel@salvationarmy.org.uk
New Life Family Centre, Billingham	Starting Wednesday 11th October, at 1.30pm	New Life Family Centre, Low Grange Avenue, Billingham, opening on October 11th at 1.30pm. Telephone: 01642 370880

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Hot Community Food - (page 1/3) low cost or free in Stockton-on-Tees



Scan with phone camera to view interactive map

**Please double check with the organisation before travel,
as details are subject to change.**

Community meals at Stockton Family Hubs - Stockton, Billingham & Redhill *Booking essential* - Telephone: 01642 528525

Join your community for a free meal - serving up a different meal every week.

- Week 1: Jacket potato with Filling
- Week 2: Spaghetti Bolognese with Garlic Bread
- Week 3: Chicken Curry with Rice and Naan Bread
- Week 4: Mince and Dumplings with Vegetables

Stockton Family Hub	Tuesdays 3.30 - 4.30pm	Stockton Family Hub, Yarm Rd, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 3PJ
Billingham Family Hub	Wednesdays 3.30 - 4.30pm	Billingham Family Hub, Ochil Terrace, Stockton-on-Tees, Billingham TS23 2QL
Redhill Family Hub	Thursdays 3.30 - 4.30pm	Redhill Family Hub, Redhill Rd, Roseworth, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 9BX

Nitelight stall, Stockton Central	First two Mondays of every month, 11am - 1pm	70 free pie, peas and roasties meals in partnership with Just Love Pies, subject to availability. Other free food items, clothing and hygiene essentials on the stall. First two Mondays of every month, 11am-1pm (except bank holidays, date is moved to the following Monday). Telephone: 07790 627499 Email: info@nitelightcic.co.uk
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Stockton Baptist Church, Stockton Central <i>(booking necessary)</i>	Thursdays 12 - 2pm	Booking necessary. Three course meal for £3, running weekly (except holidays). Everyone over 60 years is welcome. This service pauses over the summer (pauses in mid-July and resumes in September). Concessions available, ring to ask. A short Christian-themed talk is held at 1pm. The Square, Stockton on Tees, TS18 1TE. Telephone: 01642 050696 Email: office@stocktonbaptistchurch.co.uk
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Stockton Parish Church, Stockton Central	Wednesdays 12 - 2pm	Free soup, sandwiches & hot drinks. Everyone is welcome, no booking required. Part of the session is a Bible teaching, although there is no obligation to stay for this. High St, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1SP Telephone: 01642 611734 Email: office@stocktonparishchurch.org.uk
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Stockton Salvation Army, Stockton Central	Mondays 12.20 - 1.30pm	Free takeaway meal every Monday from 12.20-1.30pm. Palmerston Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1NU Telephone: 01642 617629 Email: stockton.citadel@salvationarmy.org.uk
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St. Peter's Church, Ropner <i>(for asylum seekers & refugees)</i>	Wednesdays 11 - 2.30pm	Free hot meal every Wednesday from 11-2.30pm (for asylum seekers and refugee community only). Craft activities from 11-12pm, lunch from 12-1pm. Clothes and housewares available, advice & information available. Telephone: 07958 345177 Email: info@stpetersstockton.org
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Hot Community Food - (page 2/3)

low cost or free in Stockton-on-Tees


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The Lighthouse Drop-in Centre, Ropner	Mon to Fri 10 - 1.45 pm, Sunday 10 - 1.45pm	Low cost café with surplus food items, sold at 50p each at the counter, subject to availability. 34 Yarm Rd, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3NG. Telephone: 01642 640033
Purple Rose, Newtown	Fridays 4pm - 6.30pm, see details	Free hot food drop-in meal & drinks, music, socialisation & donated items. Everyone welcome. Fridays 4pm - 6.30pm (except 1st Friday of the month). Newtown Community Resource Centre, Durham Road, TS19 0DE Telephone: 07359 573557 Email: purplerosehealthandwellbeing@yahoo.com
The Shack, Ragworth	Tuesdays & Fridays, see details	<i>Tasty Tuesdays</i> (term-time) - 10-1pm - food & hot drinks (e.g. soup, breakfast buns, muffins, may vary) <i>Friday breakfast</i> (term-time) - doors open 9am, food served at 9.30am: breakfast with drink. Donations welcomed. The Shack, Dover Rd, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0JU. Telephone: 07557 381808 Email: theshackcommunityprojects@gmail.com
St. Michaels and All Angels Church, Norton	Specific Fridays, see details	Free hot food on specific Fridays, please contact venue for further dates. Imperial Ave, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS20 2EW Telephone: 07854 108393 Email: nortonfoodbank@gmail.com
Norton Grange Community Centre, Norton	Wednesdays 12 - 2pm	Free lunch club on Wednesdays 12-2pm, running alongside their community pantry. At the lunch club, access support & referrals for employment, housing, budgeting and more. Lunch club pauses during the six week summer holiday. 64 Somerset Rd, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees TS20 2ND. Telephone: 07881 940592 Email: Kelly.Potts@groundwork.org.uk
St Mary's Parish Hall, Norton Green	Specific Mondays, see details	Free lunch on specific Mondays, check with venue for further dates. 70 The Green, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1DT Telephone: 07505 464005
Holy Trinity Parish Church, Hartburn	Thursdays 12 - 1.15pm (term time only)	*Service temporarily postponed, contact organisation for reopening date* Gener8 Luncheon Club - everyone is welcome. Food menu items between £1.50 - £3.15. Soup, toasted sandwiches, specials, cake - subject to availability. Upsall Grove, Stockton-On-Tees, TS19 7QU Telephone: 01642 570102 Email: holytrinitywithstmarkoffice@gmail.com
Sprouts Community Café at Victoria Park, Thornaby	Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 10 - 2pm	Serving low-cost hot food, snacks and drinks. Victoria Park Community Centre, Peel St, Thornaby, TS17 6HL. Telephone: 07980 808920 Email: info@littlesprouts.org.uk
The Vine Café at Teesside Vineyard Church, Thornaby	Wednesdays 10 - 12pm	Free community café. Free hot drinks, pastries, cake (subject to availability). A place to connect with others, everyone welcome. Free childrens' breakfast (term-time) at the café. Runs alongside Grow Baby Teesside's free shop for baby clothes. Acklam Rd, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 7HD. Email: hello@teessidevineyardchurch.co.uk

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Hot Community Food - (page 3/3)

low cost or free in Stockton-on-Tees

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as details are subject to change.



Scan with phone camera to view interactive map

Teesside Dementia Link Services, various locations

Telephone: 07722 958610 Email: tdls2016@virginmedia.com

Thornaby Methodist Church (over 60s welcome)	Every first Thursday of the month, 11.30 - 2pm	Thornaby Methodist Church hot meal, everyone over 60s welcome. Donation of £2.50 encouraged. Stanstead Way, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DZ
Breakfast Club at Café 81, Oxbridge Lane (see details)	Every Wednesday, 10.30 - 12pm	Breakfast Club at Café 81, Oxbridge Lane - every Wednesday 10.30-12pm. Safe and welcoming breakfast group for those with dementia, their families and their carers to relax and make new friends. Full english breakfast starting at around £5.

Local Dementia Cafés: Relaxed and supportive cafés for people with dementia, their families and carers. Make new friends and get advice & information. Hot drinks & light refreshments available.

Thornaby Dementia Café	Every second Friday of the month, 1.30 - 3pm	Thornaby Dementia Café at Thornaby Library, free refreshments.
Stockton Dementia Café	Every first Monday of the month, 11.30 - 2pm	Stockton Dementia Café at Stockton Parish Church, low cost refreshments.
Yarm Dementia Cafés (In two locations)	(See details)	Yarm Dementia Cafés: <i>Yarm Methodist Church</i> , low cost refreshments. Every first Saturday of the month, 10-12.30pm. Also runs at <i>Yarm Wellness</i> , every third Monday of the month, 12.30 - 2pm.
Billingham Dementia Café	Every second Monday of the month, 11.30 - 2pm	Billingham Dementia Café at St. Aidans Church, low cost refreshments.

Sunday Lunch Service, Billingham	Delivery service, referral required (see details)	Free two course Sunday meal for older residents within the Billingham Community, delivered to residents' homes. Referral required - this could be from social worker, GP or other agency. Billingham Town Council. Telephone: 01642 551171 Email: info@billingham-tc.gov.uk
Low Grange Community Centre, Billingham	Tuesdays 12 - 3pm	Free tea and toast with the Tea, Toast and Talk community group, everyone welcome. Run by Billingham Environmental Link Programme. Telephone: 01642 564077. 169 Low Grange Ave, Stockton-on-Tees, Billingham TS23 3PF
Yarm Wellness, Yarm Youth & Community Centre	Fortnightly Tuesdays, 1.30 - 3.30pm (see details)	Free coffee, cake and company, 1.30-3.30pm. Sept 26th and continuing on Tuesdays, fortnightly. Everyone is welcome - enjoy a warm space, and meet new friends. Wellness Centre, High Church Wynd, Yarm TS15 9BQ Telephone: 07732 395441 Email: yarmwellness@gmail.com
Casserole & Crumble, Yarm	Delivery service (see details)	Meals delivered to older residents, to be reheated at home. Enquire with organisation. Telephone: 07801 531044 Email: cschyde@hotmail.com
Yarm Lunch Club, Yarm Community Centre	Fortnightly on Tuesdays, (see details)	Fortnightly on Tuesdays, a two course hot meal for older residents. Enquire with organisation, may be a waiting list. Yarm Community Centre, High Church Wynd, Yarm TS15 9BQ. Email: yarmlunchclub@gmail.com

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Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network

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APPENDIX 2 - SBC Employee Benefits and Initiatives

Benefit/Initiative	Details of the Initiative and the Impact on Employees
Counselling Service	The Council has had a Counselling Service for employees since January 2000 and the current provider is Teesside Mind. They provide free access for employees of up to 6 sessions (further sessions can be requested for approval if it's deemed critical for recovery or while external longer-term support is sought) to provide support for depression, anxiety and other mental health related issues which could stem from concerns about their financial situation. The Mind team have also attended away days/events/activities providing confidential drop-ins for employees.
Physiotherapy Service	The Council has had a Physiotherapy Service since 2000 and the current provider is Body2Fit. They provide free access for employees of up to 5 sessions for employees who are experiencing movement disorders arising from conditions, injuries, and diseases. The initial assessment will then determine if you require further appointments for treatment or if you can self-manage your condition with the aid of exercises and advice. In addition, they also provide workplace assessments and a podiatry service. Body2Fit also offer a 20% discount to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council employees who wish to pay for physiotherapy treatment privately.
Flu Vaccination Programme	The Council has provided a flu vaccination programme. Initially the programme was free for frontline employees with other employees being able to access the service at a small charge. Since 2021, the service has been free to all employees who wish to take up the offer.
Additional Annual Leave Purchase	Employees can purchase up to an additional 10 days holiday, the cost of which is spread over the year. This can assist employees who need additional time off such as, to assist with childcare.
Leave of Absence, Work Life Balance	The Council has a generous Work-life Balance Policy to allow employees who are struggling with certain caring responsibilities additional time off.
Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC)	AVCs are a tax-free way for employees to save for retirement. Any employee who is a member of the LGPS can contribute to AVCs. The Council has partnered with the Prudential for many years to provide this benefit to employees. In 2021 the Council partnered with AVCWise to provide Shared Cost AVCs to employees. The investment remains with the Prudential however, as it is a shared cost scheme the deductions from the employees pay is also free of National Insurance as well tax which makes it a very

Benefit/Initiative	Details of the Initiative and the Impact on Employees
	<p>attractive pension saving option. The Council also benefits from employer NI savings.</p> <p>Whilst this might not seem it would be a benefit in the current climate more employees are planning for retirement and the number of employees accessing this benefit has increased from 132 before the introduction of this new scheme in September 2021 to 302 at August 2023.</p>
Car Lease Scheme	<p>The Council has had a car lease scheme since 2010 and the current provider is NHS Fleet Solutions. The scheme is for electric, hybrid and ultra low emission cars and the costs of the lease cover the car, insurance, servicing and breakdown cover. A car lease scheme is a salary sacrifice scheme which means that the payments are free of tax, NI and pension which is a saving for employees. The Council also benefits from employer NI savings.</p>
Tees Credit Union	<p>Tees Credit Union provides loans to employees at a reasonable rate. As the loan is deducted from the employee's salary at source there are no credit checks which means employees with a poor credit history can access these loans.</p>
B&Q Trade Point Discounts	<p>B&Q Trade Point give SBC employees discounts of 10% on the majority of products in store and on-line. This benefit was introduced in 2022 and has proved to be very popular with employees.</p>
Tees Active Discounts	<p>Council employees receive a discount on joining fees for gym membership with Tees Active. We have reached out to Tees Active to discuss other potential discounts for our employees.</p>
Bus and Train Discounts	<p>Council employees can take advantage of discount offers on annual tickets from Arriva, Stagecoach and Northern Rail.</p>
Vivup	<p>In 2022 the Council partnered with Vivup to provide a number of employee benefits to employees. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee lifestyle savings which allows employees to access instant savings of around 7% on high street and online shopping, health and beauty, travel and entertainment, home and garden, mobile, broadband and utilities, restaurants and takeaways and supermarkets. These savings have been negotiated by Vivup and new discounts continue to be added. • Home and Electronics which allows employees to buy products at Currys PC World. and John Lewis and pay for them through the payroll. Employees being able to spread the cost of purchases over 12, 24 or 36 months as a payment directly from their

Benefit/Initiative	Details of the Initiative and the Impact on Employees
	<p>pay. Whilst this is a net deduction scheme it has proved to be very popular with employees as there is no credit check and it is hoped that by accessing this benefit, they are not accessing pay day loans at extremely high interest rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle to Work Scheme which allows employees to purchase a bike from Halfords, Evans Cycles and also any local retailer. This is a salary sacrifice scheme which means that employees benefit from a reduction in tax, NI and pension contributions. • The Bike Shop which allows employees to purchase bikes and accessories for their family and pay directly from their salary over a 12 or 24 month period. This is a net deduction scheme. <p>There is no cost to the Council for these benefits and actually benefits from employer NI savings for the salary sacrifice. In addition, by partnering with Vivup for the above benefits we are able to access a free Employee Assistance Programme which would provide further choice for our employees to access support for mental health issues. In particular, the service has a number of self-help resources for employees to access, including assistance with financial well-being.</p>

APPENDIX 3 - Citizens Advice – Average Monthly Surplus among debts client by group

Average Monthly Surplus among debt clients by group

Surplus equals income minus essential expenditure. Groups below the blue line are in a negative budget on average.

All Household Type Ethnicity Disability or Health Condition Housing Tenure Age Group Employment Status Gender Universal Credit



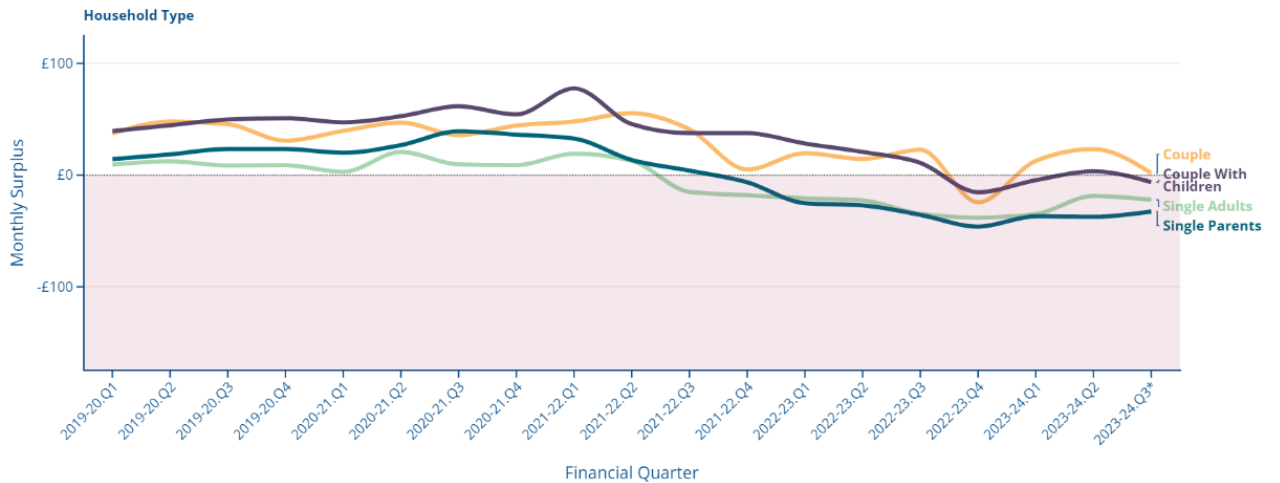
Source: You can access this visualisation directly here. For more insight into negative budgets look at our In the Red Index. Data for England and Wales. Average is the 20% trimmed mean.



Average Monthly Surplus among debt clients by group

Surplus equals income minus essential expenditure. Groups below the blue line are in a negative budget on average.

All Household Type Ethnicity Disability or Health Condition Housing Tenure Age Group Employment Status Gender Universal Credit



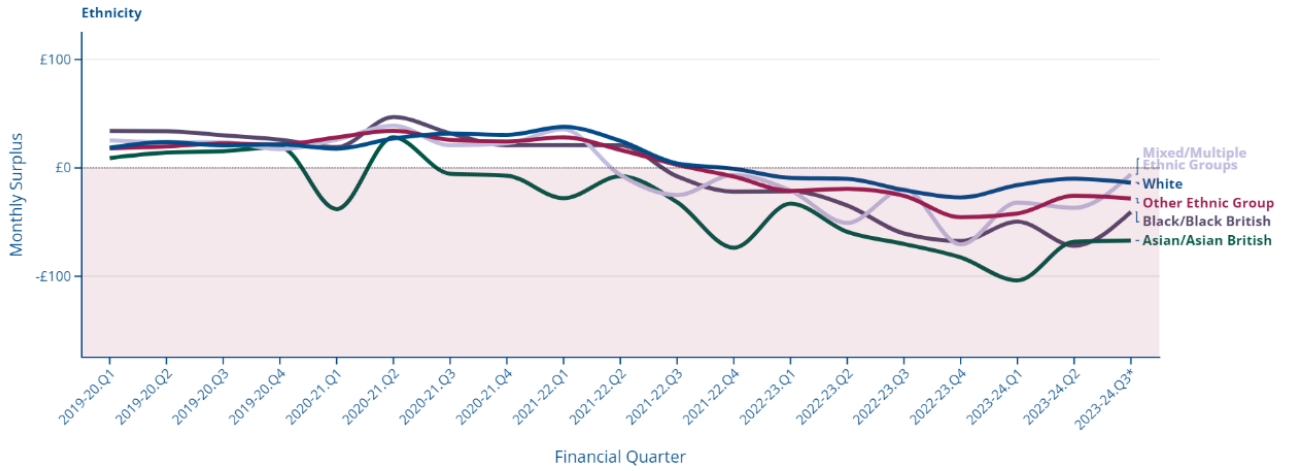
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Average Monthly Surplus among debt clients by group

Surplus equals income minus essential expenditure. Groups below the blue line are in a negative budget on average.

- All
- Household Type
- Ethnicity**
- Disability or Health Condition
- Housing Tenure
- Age Group
- Employment Status
- Gender
- Universal Credit



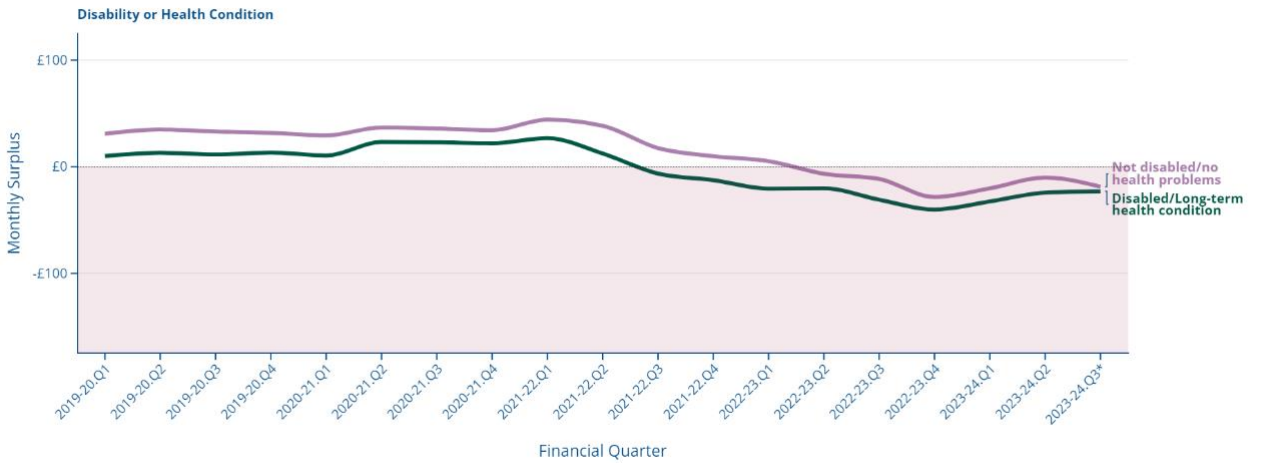
Source: [You can access this visualisation directly here.](#) For more insight into negative budgets, look at our [In the Red index](#). Data for England and Wales. Average is the 20% trimmed mean.



Average Monthly Surplus among debt clients by group

Surplus equals income minus essential expenditure. Groups below the blue line are in a negative budget on average.

- All
- Household Type
- Ethnicity
- Disability or Health Condition**
- Housing Tenure
- Age Group
- Employment Status
- Gender
- Universal Credit



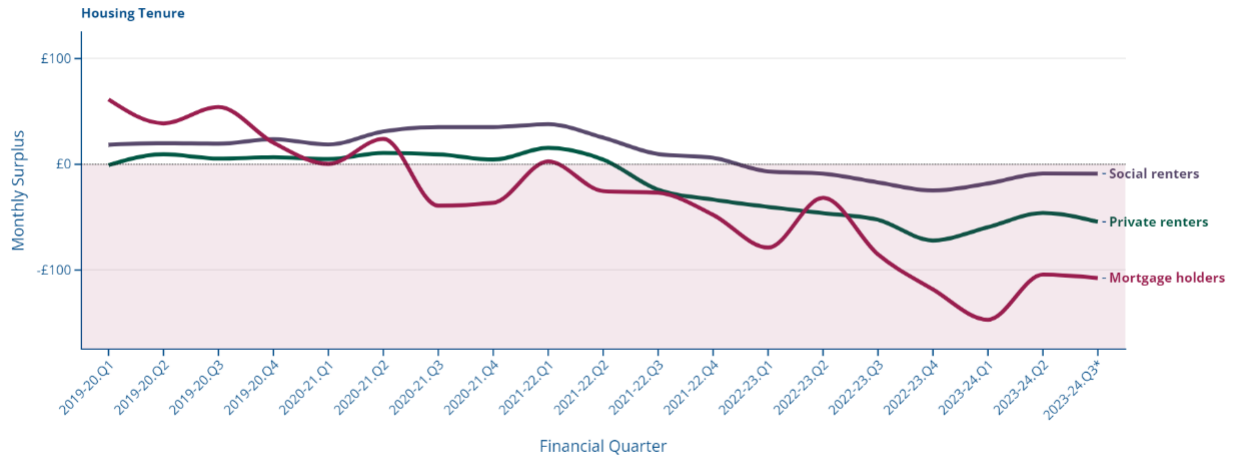
Source: [You can access this visualisation directly here.](#) For more insight into negative budgets, look at our [In the Red index](#). Data for England and Wales. Average is the 20% trimmed mean.



Average Monthly Surplus among debt clients by group

Surplus equals income minus essential expenditure. Groups below the blue line are in a negative budget on average.

All Household Type Ethnicity Disability or Health Condition **Housing Tenure** Age Group Employment Status Gender Universal Credit



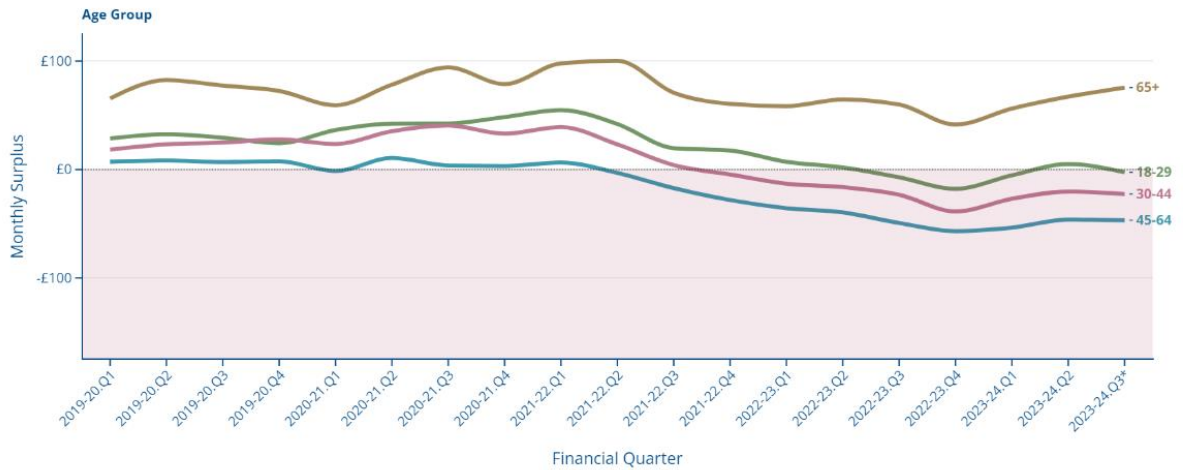
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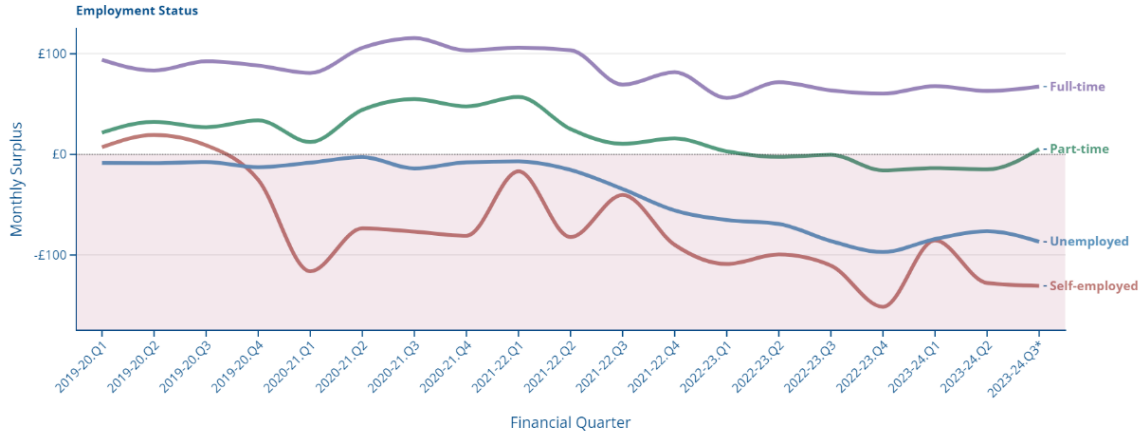
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- Ethnicity
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- Gender
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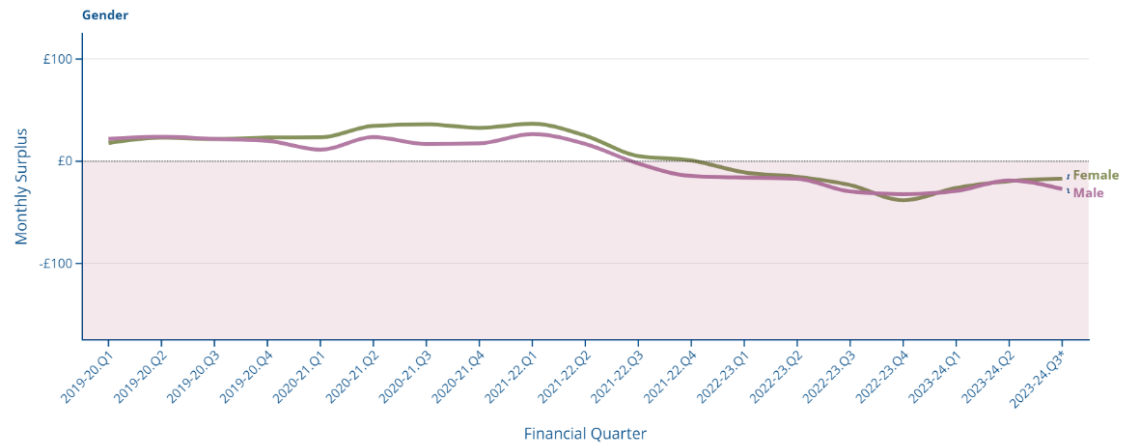
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Glossary of Terms

APLE Collective	Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience
BMBF	Bright Minds Big Futures
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DfE	Department for Education
FSOT	Fairer Stockton-on-Tees
HAF	Holiday Activities and Food Programme
HVE Services	Heating Ventilation Electrical Building Services
LGA	Local Government Association
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
SDAIS	Stockton & District Advice and Information Service's
SFPN	Stockton Food Power Network
SWAPs	Sector Based Work Academies
TBBT	The Bread and Butter Thing
VCSE	Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise
WHHP	Warm Homes Healthy People

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE: 18 APRIL 2024

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio Title – Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Cook

Powering Our Future – Programme Update

SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update on the Powering Our Future Programme. It includes:
 - Communities Powering Our Future – confirmation of priority workstreams and ‘Getting Ready’ exercise
 - Partnerships Powering Our Future - draft Partnerships Charter for Cabinet approval
 - Transformation Powering Our Future:
 - Draft scope for 14 Transformation Reviews.
 - Update on Xentrall Shared Services and Digital, Data & Technology (DDAT) projects.
 - Colleagues Powering Our Future - draft Workforce Strategy for Cabinet approval.
 - Regeneration Powering Our Future – update on Our Six Towns and the Tees Valley Care & Health Innovation Zone.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS

2. Cabinet is recommended to agree updates on the Powering Our Future approach to ensure that the Council has a clear plan to address the financial challenges we face, at the same time as improving outcomes for communities, including:
 - Creation of opportunities to build brighter futures for our communities and reduce inequality, using the limited amount of money we have available.
 - Carefully managing our resources, creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that are valued by our residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - Note the updates on individual Missions.
 - Agree the Partnership Charter attached at Appendix 1.
 - Note updates on the Xentrall Shared Services and DDAT projects in the Transformation Powering Our Future section.
 - Agree the scope for the 14 Transformation Reviews attached at Appendix 2.
 - Agree the draft Workforce Strategy set attached at Appendix 3.

Introduction

4. The framework for Powering Our Future was agreed by Cabinet in July 2023. Since then, work has taken place to develop and refine the focus of the Programme to ensure that it effectively responds to the challenges and opportunities facing the Council and the Borough.
5. In January 2024, Cabinet agreed the following Mission Statement for the Council:
We will be a bold, brave and innovative Council. Together with our partners we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place, where everyone is proud to live and work, where our communities flourish and people feel they belong. We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.
6. Cabinet also agreed the areas of focus for 5 underpinning Missions:
 - Communities Powering Our Future.
 - Partnerships Powering Our Future.
 - Transformation Powering Our Future.
 - Colleagues Powering Our Future.
 - Regeneration Powering Our Future.
7. Powering Our Future sets out a planned approach to carefully manage our resources over the longer term. It will see us create a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that offer value for money and are valued by our residents.
8. Our approach will be iterative, building over time, to engage communities and undertake thorough reviews. This can avoid the need to make short-term cuts, which can be damaging to services and the residents we serve.
9. The remainder of this report provides an update on each of the Missions, for Cabinet comment and approval. Regular reports to Cabinet will ensure that our Member-led approach drives the development and delivery of Powering Our Future.

Communities Powering Our Future

10. This Mission seeks to change our relationship with communities to make sure our residents have happy, healthy lives.
11. Three workstreams have been identified for this Mission, these are:
 - Communications.
 - Community Engagement.
 - Community Development.
12. In March 2024, we undertook a 'Getting Ready' Exercise through the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi). The Getting Ready exercise builds understanding of the local context, opportunities and challenges to meaningful community engagement. The outcome of the Getting Ready exercise is a shared sense of opportunities, risks and priorities that will further shape the programme plan for the Communities Mission.

13. Over 1600 people responded to our Residents Survey, which closed before Christmas. The Survey gathered views from our communities, based around the National Wellbeing Measures. It also included open questions, asking what's good and what could be improved, which provided a narrative response that allows us to better understand our residents. The Survey has given us a rich data set, and analysis of this is ongoing. Residents were also asked to provide their details if they would be happy to be involved in further engagement work, and this will be followed up through more targeted and focused sessions that will shape our approach to engage residents and help them to drive change.
14. Work has been ongoing across the Council to understand how we are working with partners, providers, the voluntary sector and our touchpoints with communities. We want to engage with members and local people to support us to develop a different approach. In Adult Social Care we have implemented a Making it Real Board with local people who have lived experience, and they will be part of our partnerships to inform what the future can be. We want our Members and communities to be at the heart of all we do.
15. To enable meaningful community development across the borough, our staff will be supported to have a conversation with communities, focused on what works, what is strong and what is positive in their lives. Staff will be up-skilled to support communities to build on their strengths and help fill any gaps, starting with community offers. Our approach will support people to maximise their independence wherever possible.

Partnerships Powering Our Future

16. This Mission seeks to ensure we are 'Stronger together'.
17. A Charter has been drafted, setting out proposed terms of engagement for the Council to observe when entering into any Partnership. This seeks to ensure that the Council engages in strong partnerships that deliver better outcomes for our communities, efficiently and with available resources.
18. The draft Partnership Charter is attached at Appendix 1. Subject to Cabinet agreement, this will be embedded into working practices.
19. The Place Leadership Board continues to see strong engagement across partners. Project activity is progressing across all priority areas identified by the group, including;
 - Developing skills for public service.
 - Attracting and retaining talent.
 - Building Pride in Place.
 - Maximising use of shared resources.
 - Health and Social Care Integration.

Transformation Powering Our Future

20. This Mission will identify new and innovative ways of working that are better for communities and more efficient.
21. In January 2024, Cabinet agreed the headline focus for the first phase of transformation reviews.

22. Following work to develop and refine the scope for each of the reviews covered by the programme, it is proposed that there are two amendments to the initial phase. These are set out below.
23. Xentrall – it is proposed that the stand alone review of Xentrall Shared Services is removed from the Transformation Programme at this stage. Wider exploration of potential opportunities to develop our shared services offer with Darlington Borough Council will now take place through the Partnerships Mission. Further information and ideas that emerge from the initial options appraisals will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration.
24. Digital Data and Technology – it is proposed that a broader review of the Council's approach to managing Digital Data and Technology takes place. The scope for this reflects best practice in line with with large Government Departments, and will consider how we use data and technology to drive transformation of our services. Details of the proposed scope for this review is attached at Appendix 2.
25. Proposals for the detailed scope of 14 Transformation Reviews that form Phase 1 of the Programme are attached at appendix 2 for Cabinet approval. The purpose of the scope is to identify areas of review or improvement within a given project. The scopes aim to provide clarity on the objectives of the project, in alignment with the Council's Mission Statement.
26. Appendix 2 includes the scope for the following reviews:
 - Waste Collection.
 - Fleet Management.
 - Intermediate Care.
 - Administration & Business Services.
 - Debt Management.
 - Community Safety & Regulatory Services.
 - Community Transport.
 - Transitions to Adulthood.
 - Customer Contact & Access to Services.
 - Early Intervention & Prevention.
 - Fees & Charges.
 - Children in Our Care.
 - Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) / High Needs.
 - Digital Data & Technology.

Colleagues Powering Our Future

27. This Mission seeks to empower our colleagues to do the best they can for communities.
28. Our Vision is to have a talented and diverse workforce that is committed, engaged and empowered to deliver the Council's priorities and ambitious Powering Our Future Programme. Our workforce will step up to the challenging budget situation by using their knowledge and skills to work with our partners and communities.
29. We want to be an employer of choice where our colleagues feel valued, informed and involved in a working environment that is fit to meet the future demands of the Borough.
30. A draft Workforce Strategy has been developed, which identifies priorities for delivery. It is based around the following themes, agreed by Cabinet in January 2024:

- Organisational Culture - To have a strong organisational culture of shared values and behaviours that guide the way we work and how we make decisions, aligned to Powering Our Future ambitions.
- Communications & Engagement - To have an effective communication and engagement strategy at all levels. This will ensure our colleagues and stakeholders understand corporate aims and priorities. It will facilitate bold, innovative and collaborative working, and ensure everyone understands the reason and context for change.
- Smarter Working – To ensure we have the right resources, processes and working environment to do the job in the most efficient and smart way. This will empower staff to do their best for communities.
- Attract & Retain – To have the best people with the right skills to Power Our Future. It is important we remain competitive with our Employee Reward Offer to be an attractive employer of choice and retain a talented and dedicated workforce.
- Happy & Healthy Workforce – To ensure that everyone supports and pays attention to their own as well as their colleagues' wellbeing.
- Workforce Planning - To ensure we have a workforce fit for the future we will embed and improve workforce planning across our organisation so that we understand our workforce profile to address future demands.
- Workforce Development – To provide employees with development opportunities to support retention, succession planning, future leaders and ensure we have a workforce with the right skills able to meet current and future demands. We will empower our colleagues to use their skills and talent to be innovative, entrepreneurial, dynamic and adaptable in all that they do.

31. A copy of the draft Workforce Strategy is attached at Appendix 3 for Cabinet approval.

Regeneration Powering Our Future

32. This Mission will drive economic growth to improve community prosperity and wellbeing.

Town Centre regeneration

33. Improvements and interventions have been or are in the process of being delivered across our six town centres.

Billingham

- A masterplan is currently being prepared for Billingham Town Centre, which builds on the previous 'Let's Talk about our Towns' public consultation.
- Following confirmation of £20m Levelling Up Funding awarded to Billingham in November 2023, negotiations are taking place on a future working relationship with the owners of Billingham town centre, with a view to presenting a shared Vision for the centre and agreed way of working.

Ingleby Barwick

- Work completed in January 2024 on new and refurbished play equipment in Romano Park, along with community growing and events space within the extended Romano Park area.

Norton

- Following completion of the popular refurbishment of the duck pond and fountain, work is currently on site delivering infrastructure and public realm improvements. Work will complete in early autumn 2024.

Stockton

- Following the demolition of Castlegate shopping centre, work is underway on the delivery of Stockton Waterfront, with completion forecast for January 2026. Work is also progressing on the Community Diagnostic Centre with completion forecast for late 2024. A blueprint is being developed for Central Stockton and North Thornaby. A public consultation gave residents the opportunity to comment on future ambitions for: Stockton Town Centre, the Municipal Quarter, Castlegate Quays and our Waterways.

Thornaby

- New developments under the £23.9m Town Deal umbrella are underway and planned in Thornaby. Detailed design for a new swimming pool connected to Thornaby Pavilion is underway with a view to starting work on site at the end of 2024, alongside progressing discussions to acquire the Golden Eagle to enable redevelopment of the site. A planning application for the new NETA training facility linked to the Riverside College is imminent, with work planned to start in early autumn 2024.

Yarm

- As part of the £20m Levelling Up Funding, work will be undertaken on improvements to Yarm High Street. More detail on timescales will be presented later in the year.
- Work is underway on the new Exhibition Space and store in Preston Park Museum and Grounds along with work due to begin in the summer on improvements to the cafe, aviary and to recognise the railway heritage and location of the historic 1825 railway.

The Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone

34. A Masterplan for the Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone is being finalised, The Zone is located at Teesdale Business Park and the adjacent Tees Marshalling Yards in Thornaby. The Masterplan will identify opportunities to unlock a 60 hectare brownfield site in the heart of the Tees Valley that can transform the area, for the benefit of the entire Borough and the wider region. The final draft Masterplan will be brought to Cabinet for approval in the coming months.

Inclusive Growth

35. We will continue to deliver against the aims contained within the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy as well as periodically reviewing the strategy to ensure it remains in line with the Council's vision. The four aims of the strategy are:
 - Support businesses to survive and grow
 - New businesses and investment are being attracted to the Borough creating new jobs

- All residents have access to skills gaps and job opportunities
- Deliver interventions that facilitate inclusive growth.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

36. Powering Our Future puts communities at the heart of everything we do. It will change the way we work with our communities so they use their knowledge, skills and strengths to help them deliver positive outcomes for themselves. Not only will this save money, it will mean that our residents are healthy, happy and feel like they belong.

37. Our approach will:

- Empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, helping people and communities to be independent and have less reliance on Council services.
- Always look for opportunities to be innovative and improve the way we work, so that we remain in the best possible financial position now and in the future.
- Ensure that if we redesign a service, we will do this in a way that minimises impact for our residents, communities and partner organisations.

38. A Community Impact Assessment will be undertaken for individual reviews as required.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

39. There are no direct impacts on Corporate Parenting as a result of this report. Implications will be identified as part of individual project activity for Powering Our Future.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

40. As outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Report to Council in February 2024, the Council is forecasting a budget gap of £9m by 2026/27. The Powering Our Futures Programme will be a key measure in ensuring we address the budget gap and deliver a balanced budget across the Medium Term Financial Plan.

41. The achievement of financial savings from the Phase 1 reviews will be essential to addressing the budget gap. Updates will be brought back to future Cabinet meetings regarding Phase 1 and Phase 2 reviews.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

42. There are no direct legal impacts as a result of this report. Implications will be identified and legal advice sought/provided as part of individual project activity for Powering Our Future.

RISK ASSESSMENT

43. This report provides an update on the development of the Powering Our Futures Programme. There are two main risks associated with the programme. Firstly, the programme doesn't achieve the levels of financial savings needed to put the Council on

a financially sustainable footing. Secondly, the programme does not improve outcomes for our communities. Both these risks could lead to reputational risk.

44. To manage the risks, the Council has implemented a robust governance structure to manage the Powering Our Future programme. The structure includes senior management oversight, steering groups for each strand of the programme, clearly defined projects and programme and project management arrangements and regular reporting to Cabinet. In addition, the programme will be appropriately resourced with additional officer capacity to ensure outputs are achieved that lead to delivering the aims of the programme.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

45. Powering Our Future is a Borough-wide Programme.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Financial Update and MTFP Report to Cabinet (December 2023)
- Powering Our Future Programme Update (January 2024)
- MTFP and Budget Report to Council (February 2024)

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Email Address: Geraldine.brown@stockton.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Partnership Charter

Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We enter into strong partnerships that deliver benefits for our council and our communities Our partnerships support the delivery of our Powering Our Future by having a strong approach to collectively plan and deliver We have a shared Vision and set of goals with our partners Our collective power with our partner organisations will make a positive difference to our communities Our leadership of the Borough will be recognised. Our residents will tell us our new approach is improving their lives We can show how we've removed organisational boundaries to help improve joined up approaches working with communities to address key issues; and to improve access to services for our communities Our residents experience seamless services which are joined up across partner organisations We can demonstrate how our collaboration with partner organisations has helped us reduce our size and eased the pressure on our finances. 	Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will have an agreed charter to enter into and foster constructive partnerships The charter is embedded into working practices We will increase the number of joint initiatives delivered between public, private, voluntary and community sector partners and help to align existing joint initiatives to support the strategic direction for the Borough We will have a shared conversation with communities Local partners will speak and act with 'One Voice' as a recognised 'The Place leadership Board' Stockton-on-Tees will have a strong place-based brand that is recognised locally, regionally and nationally
Criteria for Entering into a Prospective Partnership Agreement			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partnership must represent a benefit to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and our communities (financial/outcome). The added value must be clear We should agree shared values/principles We should agree shared objectives It is essential to agree clear governance The partnership must not pose a reputational risk to the Council We must have a clear understanding of the financial position relevant to partnership activity, and crucially where this may lead to shared funding. It's essential to understand that all partners will have financial challenges, but our partnerships can be our strength We must consider proportionality of partners resources A cost benefit analysis should be completed before entering into any partnership. 			

Appendix 2- Transformation Review Scopes

Project ID:	MT01	Project Name:	Waste Collection
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>As of the financial year 2022/2023, the Borough's recycling rate stands at 25.2%, ranking 328th out of 338 Local Authorities nationally. This compares to the Tees Valley average of 30.58% and the national average of 42%.</p> <p>The Joint Waste Management Strategy (JWMS) aspires to attain a 45%-50% recycling rate for the Tees Valley by 2027, and a national target of 65% for Municipal solid waste by 2035.</p> <p>Following approval of the Environment Act, there will be substantial forthcoming changes in the methodology employed for household waste collection, placing particular emphasis on the need for Local Authorities (LAs) to enhance the quality of their collected recyclable materials. This will result in the adoption of a mandated weekly food waste collection service from April 2025 (Stockton-on-Tees and other Tees Valley LA's have received transitional approval to roll this out from April 2026) and Government have announced New £295m for councils to introduce weekly food waste collections - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) as well as EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) which places the financial responsibility for disposal costs on producers rather than LA's, as well as the potential launch of DRS (Deposit Return Scheme) which could impact on the level or recycling material we collect at the kerbside in future.</p> <p>It is essential to recognise that the frequency of refuse collection plays a pivotal role in shaping the Council's recycling achievements. Currently, residents have access to a generous weekly disposal capacity of 240 litres for residual waste. This abundance of disposal capacity inadvertently discourages recycling efforts. This excess disposal capacity has led Stockton Borough Council to possess the highest Residual Waste per household rate in the nation, at 783 Kilogram/Hectogram. This situation presents a formidable financial risk, with our current waste disposal fees anticipated to double in 2026 and the potential for further increases with the proposed launch of the Emissions Trading Scheme in 2028. Another key consideration is a significant increase in disposal charges which we will see when the current contract ends in April 2026.</p> <p>Historically, our Waste and Recycling service has consistently resulted in high levels of resident satisfaction, always in excess of 90%. Nevertheless, given the financial and environmental factors associated with the current collection approach, a comprehensive review is needed to assess available options thoroughly. This review will leverage both local and national expertise to ensure the delivery of a high-performing Waste and Recycling service to our residents, one that aligns with critical recycling targets and contributes to the principles of a circular economy.</p>		
In Scope:	<p>Review of the domestic, green and food waste collection service provision including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational delivery/optimisation, waste minimisation • opportunities for income generation, financial stability and investment • Increase recycling levels and targets • digitisation of process and customer access consideration of climate change agenda and national policy / legislation <p>The review will be aligned to the Scrutiny review of waste collection and recycling undertaken by the Place Select Committee.</p>		<p>Out of Scope:</p> <p>Household Waste Recycling Centres</p>

Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Legislation – The requirements of the Resources and Waste Strategy for England (RWS) (December 2018) and the Environment Act (November 2021) places a statutory duty on all waste collection and unitary authorities in England to collect food waste separately and to treat this waste by recycling. This legislation remains subject to further consultation regarding timing and funding, however in late October 2021 the net zero strategy and autumn budget statement announced an allocation of £295m of capital to allow local authorities in England to prepare to implement free weekly separate food waste collections for all households. Weekly food waste collections would not be viable alongside weekly residual collections due to participation levels.
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate in alignment with new National Legislation Reduction/Avoidance in costs and financial sustainability. Achieve higher rates of recycling across the Borough Reduction in carbon footprint Improved service efficiency through use of technology 	
Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fleet Management Transformation Review- changes to operations may result in changes to fleet requirements Digital Data and Technology (DDAT) Transformation Review - adoption of new digital technology to improve efficiency of service Communications & Community Engagement- waste collection is a fundamental service we deliver; therefore it is imperative that our communities understand the reasons for change and how it will affect their day to day lives. Scrutiny review of waste collection and recycling undertaken by the Place Select Committee. 	

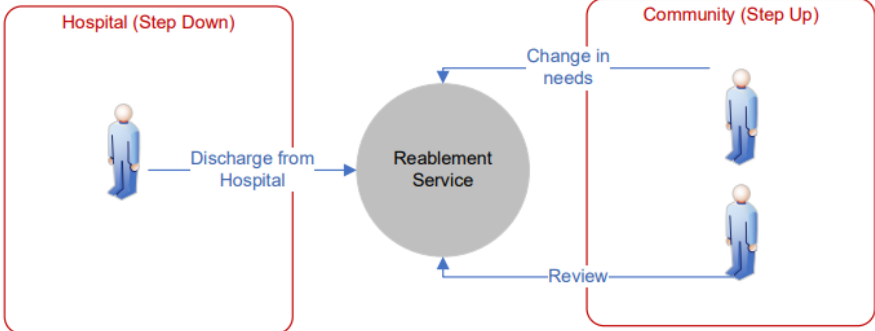
Project ID:	MT02	Project Name:	Fleet Management
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>This review will consider current vehicle usage, future demand and management. It will consider use of the Fleet Renewal Fund. The review also seeks to understand current Depot provisions and the risks and benefits of current depot pressures and the potential benefits of providing Depot capacity in an alternative way.</p> <p>Spiralling fleet costs based on the impact of COVID and global financial influences have seen the cost of goods and materials soar in recent years. As an illustration, vehicle costs have increased by 20% over the last 3 years.</p> <p>A typical example of rising cost is the hire of vehicles through the NEPO contract have seen a recent increase in charges of between 50-60% in one iteration. This example sets out the current market trend where increased cost of purchasing vehicles has an organisational impact. This is further compounded with delivery times particularly on municipal fleet extending to 12 months or more, making planning difficult and spending profile difficult to predict.</p>		

	<p>This review will consider the current provision set against a projected view of need over the next 10 years and identify what short, medium and long-term actions are necessary to deliver services in a safe, cost-effective way over the next 10 years. It will also consider how partnerships may support the work of the Council. Whilst there are existing pressures within all depot locations, there are also emerging challenges which will compound the capacity issues further; the launch of a nationally mandated weekly food waste collection service which will add additional operational vehicles to existing sites and new Tees Valley Waste Disposal Contract in 2026</p>		
<p>In Scope:</p>	<p>The review will consider current vehicle usage and future management This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demand for services • current and emerging statutory requirements • a revised approach for vehicle acquisition and fleet management including a financial forecasting model. • links to Environmental Strategy • Identify Depot (including storage space) needs across the whole Council and identify options which are cost effective and meet the long term demands of the Council, include future proofing for additional demand. • The FRF currently facilitates the timely renewal of vehicles used to provide services across the Borough, these included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Highways Maintenance ○ Street Cleansing ○ Waste Management ○ Adult Social Care ○ Childrens ○ Community Transport ○ Horticultural Services ○ Catering & Cleaning Services ○ Winter Maintenance ○ Street Lighting Maintenance ○ Security and Surveillance ○ Trading Standards ○ Environmental Health ○ HVE Building Services ○ Home Improvement Agency (HIA) 	<p>Out of Scope:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Constraints:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are looking to replace current Municipal fleet with more sustainable solutions when they become available. However, it is clear that early generation technical solutions come with a premium cost which may make environmental choice more of a challenge • Increased cost of goods and materials, general unpredictability of market 		
<p>Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i></p>			

- Delivering good, well-maintained, and safe Fleet, which meets all operational needs within the available budget.
- Delivering safe operational base for service delivery and associated staff, storage, and maintenance of all council assets in order the Council can meet all statutory requirements.
- Reduction/Avoidance in costs and financial sustainability.

Interdependencies: (Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)

- Waste Collection Transformation Review changes to operations may result in changes to fleet requirements
- Digital Data and Technology (DDAT) Transformation Review - adoption of new digital technology to improve efficiency of service
- Community Transport Transformation Review - changes to operations may result in changes to fleet requirements

Project ID:	MT03	Project Name:	Intermediate Care
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>The number of people being placed in long term residential care has continued to fluctuate and whilst the latest in-year projections have dropped to 400 per 100,000 population in 23/24 (a rate lower than the previous year at 433 per 100,000 population in 22/23) the spikes in activity during the year and subsequent costs have resulted increased costs on older people's and physical disabilities residential care. The use of Intermediate Care and Reablement services (including our building-based assessment and rehab service at Rosedale) are a key lever in managing both demand and flow into long term service (step down) and escalation of need for people already supported to live independently (step up). See Figure 1 below.</p>		
<p>Figure 1: Step Up and Step Down.</p>  <pre> graph LR subgraph Hospital_Step_Down [Hospital (Step Down)] H[Person in Hospital] end subgraph Reablement_Service [Reablement Service] RS((Reablement Service)) end subgraph Community_Step_Up [Community (Step Up)] C1[Person in Community] C2[Person in Community] end H -- "Discharge from Hospital" --> RS RS -- "Change in needs" --> C1 C2 -- "Review" --> RS </pre>			
<p>The challenge is fivefold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale: The volume of people who could benefit intermediate care support to maintain their independence or who could be supported back to the community from a hospital setting is only a proportion of the total number of people who currently benefit from this support. • Focus: Reablement and Intermediate Care services are focussed on supporting older people back to independence / maintaining their independence in the community. Whilst the numbers are lower, there are people with a learning disability and enduring mental health need that would benefit from this support and ensure a more person-centred progression model and reduce the dependence on long term support. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the data is accurate and timely with the need to develop a reliable dashboard for robust decision making and monitoring (including finance and forecasting evidence) with capacity to review the information to make the connections across services. • Interrelationships: Reablement and Intermediate Care services are intrinsically linked to many health services so defining and managing the scope of the project will be essential. • Technology: How can technology support both the efficiency and effectiveness of reablement to maximise independence but also to offer an enabler to support people to self-care and live independently. <p>Growing the capacity of the current offer and linking this into a pathway that works with the new older people residential framework and the new care at home and extra care frameworks (due to be commissioned by 01 October 2024). These will add value to the current service offer making the long-term package of care more resilient.</p> <p>Review of the Care at Home Service in 2023 included elements of the intermediate care / reablement service as an enabler for a sustainable contract for domiciliary care services (01 Oct 2024 – 30 Sept 2031). As a consequence, this project has identified an option to grow the service to encompass a greater number of people. The rationale and evidence for this option will need to be reviewed and considered alongside other solutions as part of the discovery phase of the project.</p>
<p>In Scope:</p>	<p>Review of mechanisms and services to support people living at home & avoiding the need for long term residential care. This will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home care services • Care at home market, home care market (including discharge to assess) • Reablement Service & Rosedale Service. • Commissioning of future service requirements • Links to the developing Care and Health Innovation Zone to be identified in relation to research and innovation. <p>It will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People being discharged through pathways 1 and 2. • People in the community whose support shows sign of failure. • People who are subject to review and may benefit from a period of additional reablement. • People in scope include all people over 18 with a diagnosis of dementia, learning disability,
<p>Out of Scope:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People being discharged on pathway 0 who have no package of care in place when they were admitted to hospital. • End of life placement • Continuing Health Care Placements • Health services commissioned by North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System • Integrated Care Board delivered by North Tees Hospital Foundation Trust, Tees, Esk & Wear Valley Foundation Trust.

	<p>mental health and physical impairment.</p> <p>This will not review all of adult care but will influence spend across the whole service area</p>		
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care at home and Discharge to Access (D2A) contract arrangements • Economic – Sustainability of the Care at Home and residential market as a direct result in reduced volume of referrals and reduction in package size because of this project to be reviewed. 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people living independently in their home • Care market sustainability - reduced demand will stabilise the current market, promoting quality in manageable demand. • Improved outcomes for the people being supported through reablement. • Pre and post assessment of wellbeing improvement 			
Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re tenders for Care at Home, Extra Care and Older People residential Care retender. • Better Care Fund Programme. • Transformation Reviews: Early Intervention and Prevention, Customer Contact and Access to services and Administration and Business Services 			

Project ID:	MT04	Project Name:	Administration and Business Services						
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>The review will include Corporate Administration, Business Support, Mail and Courier Services and Receptions.</p> <p>Corporate Administration The centralised administration team is based in main council buildings and other offices in their locality using a hub and spoke model with three categories of support:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 40%;">Office Resource Hubs</td> <td>Multi-skilled resource teams delivering council wide administrative support.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Specialist Resources</td> <td>Service specific teams of pooled resources, providing specialist functions, may have some dependency on location and degree of interaction with service user/service.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Embedded Administration</td> <td>Services closely working with a specific team, tasks that are location dependent and require face to face interaction with service users (e.g. receptions).</td> </tr> </table> <p>A full review of the functions carried out will be undertaken with a view to identifying if the functions carried out are needed; delivered in the most efficient way; and, best placed in individual service areas or in a centralised corporate team.</p> <p>Business Support</p>			Office Resource Hubs	Multi-skilled resource teams delivering council wide administrative support.	Specialist Resources	Service specific teams of pooled resources, providing specialist functions, may have some dependency on location and degree of interaction with service user/service.	Embedded Administration	Services closely working with a specific team, tasks that are location dependent and require face to face interaction with service users (e.g. receptions).
Office Resource Hubs	Multi-skilled resource teams delivering council wide administrative support.								
Specialist Resources	Service specific teams of pooled resources, providing specialist functions, may have some dependency on location and degree of interaction with service user/service.								
Embedded Administration	Services closely working with a specific team, tasks that are location dependent and require face to face interaction with service users (e.g. receptions).								

	<p>Some services across the Council incorporate their own business support teams and/or individual business support roles. The review will attempt to identify these and consider whether the functions link to, or are similar to, those carried out in the centralised corporate team. Where links/similarities are identified the review will identify if the functions are needed; delivered in the most efficient way; and, best placed in individual service areas or in a centralised corporate team.</p> <p>Mail and Courier Services</p> <p>Opportunities to streamline dispatch of and response to incoming mail, reduce outgoing paper mail and consider a hybrid mail solution as an alternative to current dispatch of mail.</p> <p>Reception Services</p> <p>The corporate administration service currently provides reception services for 6 council buildings. Reception services for Municipal Buildings is provided by customer services; reception services for Halcyon Centre/Dementia Hub are provided by adult services. The centralisation of office accommodation will reduce the need for reception duties. Future needs will be considered in the review.</p>		
In Scope:	<p>Review of organisation wide admin and business service functions including PA, Reception Services, Mail and Courier Services and all admin support. The review will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functions to be undertaken • customer access • use of technology • roles and responsibilities • structure alignment, future operating arrangements 	Out of Scope:	N/A
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exiting contracts for equipment and resources 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction/Avoidance in costs and financial sustainability • Clearly defined admin and corporate functions that fit well in a centralised team • Clearly defined specialist functions that can be placed in a specific team • The simplification and standardisation of processes, better utilization of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) 			
Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All reviews included in Phase 1 of the Transformation Mission Programme 			

Project ID:	MT05	Project Name:	Debt Management
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc	<p>The responsibility for corporate debt was included as part of the Revenues, Benefits and Welfare service within the last Senior Management review however at present collection of Council income is spread across the organisation depending on the type of income and means by which it can be collected.</p>		

<p>Local/services issues):</p>	<p>Xentrall Shared Services provides the means by which services can issue invoices with an automated recovery process up to and including final reminder before the debt is handed back to the service to progress further. Other debts such as council tax is collected via a billing and enforcement process set out in regulations.</p> <p>A review of income collection undertaken in the Revenues, Benefits and Welfare service considered the impact of Coronavirus on income collection for the income streams of council tax, business rates and overpaid housing benefit. A number of challenges have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review established that the pandemic brought about financial challenges for many residents and businesses; exacerbating problems of debt for those that have previously had difficulty in maintaining their financial commitments and placing those who have not previously experienced financial difficulties into a debt situation. • Debts built during that period have increased and many households and businesses are now impacted by the Cost of Living Crisis. • Processes for the management and reporting of debts and customer engagement is inconsistent ad reply on manual processes and various systems 		
<p>In Scope:</p>	<p>Review of organisation wide debt management functions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functions to be undertaken • customer access • roles and responsibilities • structure alignment, future operating arrangements • digitisation of process • the handling of enquiries, provision of debt advice and payment options and will link with the fees and charges review to understand opportunities for 'payment up front' and provision of grants and loans. • corporate requirements to respond to proof of debt for insolvency and breathing space regulations. • provision of welfare support and income maximisation across the council and the use of external providers. <p>All income streams will be included.</p>	<p>Out of Scope:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Constraints:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal / Policy – statutory service specific requirements to be fulfilled. • Economic – cost of living crisis impacting ability to repay debts 		
<p>Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maximise collection; • To minimise the cost of collection <p>Strategic Objectives to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce duplication in processes; • Improved efficiency, maximising opportunities to digitalise and automate processes • Support financially vulnerable households to maximise their income; • To minimise the potential for businesses to accrue debts; 			

- Improve the provision of co-ordinated debt, benefit and other advice;
- Provide accessible and consistent transactions for our customers;
- Protecting the Public Purse

Interdependencies: *(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)*

- Corporate Admin and Business Services Transformation Review– operating model may impact where functions are delivered.
- Customer Access - operating model may impact where functions are delivered.
- Early Intervention and Prevention – provision of support to households in financial distress, tackling issues that may result in debt.
- Fees & Charges – success reliant upon adoption of pay first approach to minimise accrual of debt.

Project ID:	MT06	Project Name:	Community Safety and Regulatory Services
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>Here in Stockton-on-Tees, the protection of our residents, legitimate businesses and visitors is of absolute importance. We take our duties in relation to community safety and regulation extremely seriously and as a result, we expect only the best of our services. Following recent service transformation in May 2022, our Community Safety Team, Environmental Health Service, Licensing and Trading Standards Services are now working collaboratively within a newly formed portfolio of services that also includes our emergency planning statutory functions. This collection of services are responsible for not only discharging the Authority’s vast and complex array of statutory duties, but to do so by ensuring Stockton-on-Tees is a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm – working in close partnership with our strategic partners across Stockton-on-Tees, regionally and nationally.</p> <p>Following the senior management review in 2023, these services within scope were brought together without changes to structures, responsibilities or any consideration of the services offered. As a result, over the past 12 months work has been undertaken to better understanding the levels of service offered and considerable thought given to better ways of working.</p> <p>There are therefore several key drivers for reviewing this grouping of services, with a view to rationalising leadership, aligning priorities and responsibilities, and ensuring services are on a strong footing to meet future legislative changes which have either recently been implemented or are due shortly.</p>		
In Scope:	<p>Review of all Community Safety and Regulatory Service provision within the authority with a view to rationalising leadership, aligning priorities and responsibilities, and ensuring services are on a strong footing to meet future legislative changes that have either recently been implemented or are due shortly. The review will also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current & emerging statutory requirements • operational delivery/optimisation • digitisation of process and customer access 	Out of Scope:	N/A
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming legislative changes and therefore more statutory duties expected to be placed on services which add an element of uncertainty regarding capacity 		

Outcomes to be achieved: *(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)*

- Becoming a service that is ‘fit for the future’
- Prioritising the customer through a single front door approach
- A safer Borough
- Continually improving working relationships with Police and other agencies
- Reduction/Avoidance in costs, Increase in income and financial sustainability.

Interdependencies: *(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)*

- Safer streets policy
- Public Health (outbreak management)
- Partnerships & Communities Missions
- Transformation Reviews: Customer Contact and Access to services, Administration and Business Services, Debt Management, Fees and Charges

Project ID:	MT07	Project Name:	Community Transport
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>The Community Transport Service provides Home to School Transport provision as a statutory requirement and core service focus to and from mainstream, special educational needs (SEN) and looked-after children (LAC), as well as Adult Transportation to the Council’s two Adult Day Care Centres at Allensway in Thornaby and in Central Stockton.</p> <p>While significant effort has been taken over the years to ensure financial resilience, Community Transport has faced significant budget pressures due to a range of factors, specifically the impact of the ongoing global financial climate which has seen an inflationary increase in internal costs, the costs of all mainstream and SEN routes due to the increase in labour, fuel for SBC fleet vehicles, and other supply chain costs including the retendering of contracts for private transport operators.</p> <p>It is expected that costs are likely to increase in the future, therefore a key part of this review will be to consider the services we are currently providing and legislative requirements. It will consider opportunities to make better use of resources and interrogate supply options while appropriately driving down demand to arrive at a balanced and effective future delivery model.</p>		
In Scope:	<p>The review will consider policy, and delivery requirements to meet policy priorities and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigating rising costs associated with community transport especially for those with complex needs while continuing to provide this service to vulnerable people • Exploration of journey geography to understand ‘high-cost placements’ to/from ‘out of Borough’ settings • Mitigating maximum capacity situations • Decision-making process for formulating home-to-school travel plans at SEND level to incorporate agreed future Community Transport revised policies • Links to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) decision-making processes to ensure requests strictly relate to the codified policy • Wider sourcing and provision of transport 	Out of Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five community bus routes also operate but are funded separately through City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements to support public transport throughout the Borough • All public transport

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of independent/community “travel buddy” schemes in line with asset-based community development (ABCD) practices • Exploration of links to Motability benefits if an individual has been awarded: the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, the enhanced rate mobility component of Personal Independence Payment or Armed Forces Independence Payment / War Pensioners’ Mobility Supplement and crossover with households also claiming a school transport place • Community Services enquiries as the central gateway to the service • Digital optimisation opportunities to reduce demand pressures and optimisation of service delivery 		
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal duties to provide a minimum level of service to specific children and adults as statutory requirements – as mandated in ‘Travel to school for children of compulsory school age – statutory guidance for local authorities’ (June 2023). • Aims set out in SBC’s Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-2032 inc. net zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2032 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction/Avoidance in costs and financial sustainability. • Improved partnership between SBC, the voluntary sector, individuals, and private transport companies • Optimising digital systems e.g. digital bus passes for service users and maximise routing software alongside improvements that reduce pressure on Customer Services and make better use of resources • Minimise Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO2e) 		
Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Driver pilot scheme: pilot commencing January 2024 in partnership with Volunteering Matters (procured by Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees). • Fleet Management Transformation Review • Wider sustainable travel and parking may also contribute to enabling greater self-sufficiency for children and parents to achieve home-to-school travel. • Placement Sufficiency project within Children’s Services Transformation aimed at enabling more children to remain at their home and not be placed into long-term care, this may increase or reduce demand pressures on Community Transport. • Private bus operators – operational delivery changes may impact pressure and demand on SBC Community Transport provision. 		

Project ID:	MT08	Project Name:	Digital Data and Technology
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc	<p>Background Responsibility for Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) has evolved in the Council and is fragmented across 3 key functional areas with additional related pockets of activity within other Council services. Digital and Data are separate functions within the Council and the Technology function is part of Xentrall Shared Services.</p>		

Local/services issues):

Digital Services Group ensures that project activity is joined up and prioritised and provides a governance framework for the Council's ICT and Digital developments and procurements. However, the separation and blurring of leadership responsibilities and operational delivery can be inefficient and relies heavily upon collaboration.

We are experiencing challenges in attracting the capacity and skills in some aspects of activity, particularly relating to data and digital developments. We have overcome this to some extent by developing internal staff and recruiting apprentices, however our ability to progress rapidly and to exploit particularly specialist opportunities such as Artificial Intelligence and Rapid Process Automation is somewhat restricted.

The Transformation Powering our Future programme presents an opportunity to review the current approach with a view to strengthening the Council's position and recognising DDaT as strategic assets to support service performance and to enable the design and delivery of high quality, efficient, effective services.

In this review it is important to acknowledge the vital role of DDaT in the success of the Council's Powering Our Future programme to enable the following:

- Transforming the way we work as a council
- Transforming how our services work for residents
- Supporting business and employment growth
- Supporting community development

Services in Scope

Digital and Websites

The Council's Digital function was established in November 2017 to drive forward the Council's approach to customer focused digital transformation and to provide a modern omnichannel customer function. This function is responsible for:

- Design and development of the Council's websites and interactive online self-serve solutions
- Ensuring compliance of Council websites with legislation relating to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- Leadership, support and guidance to support the successful transition to new working practices and digital service delivery, including Microsoft 365 and other digital solutions
- System strategy, implementation, development and maintenance supporting the following functions:
 - Customer contact (Netcall Omnichannel Contact Centre Solution, including integration with the Council's telephony system)
 - Corporate land & property gazetteer
 - Community Services, Community Safety and Regulated Services (CIVICA APP)

All Council owned websites are bound by WCAG legislation and are subject to audits by the Cabinet Office. The following teams are in scope in respect of externally facing website content.

- Communications Function

This covers the main Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council website content and a range of subsites and is currently a shared responsibility between the Digital Services function and the Communications function. Digital Services are responsible for website design, development, information architecture and ensuring Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) legislation and Communications are responsible for

the messaging and the ongoing currency, accuracy and accessibility of content.

The following teams are in scope in relation to website content for their specific team related websites: -

- Adult Learning and Skills
- Community Services – Crematorium website
- Public Health – Tees Valley Joint Strategic Needs Assessment website
- Libraries Websites
 - Children’s Book of the Year
 - Heritage Stockton
 - Picture Stockton
 - Libraries Catalogue
- Preston Park Museum and Grounds
- Tees Valley Safeguarding Board

Data and Line of Business Systems

The Council’s Strategy and Performance function has the following relevant responsibilities for data and systems. (some out of scope responsibilities of this function are not included for this purpose):

- Configuration, preparation and management of data sets from a variety of sources to enable performance analysis, research, intelligence and insight.
- Leadership for the Council’s use of data interrogation and analysis tools such as Power BI
- Implementation and management of the geographical information Geographic Information System toolkit
- System strategy, implementation, development and maintenance supporting the following functions:
 - Children’s social care (Liquidlogic Childrens Systems/Early Help Module)
 - Adults social care (Liquidlogic Adults Social Care System)
 - Education, early years and special educational needs (Capita One, to be replaced with Liquidlogic Early Years & Education System Jul-24)

The following functions develop and maintain their own applications:

- Xentrall Finance (Agresso)
- Xentrall HR (Resource Link)
- Revenues and Benefits (Civica)
- Planning (IDOX Uniform)
- Housing (HOAMS)
- Libraries Management (Spydus)

Technology

The Council’s ICT function is delivered by Xentrall Shared Services (in partnership with Darlington Borough Council) who are responsible for the following:

- Strategy, architecture and management of platforms, networks and end user devices
- Technical implementation of change projects, e.g. Microsoft 365
- Cyber security
- Business analysis and project management for ICT related projects
- Applications development
- Applications and database support and maintenance
- Incident and problem management of faults
- End user support (help desk)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End user training 		
<p>In Scope:</p>	<p>The organisation and delivery of DDaT related services delivered by the following functions (described in detail above):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xentrall ICT • Digital and Web Development • Strategy and Performance • Systems support in services across the Council. • Teams involved in the publication of external website content. <p>Identification of gaps in strategies, skills, platforms and tools required to establish and deliver an effective DDaT function</p> <p>Exploration of sharing opportunities with Darlington Borough Council (in conjunction with the SBC / Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Partnerships project).</p>	<p>Out of Scope:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement of existing technology or line of business systems
<p>Constraints:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership with Darlington in respect of Xentrall ICT Services. • The ability to fulfil statutory responsibilities relating to configurations and outputs from Digital solutions, websites and Line of Business Applications. • Availability of skills and capacity to fulfil all identified DDaT functions. 		
<p>Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic alignment of DDaT with Powering our Future Missions • Capacity and capability of DDaT is designed to meet the requirements of Powering Our Future Missions • Capacity and capability of DDaT is designed to fulfil statutory duties and operational service delivery. • Organisation of DDaT functions is optimised for strategic alignment and efficient delivery. 			
<p>Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC / DBC Partnership Project (Partnerships Powering our Future) • Council Operating Model 			

Project ID:	MT09	Project Name:	Transitions to Adulthood
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>Currently Children’s Services provide support to children and young people until the age of 18 years (25 if they have SEND or are care leavers) after that age Adult Social Care will then provide support to the individual as an adult if an eligible care need is identified.</p> <p>However, there are individuals that will receive care and support from Adult Social Care from the age of 18 upwards if an eligible care need is identified. Importantly, planning will occur between children’s & adult services as an individual transitions from childhood to adulthood.</p> <p>There is a need to ensure that there is shared responsibility and focus on developing and implementing a ‘Preparing for Adulthood’ (PfA) pathway for those young people with complex needs, who may or may not qualify for Adult Social Care support by developing a plan that supports young people during their transition to adulthood.</p> <p>As part of this project a mapping exercise is needed to understand what currently happens regarding transition planning and develop a robust and consistent practice that is understood by Adults, Children’s Services, and relevant partners.</p> <p>The Care Act places a duty on Local Authorities to conduct transition assessments for children, their carers and young carers where there is a likely need for care and support after the child turns 18.</p> <p>The legislation delivers a clear message that agencies must work together to provide careful preparation, planning and communication to ensure that young people get the support they need so they can move from child to young person, to adult as seamlessly as possible.</p> <p>Partners across education, health and social care have a key role to play in helping all children and young people with a disability prepare well for the transition to adulthood.</p> <p>The key challenges as identified by the working group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can adult services learn about children with disabilities before they reach 18 years? • What is needed for an early identification of need at the most appropriate age to alert the adults specialist disability team that a young person is likely to need care and support? • What assessment process is needed to be developed that triggers the service depending on need for the young person? • How can the services know about a young person in advance of them needing support from adults for mental health & well-being? • Are there opportunities for joint commissioning and partnership continuity? • What are the thresholds – how do they differ between adults and children’s services? • Could Liquid Logic or relevant case recording system be used better to support transfer and sharing of information? Could a transitions module be added to into this? • What policies and procedures are needed to underpin the transition work? • Is there a consistent ‘Think Family’ approach to the needs assessment? • How are expectations managed during transitions for young people, families, and services? • How are legal services involved when assessing mental capacity for children and adults? 		

	<p>The data tells us, there are currently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55 Children with disabilities age 15+ • 635 Children age 15+ with EHCP and expected annual review outcomes. • 49 Expected care leavers with identified additional needs age 18 – 25 years. <p>Not all these children/young people will need ongoing support. However, an established method for early identification is needed in order to ensure support is available to the right children/young people at the right time. This will help services to better plan and avoid difficulties escalating for the children/young people which then may require more intensive intervention.</p>		
In Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of a new PfA pathway • Establishment of new PfA function/team • Development of roles & responsibilities across the pathway • Special educational needs and disabilities • Partnership opportunities • Co-design of communications • Workforce development within Stockton across the pathway – Transitions Worker • Children’s Disability Team 	Out of Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this stage, redesign of Health-led transition pathways (e.g., Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Community Mental Health Teams (CHMT) • Additional ‘transition’ pathways, e.g. Leaving Care • Commissioning services to fill any gaps in the provisions - although it is expected this would begin once gaps are identified as part of business-as-usual commissioning
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful PfA transformation requires a strong partnership ethos and requires good joint working both within the LA between Adults, Children’s and SEND as well as wider services (e.g. Housing) and with partner agencies 		
<p>Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction/Avoidance in costs and financial sustainability. • The transition pathway (PfA) should not be noticed by young people and their parents or carers • The PfA uses the national definition for describing complex needs • SBC has access to future needs information that shapes the market for the best offer 			
<p>Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in our Care Transformation Review • Early Intervention and Prevention Transformation Review • Community Transport & Active Travel: Independent Travel Training and independent travel are key ways to unlock independence • Any housing strategy related activity to ensure the requirements of young adults are appropriately captured • Any SEND transformation activity to ensure PfA outcomes are embedded • Any joint funding (Continuing Healthcare) related activity 			

Project ID:	MT10	Project Name:	Customer Contact and Access to Services
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>The Contact Centre within Customer Services provides the ‘front door’ for over 20 Council Services, including the Switchboard, Council Tax, Care for your Area, Bus Passes and Blue Badges. In the year to 31 March 2023, the Contact Centre handled 207,528 telephone calls, 52,944 emails and 12,116 face to face visits.</p> <p>A combination of interrelated factors is driving the need for a review of Customer Services, with the aim of designing a new operating model that will address existing performance challenges, as well as support the council’s broader strategic and financial sustainability objectives. These drivers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • council-wide efforts underway to close the projected budget gap and ensure financial sustainability, with identified opportunities to improve the use of available resources and operating arrangements within Customer Services for greater value for money and overall service quality. • increasing volume and complexity of customer support needs driven by the broader cost-of-living crisis and enduring effects of the pandemic. More customers are calling the Contact Centre during periods of distress and requiring multiple forms of council support, with an increasing proportion of customers experiencing homelessness. • performance deterioration in call wait times, with average wait times gradually increasing from previous years heightening the risk of poorer customer experiences and outcomes. This has improved recently but deterioration is still a major risk, primarily relating to workforce retention. • workforce retention challenges, with increasing turnover to experienced staff members to other parts of the council and other organisations. This is understood to be in part due to increasing demand and complexity of customer support requests, which can be distressing and fatiguing for staff. This is contributing to capacity constraints, service discontinuity for customers, and increasing training costs. • advancing technology solutions, with potential opportunities to further digitise elements of Customer Service operations, including elements of automation, use of customer insights, and predictive analytics to support resource allocation and more streamlined service delivery. • council aspirations to deliver more effective early intervention and prevention services, of which Customer Services will be a critical enabler as the ‘front door’ to many council services and the primary touchpoint between the council and the broader community. <p>The aim of this project will be to identify and implement a model of customer service across the organisations that supports the council in responding to these drivers of change.</p>		
In Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service operations and interfaces with other services 	Out of Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other Council Services
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council-wide alignment: Ensuring project delivery in line with broader PoF timing, aims, and scope. 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>			

Improved effectiveness in the delivery of Customer Services, as measured by:

- Reduced call wait times
- Reduction in call volumes
- Reduction in call handling times
- Reduction in calls relating to progress chasing
- Improved customer satisfaction

Interdependencies: *(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)*

Other Powering our Future work, including:

- Early Intervention and Prevention Transformation Review – will involve engaging customers that present themselves at the ‘front door’ and identifying risks that require additional support
- Administration and Business Support Transformation Review – admin teams are believed to act as a front door in some departments, therefore this would be within the scope of this project
- Digital Transformation – the council’s emerging programme of technology-enabled transformation may need to support implementation of some elements of the new model

Other areas:

- All services with a customer-facing element, whether the contact centre currently provides a service on their behalf or whether they provide some services directly
- Services that determine the Estates/places that customer contact can take place – e.g., Facilities, Estates, Libraries service

Project ID:	MT11	Project Name:	Early Intervention and Prevention
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>Creating the conditions for people in the Borough to be healthy and maximise their potential and providing support for them at the right place and right time, at the earliest opportunity is morally and ethically the right thing to do, reducing the social and personal cost to individuals, families, and communities.</p> <p>The increasing complexity of need is occurring at a time when costs for services are growing exponentially, and there are finite resources with children’s services seeing the biggest challenges as described in the recent Medium Term Financial Plan (February 24) and Powering our Future reports (January 24).</p> <p>Inequalities between wards in the Borough still exist and have widened due to COVID and increasing poverty. Whilst the long-term impact is unknown it is likely to result in a continued need for support/interventions.</p> <p>Drivers for change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive and fragmented support. • Limited agency amongst those who face biggest inequality (control and resources to help/do for themselves) • improvements needed to enhance better joined up working between agencies, communities, and individuals. • Inconsistent preventative action that is not clearly articulated. • Increase in costs to children’s social care. • Increase costs to adults’ social care. • The market for placements and care homes is expensive and precarious. • Increasing rates of children living in poverty. • Significant financial pressures. 		

- Increase need to support more People with significant complex needs.

The challenge

Effective support for residents should be:

- Identified early and systematically.
- Accessible to all and targeted based on need.
- In the right place at the right time (Including within their own community networks)
- Supportive of communities, families and individuals helping themselves
- Free from barriers to getting help.
- Proactive.
- Equitable.
- Based on best available research evidence and views of local people

The breadth and scope of opportunities for early intervention is significant. A key part of the project will be to understand need and identify and prioritise opportunities for prevention and early intervention across the organisation. In addition, we will agree a programme of work based on best practice and the evidence of what works within the confines of current resources and capacity. Taking an approach of prevent, reduce, delay as a method of demand management.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council will require significant cross-organisational change to achieve the core tenets of an early intervention and prevention model:

- Keeping people and families well and thriving by preventing or mitigating the need for complex interventions and, as a result, reducing avoidable costs for complex/statutory services.
- Shifting the balance of Council resources upstream towards preventative activities that tackle the root causes of more complex issues for households.
- Understanding data, research evidence and insights to proactively identify opportunities for prevention and to forecast future demand and need.
- Working with and supporting those likely to be at the cusp of requiring intervention, reducing the needs for services.
- Building resilience and capacity for individuals, their households, and their community by enabling individuals to support themselves, fostering independence and delaying the need for Local Authority intervention.
- Providing support in a way which puts the individual’s goals and aspirations at the centre.

<p>In Scope:</p>	<p>Activity for prevention and early intervention needs to occur across various domains and levels. Therefore, the scope should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention and prevention services, including the front door to support (Access to support is more than the front the door, how people get through to services, beyond the traditional 'front doors' wherever we have customer facing functions e.g. Fairer Stockton social spaces) • Whole system/ Cross-organisational change through policy, procedures, and workforce development • Collaboration and partnership working across the organisation and with communities 	<p>Out of Scope:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tertiary service provision for those at the acute end of need, although insights/learning may inform prevention planning.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data, insights and intelligence for planning and targeting of interventions 		
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale change in a complex and dynamic environment in which business as usual is important and there are a number of significant interdependences mean that timescales to refine, develop, implement and evaluate will be longer than 12- 18 months • Different services within scope may be under contractual arrangements which will need to be considered. 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>			
<p>More people are able to access and receive the right support at the right place and time leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved outcomes for people receiving support • Better collaboration and joint working, reducing service and organisational barriers/silos. • A reduction in demand for acute/specialist services, therefore reduction in costs in this area • Better use of organisation wide resource and assets, skills, capacity and knowledge focused around EIP including the workforce. • Increased capacity for community based/led support 			
Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i>			
<p>All current transformation reviews are likely to interface and align with EIP workstream. However, there are some critical system links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in our Care • SEND • Customer services <p>Across the powering our futures programme the Communities mission and Colleagues mission will also be critical interdependencies and fundamental to the success of the project.</p> <p>Early intervention and prevention have the potential to interface across the organisation and will require a further review once the define phase has been completed.</p>			

Project ID:	MT12	Project Name:	Fees and Charges
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>As has been well documented, Local Authorities are facing significant financial pressures, driven by a myriad of factors ranging from inflation, increasing demand for key services, the cost-of-living crisis and uncertainty over the medium-term funding landscape. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is no exception, and this was articulated in the December and February MTFP reports taken to Members as part of the budget and Council Tax setting process.</p> <p>External Fees and Charges are an income source for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and as such there is the need to ensure that these are maximised from a financial point of view, but also that they are proportionate to the cost of the service and have some consideration of the market they are operating in.</p> <p>Historically, prior to 23-24 financial year the changes to prices were left to the individual services to set on an annual basis. Some of these remained static over a number of years and others had small amendments. For 23-24 and 24-25 a corporate uplift of 7.5% and 6.7% was allowed for within the MTFP (Linked to inflation) and services were asked to facilitate this except for in extenuating circumstances.</p> <p>As a consequence of the above the following challenges exist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council does not have a formal, publicly available fees and charges policy. • Information on how we compare, from a charging perspective to other Local Authorities is piecemeal – both in terms of rates we charge and services that we may not charge for, but others do. • There is not a clear and consistent understanding of the cost to deliver some services against what level of income is generated through charging. <p>Addressing these challenges will present an opportunity to generate additional income to address the financial pressures outlined in the opening paragraph.</p>		
In Scope:	<p>External Fees and Charges (Where there's ability to set locally) – such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charges to Schools and academies • Charges to businesses and service users • Charges to other Public Sector bodies 	Out of Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other sources of income to the Council e.g. grant income; partnership funding; Council Tax; business rates; Service Level Agreements; NHS income • Fees and charges whereby the rate is NOT determined locally. • Review of viability of commercial services
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All recommendations approved prior to November 2024 for MTFP report. • Legal / Policy – Possible consultation required to enact some changes. • Economic – Cost of living impact on ability of individuals or organisations being unable to pay. 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>			

- Increase in income and financial sustainability for paid for services
- An understanding of individual services fees and charges and how these compare to both other LA's and market competitors.
- A corporate awareness of fee funded services that are subsidised by the Local Authority and to what extent.
- A transparent policy whereby information is publicly available on a granular level.

Interdependencies: *(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)*

- Debt management Transformation Review
- Admin and Customer Service Transformation Review
- Community Safety and Regulatory Services Review

Project ID:	M13	Project Name:	Children in our Care
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>Stockton-on-Tees has a Children Looked After (CLA) population of 133 per 10k children population compared with a statistical neighbour average of approx. 82 CLA per 10k making the Borough a significant outlier in terms of the number and therefore cost of CLA.</p> <p>There are currently 587 of children within the Borough experiencing care. As per the national picture, overspend on placements is putting pressure on the Children's (and wider council) budget and several contributing factors have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising numbers of children in care with an increase of children who require specialist provision that can support complex needs, • The need for more targeted & needs-led Edge of Care provision, • Commissioning, data and monitoring of placements, • An ageing cohort of (in-house) Foster carers, • Increasing numbers and costs of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), • Previous lack of focus on reunification and High numbers of children subject to care orders and living at home with parents, • Numbers of 15/16/17-year-olds entering the care system, • Inconsistency in the quality of practice. 		
In Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of current placement operational and social work assessment practice and financial position including fostering, reunification, and edge of care processes and stable loving homes strategy. • Commissioning, procurement, and partnership arrangements. • Potential development of Spark of Genius • It covers all placement provision as outlined below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Children's Homes – Foster Carers – Staying put/supported lodgings 	Out of Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring of senior leadership team • Adolescent and MACE Teams/Function • Delivery of the Strengthening Services Plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Independent Fostering Arrangements (IFA) – Special Guardianship Order (SGO) – Child Arrangement Order – Supported Accommodation 		
Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of children in our care reduces, and more children stay in their family home. • Where children are placed in our care, it will ensure that placements are cost effective and meet the required standards and agreed needs of the child. • Reduction in costs and financial sustainability. 		
Constraints:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market conditions/forces - Shortage of appropriate placements and significant costs. 		
Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening service plan • Transformation Reviews: Customer Contact and Access to services, Administration and Business Services, Community Transport, SEND/High Needs, Early Intervention and Prevention • Colleagues Mission: Workforce planning recruitment and retention projects. • Commissioned work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review of the child’s voice within our internal residential Homes ○ Practice and quality assurance (with a workforce training and development aspect) ○ Reviewing high-cost cases that require joint funding from Health partners. • Partnerships – existing partnerships with health (e.g. Health Visitors), schools, Early Years providers, and wider groups will have a role to play in the new model (e.g. early diagnosis through visits). 		

Project ID:	MT14	Project Name:	SEND/High Needs
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The council has a statutory duty to support children and young people educated in the borough that have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Local Offer sets out what support is available for children with SEND.</p> <p><u>Drivers of change</u></p> <p>The following factors are driving a need for the Council to re-shape its offer to children and young people with SEND:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising demand – both nationally and in Stockton-on-Tees there is a trend of increased numbers of children and young people being diagnosed as having SEND, particularly in the Early Years (0 – 4 years) group. • Mainstream provision needs to support earlier identification of children with SEND and be part of early help and support for children and their families, this fits within the ambition for a wider and more inclusive support. • Specialist SEND provision – the Council does not have enough specialist school places to meet the needs of several of the largest cohorts of children with SEND (e.g. Profound 		

	<p>and Multiple Learning Disabilities, Specific Learning Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constraints to expanding provision – the Council will find it difficult to expand existing schools or create new provision. It cannot open new special schools unless they are Free schools with a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) to run them. • Out of borough provision – as a consequence of the shortfall in SEND provision, we have children travelling out of borough to suitable schools which adds additional expense to the transport budget but also additional time to the school day for children whilst they are travelling. • Funding deficit – the Council currently has a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit, and this needs to be reduced which is challenging especially as service demand and high needs expenditure continues to increase. • Parental satisfaction is highly important and will need careful and continued monitoring, this is also part of the developing Delivering Better Value (DBV) communications strategy including positive engagement with the Stockton-on-Tees parent carer forum. The strategy is looking at best practice in other Local Authorities and is seeking to share key learning. The DBV communications strategy is being supported with a children and young people engagement plan. • Partnership arrangements – although the Council works in partnership with a variety of local bodies, groups and practitioners (e.g. Education Psychology), there is an opportunity to enhance this to further improve the overall offer to children and young people with SEND. <p><u>Aims of the project</u></p> <p>This project aims to tackle the current challenges faced by the service by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming better at identifying SEND earlier in childhood so that appropriate support is offered and the contribution to good outcomes is maximised. • Improving the support offer to practitioners that support children with SEND such as teaching staff, social workers, and healthcare professionals (consideration needs to be given re: options for parents to get advice and guidance). • Providing a clearer offer of support to families and schools for SEND. • Ensuring EHCPs align to current pupil education need. • More consistent decision-making and transparent funding for schools that reflects the broad range of activities/interventions schools provide to support a child’s learning. • Increasing SEN EHCP capacity in the Boroughs mainstream primary/secondary schools and Post 16. • To reduce the DSG deficit by reducing overspend on the High Needs Block Budget. • Ensure this is aligned with and linked to the interdependencies in other relevant projects. 		
<p>In Scope:</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="317 1624 895 2018"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-sizing specialist provision to match the current and projected future needs of children and young people with SEND. • Establishing an Inclusion support line – that provides specialist support to practitioners that work with children and young people with SEND. • Education support offer to schools – focused and targeted support </td> <td data-bbox="895 1624 1522 2018"> <p>Out of Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the early help developing model may fall within the Early Intervention & Prevention project, however there are clear interdependencies with this work stream so will need to be linked as appropriate • Statutory Health and Social Care offer </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-sizing specialist provision to match the current and projected future needs of children and young people with SEND. • Establishing an Inclusion support line – that provides specialist support to practitioners that work with children and young people with SEND. • Education support offer to schools – focused and targeted support 	<p>Out of Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the early help developing model may fall within the Early Intervention & Prevention project, however there are clear interdependencies with this work stream so will need to be linked as appropriate • Statutory Health and Social Care offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-sizing specialist provision to match the current and projected future needs of children and young people with SEND. • Establishing an Inclusion support line – that provides specialist support to practitioners that work with children and young people with SEND. • Education support offer to schools – focused and targeted support 	<p>Out of Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the early help developing model may fall within the Early Intervention & Prevention project, however there are clear interdependencies with this work stream so will need to be linked as appropriate • Statutory Health and Social Care offer 		

	<p>offered by the specialist education service to schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To redesign the Top Up/Element 3 funding that schools receive in order to meet the current needs of a child who has an EHCP. • SBC maintained schools, free schools and academies • Redesign of High Needs Banding • Delivering Better value for pupils • Continuing Professional Development for school leaders and Children’s Services • The existing Education and Healthcare Planning process • Any future SEN support offer for professionals • Capital development • Review of Alternative Provision and Specialist Support • Post 16 support offer 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is based on best practice and is closely linked to the current DBV work so there is a clear need to continue to develop this and is not dependent on the success of that particular work stream
<p>Constraints:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project will need to ensure the Council is fulfilling its statutory and legal obligations around SEN support 		
<p>Outcomes to be achieved: <i>(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for High Needs funding will reduce • Reduction/avoidance in costs and financial sustainability. • SEN pupils will access earlier support which is better aligned to their needs • Fair and equitable High Needs Banding system 			
<p>Interdependencies: <i>(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community transport transformation review – as part of the EHC planning process the SEND team develop a support offer for cases around home-to-school transport. The outcome of this process directly affects the cost of transport provision as it specifies what support will be offered. • Early Intervention and Prevention transformation review– this project will be developing a whole-Council (and potentially partners) early intervention and prevention support offer to residents in the borough. There may be some overlap between the aims and scope of both projects, given that they aim to identify and support children as early as possible • Children in our Care transformation review – children placed out of borough with SEND or complex needs will need support • Transitions to Adulthood transformation review – a portion of these children and young people will require social care support during adulthood so will form part of the remit of a future Transitions service • Partnerships – existing partnerships with health (e.g. Health Visitors), schools, Early Years providers, and wider groups will have a role to play in the new model (e.g. early diagnosis through visits) 			

Appendix 3- Workforce Strategy

Draft Workforce Strategy



Foreword by Mike Greene, Chief Executive

The 'Powering Our Future' programme is at the heart of our workforce strategy. The programme is designed to transform our services, improve the well-being of our residents, and strengthen our local economy. To realise this vision, we depend on a workforce that is not just talented and resilient, but wholly committed to enhancing and improving the quality of life for everyone in our borough.

We are building on a solid foundation, as the feedback from our IIP Employee Survey shows we have organisational strengths in leadership, managing performance and work, and delivering continuous improvement. However, we are not complacent, and I am keen to unlock even more potential within our workforce. We are confronting regional and national challenges head-on, from recruitment and retention to skill shortages and the economic strains of living costs and pay issues. The 20% reduction in our workforce over the last 12 years, together with an increased demand for our services has further strained our resources. To address these challenges, our workforce strategy and associated Colleagues Powering Our Future plans look to invest in our employees and working environment. Our goal is to nurture, attract and retain a workforce that collaboratively strives, alongside our partners and communities, to reshape services and enhance lives.

It is important that this strategy is regularly reviewed and updated as our ambitions and priorities develop to ensure our workforce always feel supported and able to meet the challenges of the future.

WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR OUR WORKFORCE?

Our workforce will be equipped to deliver our overarching Mission Statement for the Council, to:

Be a bold, brave and innovative Council. Together with our partners we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place, where everyone is proud to live and work, where our communities flourish and people feel they belong. We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.

Our vision is to have a talented and diverse workforce committed, engaged and empowered to deliver the Council's priorities and ambitious Powering Our Future Programme.

Our talented workforce will step up to the challenging budget situation by using their knowledge and skills to work with our partners and communities in innovative, adaptable and dynamic ways with the best interests of our residents being the focus of everything they do.

Our colleagues will be empowered to work together and do the best they can for our communities.

OUR CONTEXT

Challenges

Several factors influence our capacity to deliver on the "Powering Our Future" priorities:

- Our workforce has reduced by over 20% in the last 12 years.
- Over this period there has been limited investment in developing our employees.
- We are an ageing workforce and have skills and knowledge gaps across the organisation;
- We have difficulty in attracting and retaining employees in various key roles – a regional and national issue;
- Attracting and retaining the talent of the future is a key challenge - the local government workforce is under-represented by younger people, and this is reflected in our workforce profile.
- The pandemic has changed the way we work - we want to ensure we take advantage of new ways of working whilst ensuring that collaboration, engagement and support are still at the heart of what we do;
- Local Government is facing financial challenges and we cannot continue to do “more of the same”; we need to challenge why and what we are doing and ensure that the services we support and directly deliver have the required impact.

Notwithstanding this we have a committed workforce that has a strong sense of belonging to the Council and pride in delivering the best services we can for the people of the borough.

Powering Our Future Programme

The Powering Our Future programme is a long-term vision for the future of Stockton-on-Tees. It's a new way of working for the Council which puts more of a focus on our communities and how we work with them to improve outcomes.

Councils across the country are seeing reduced budgets for public services and increased demand from residents who have been hit by the increased cost of living.

Powering Our Future will empower communities to set shared ambitions and a collaborative approach to meet local needs. This will mean working with communities and our partners to build on existing strengths within both geographical and special interest communities like sports clubs, religious networks, or neighbourhood groups.

Powering our Future sets an outcome-focused direction for the Council and is based around 5 key areas:



Our workforce is key to delivering our ambitious Powering Our Future Programme and this Workforce strategy sets out our workforce priorities which will be delivered through the Colleagues Powering our Future Mission.

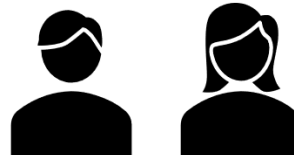
Our Workforce Profile



3,204

Employees

2,621.5 FTE



31.8%

Male

68.2%

Female

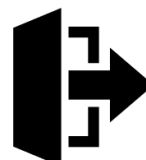


10.1 days

Lost per FTE

26,154 Days

2,911 Occurrences



12.6%

Turnover

2.2% Turnover –
Under 1 year
service

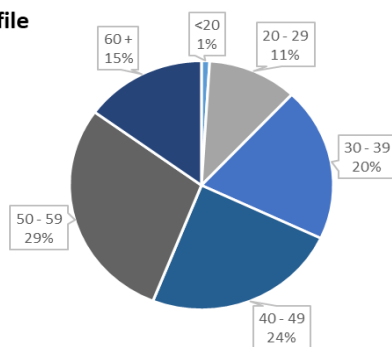
FTE standing for Full Time Equivalent

Data above is taken at 30th September 2023, with the exception of Sickness & Turnover which is for the financial year April 2022-March 23

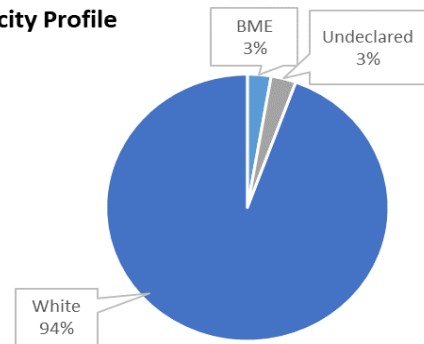
Investors In People Employee Survey and Assessment (2023)

The IIP employee survey (IIP) and assessment highlighted the potential of our organisation to be exceptional within its sector. There is still a journey to progress, but we are in the top quartile for similar organisations in 5 out of the 9 indicators.

Age Profile



Ethnicity Profile



The assessment also recognised our potential to build on the following:

- The embedded aspects of our culture including strong relationships between staff and their managers, a clear commitment to continuous learning, and the strength of many of our people processes.
- The opportunities that the strategic actions based around Powering our Future bring to connect colleagues and plans together, so they build momentum behind a journey to high performance.

Through our Colleagues Powering Our Future work strands, we will incorporate actions and improvements to take us on our journey to exceptional.

HOW WILL WE DELIVER OUR VISION?

To achieve our vision and using the insight from our workforce profile data, employee survey and feedback we have identified 7 priorities which will drive our workforce action plan.



Priority 1: A strong organisation culture

As we embark on delivering our ambitions for Powering Our Future, it is timely to review and refresh the culture of the organization, to ensure that our values and behaviours align with Powering Our Future priorities.

In particular, the success of the Powering our Future Programme including the transformation of services requires our employees to be bold, brave and innovative, to feel empowered, ready and willing to be part of and lead on change. We also need to be resilient to the inevitable challenges that working in the public sector brings whether political, legislative or social change, to ensure that what we do positively impacts on our residents.

We will ensure our employees have the right behaviours as well as the right tools, skills and support to respond and engage positively to change and that we all understand the community and social impact that we have.

By connecting our refreshed organisational culture to our programme, plans, colleagues, policies and activities such as recruitment and management development we can embed and live our workforce culture.

Priority 2: Effective Employee Communication and Engagement

Effective communication and engagement at all levels, is key to being a successful organisation. It can ensure that colleagues understand corporate priorities and messages, facilitate team working and help our employees understand the context of change. A communication focus on Powering our Future will be fundamental to transformation and the success of the programme.

In addition to our active employee networks, increasing opportunities for our employees to get involved and have a say in Council activity, it is important to ensure employees feel empowered to put their ideas and suggestions forward.

We will ensure a range of employee engagement events are held on a range of topics, from health and well-being to sporting events, is also important for team building, networking, disseminating information and most importantly making our employees feel valued and supported.

Our recognised Trade Unions are particularly important partners in ensuring effective communication and engagement. Our relationships with our Trade Unions are strong with regular and open discussion and we will ensure this is maintained.

We will also celebrate success. Recognising and rewarding high performance makes colleagues feel that their work and efforts are valued and increases motivation. We will build on our internal Star Awards and Customer Service Excellence Awards and actively promote individual, team and service achievements regionally and nationally.

However, it is not just about formal recognition, we will ensure our everyday behaviours include praise and recognition for a job well done so that we are valued as individuals and teams on a day to day basis.

Priority 3: Smart Working

We will be bold, brave and innovative in the way we work to meet future challenges and demands and to deliver the right and best services that we can for our communities. We will work more collaboratively with our stakeholders, including our communities and organisational partners driving continuous innovation and improvement, whether through service changes or challenging and changing working practices. We will challenge our working practices to ensure they are efficient and effective and reduce “red tape”.

Having the right tools and working environment to do your job is essential to be high performing and for employees to feel valued and supported. We will embrace new technology, have the right working environments including the flexibility as to where we work where possible, accessible systems and processes.

All of these contribute to being able to effectively and efficiently do our jobs, but we must never lose sight that our priority is to meet the needs of our residents and business needs of the Council.

Priority 4: Attract and Retain a Diverse and Talented Workforce

Skills shortages and recruitment challenges are national and regional issues. It is important that we are competitive with other employers whilst understanding that we are part of national local government pay negotiations and terms and conditions.

Being competitive however, is not just about pay, it's about our total employer offer; an engaging recruitment process, our employee benefits, our investment in personal development, career pathways, working environment and much more.

We will promote our borough as a place to live and work, review our recruitment processes, improve our employee benefits, develop different opportunities for starting a career in local government as well as career progression within our organisation to be attractive and retain a talented workforce.

We also aim for our workforce to represent the communities that we serve and therefore we need to continue to attract and support inclusion and diversity in our workplace.

Priority 5: A Happy and Healthy workforce

We recognise that our greatest asset is our workforce and looking after our employees' health and wellbeing is a key priority for the Council. We will make every effort to ensure there are appropriate, proactive and accessible resources to keep staff well and ensure that everyone supports and pays attention to their own as well as their colleagues wellbeing.

Our Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy vision is for:

- A healthy and motivated workforce
- A safe and healthy working environment
- Employees to feel supported, especially at difficult times.

We will ensure that supporting our colleague's health and wellbeing is part of what we do, and we will ensure that we have services and support in place for all employees.

Priority 6: Effective Workforce Planning

To ensure we have a workforce fit for the future we will embed improved workforce planning across our organisation so that we understand our workforce profile, including skill gaps. We will have plans in place, including succession planning to address future demands. We will ensure our workforce data is reliable, real time and accessible and that using workforce data becomes part of a performance management framework for our managers, services and directorates.

Priority 7: Development Opportunities for our Workforce

Over the last 10 years there has been a lack of investment in developing skills and knowledge that are unrelated to specific continuous professional development requirements, particularly formal training to support our employees to develop their management and leadership skills. Providing our employees with more development opportunities will support retention, succession planning, and ensure we have future leaders and a workforce willing and able to meet future demands.

Development linked to the Powering our Future Programme will be a key area of focus to ensure that our employees have the capability, resilience and skills to develop and transform how we work with our communities and partners.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

We will be:

- A Great Place to Work

Our employees feel that they are valued, informed and involved. We all have the right working environment and tools to effectively and where possible, flexibly undertake our work.

- An Employer of Choice

We have the reputation as an Employer that you want to work for. We can attract and retain a talented, happy and healthy workforce.

- A Workforce Fit for the Future

Workforce planning underpins our people planning processes helping to build resilience within our teams and anticipate change effectively. Our workforce has the right skills to effectively undertake their job roles and are best placed to adapt and lead change in the workplace. Our future managers and leaders are equipped and ready to take the next step in their careers. We have a workforce that is resilient and able to positively challenge and lead change to meet the future needs of our residents and respond to internal and external pressures that we have.

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

We will measure our success through a variety of ways including HR performance measures but the most important will be what our employees tell us.

We will obtain feedback from our employees through surveys including Investors In People Employee survey and exit interviews, employee networks, focus groups and accreditations such as Customer Service Excellence and Better Health at Work Award. We will also measure our success through a suite of performance indicators including turnover, sickness absence, vacancy rates, agency worker and apprenticeships rates.

We will communicate progress via internal communication channels (Mike Live, KYIT, Team briefings) making sure employees can access information in ways that are most appropriate for them.

We will review and update this strategy annually to ensure it continues to support the priorities for our workforce, our Council and our residents.