

Stockton on Tees Borough Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Thursday 13 March 2025

Agenda Item No	Topic	Decision
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Part A – Items considered in public

<p>A4</p>	<p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant - Final Report of People Select Committee</p>	<p align="center"><u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p> <p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <p>1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u></p> <p>Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant - Final Report of People Select Committee</p> <p>2. <u>Record of the Decision</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the People Select Committee’s review of Disabled Facilities Grant.</p> <p>Local Authorities had a statutory duty to provide grant aid for a range of adaptations to eligible individuals (following an assessment) home and this was carried out via Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which was a capital grant governed by the Housing Grants and Construction Act 1996. It was funded as part of the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) programme, a pooled budget between the NHS and Local Authorities (LA) and passed to the LA’s to administer. They enabled people to continue living safely and independently in their own home.</p> <p>Demand for DFGs was rising at a time when building costs had significantly increased. As a result of this there was an increasing number of DFG</p>
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		<p>applications costed above the maximum threshold of £30k. There was also a growing waiting list of both residents waiting for a DFG and the time taken from the point of application to DFG works commencing. This impacted on the health and wellbeing of individuals and potentially their ability to remain living independently in their own home. The aim of the review was to explore both current and potential alternative options to ensure the service was delivered in an efficient, effective and customer focused way.</p> <p>The Committee had taken evidence from several relevant SBC services and stakeholder organisations, including representatives from the Housing Regeneration and Investment, Occupational Therapy, and Building Services teams, Foundations who were the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and Disabled Facilities Grant, and Stockton & District Information & Advice Service. In addition to considering customer satisfaction survey results, consultation also took place with residents via Stockton Parent Carer Forum. Members of the Community Partnerships, Eastern Ravens Trust and Teesside & District Society for the Blind were approached for their comments but only one, from Teesside & District Society for the Blind, was received.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In relation to the recent announcement from the Department of Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding extra funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), officers be requested to monitor the impact of this extra funding on the Council’s waiting list; updates to be provided to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the review recommendation. 2. Officers explore the potential to engage with Teesside University to

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		<p>produce a study on the impact of DFG’s on people lives in the Borough and how long this potentially allows them to remain living in their own home.</p> <p>3. Housing Investment & Migration Support team work with Planning to explore building upon the requirements for accessibility/adaptability in new build properties when the Local Plan is next updated and, prior to this, lobbying government to make the relevant Building Regulation mandatory.</p> <p>4. The Leader and Chief Executive support officers in their ongoing discussions with Registered Provider’s to explore their current and future plans for adaptations and also explore joint working to support Registered Providers to take up their responsibility, to ease pressure on the waiting list.</p> <p>5. Officers explore with Registered Providers a register of adapted properties within the Borough which details the type of adaptations, to assist the Nomination and Lettings Team in advertising and matching individuals with appropriate properties.</p> <p>6. Communication to residents and applicants be improved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing and updating information on SBC website and explore whether the Foundations template and link to adaptmyhome.com will give residents sufficient information to decide whether to apply for an assessment/DFG - exploring introducing a system to ensure clear and consistent communications to keep applicants informed of their position in the process at regular intervals to reduce misunderstandings and manage expectations. - Sharing key information of DFG scheme available with external stakeholders to ensure potential applicants are aware of support available. - ensuring an appropriate route for residents to communicate with the

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		<p>Housing Investment & Migration Support team is in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a singular customer feedback survey covering all processes and services involved in a DFG is developed, to ensure this is only collected once. <p>7. Officers explore streamlining processes to understand their impact and benefit of implementing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - referral form used by the Occupational Therapy Team be reviewed to ensure it captures all relevant information to enabled to make a decision on eligible works. - removing the requirement for Occupational Therapist to approve the scheme of works for straightforward cases - allowing electronic forms to be uploaded - requiring only two quotes rather than three for the application <p>8. Further examination of if/how the Home Improvement Agency can be utilised to provide early help and prevention, to ease budgetary pressure for DFG</p> <p>9. Use of flat pack extensions is explored in more detail to see if they would provide a viable and cost-effective option.</p> <p>10. Following correspondence from the Royal British Legion to the Council, officers review whether it is possible for military compensation to be exempt from the means test for DFG's and report back to the Committee.</p> <p>3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u></p> <p>This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024-2025. The</p>

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		<p>review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the People Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.</p> <p>4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u></p> <p>Midnight Friday 21 March 2025</p> <p>Proper Officer</p>
A5	Minutes of Various Bodies	<p align="center"><u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p>

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		<p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u> Minutes of Various Bodies 2. <u>Record of the Decision</u> 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 – 20 December 2024 SSP – 27 November 2024 TSAB – 9 October 2024 RESOLVED that the minutes be received. 3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u> To enable Cabinet to view the minutes of various bodies. 4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u> None 5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u>

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		<p>None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u></p> <p>Midnight Friday 21 March 2025</p> <p>Proper Officer</p>
A6	Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report	<p align="center"><u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p> <p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <p>1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u></p> <p>Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy ES&CRS 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report</p> <p>2. <u>Record of the Decision</u></p>

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		<p>Consideration was given to a report on the Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy ES&CRS 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report.</p> <p>Climate change posed a real threat to society and biodiversity. There was increasing impacts of flooding, high winds, heat waves, significant wildfires and species collapse. To limit climate change by reducing carbon emissions, action was needed, building on the work already achieved.</p> <p>HM Government had entered binding international arrangements for greenhouse gas emissions reduction and set out comprehensive requirements within the Environment Act. The secondary legislation that would define targets for relevant local and regional agencies, had been delayed in a number of key areas. However, it was likely that the Council would need to evidence further progress on CO2, waste, water and air quality, in the coming years.</p> <p>The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Net Zero Strategy incorporated priorities for homes & communities, public organisations, and nature & resources, alongside decarbonisation of industry and transport.</p> <p>Stockton Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS), adopted in 2022 set out the direction the Council needed to take and described the actions that would contribute to the achievement of net zero. The Council had made significant progress within the resources available, achieving a steady decline in carbon emissions over a long period. However, substantial additional investment would be required in the coming years if the Council was to remain on target for Net Zero by 2032.</p> <p>Continued concentration on measures to improve energy efficiency and reduce</p>

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		<p>emissions from the Council assets and fleet, were an urgent priority, alongside investing in solar energy generation and counterbalancing natural solutions.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy ES&CRS 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report be noted.</p> <p>3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u></p> <p>Report for noting only.</p> <p>4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

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A7	Tree Management Policy	<p align="center"><u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p> <p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u> Tree Management Policy 2. <u>Record of the Decision</u> Consideration was given to a report on the Tree Management Policy. <p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) had a legal responsibility to inspect, maintain and manage its tree stock which was located across the Borough. There were many thousands of trees within parks, open spaces, woodlands and residential estates, including around 30,000 trees as part of the highway stock, for the Council to manage. During 2020- 2021, over 2,000 requests for service were received, these ranged from emergency works (e.g. fallen trees or limbs / structural damage to property) through to more routine enquiries (e.g. pruning due to general nuisance factors such as shading, leaf fall, etc., which tends to be of a seasonal nature).</p>

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		<p>Local Authorities had a legal duty of care to ensure they had a defensible system of tree inspection and maintenance for their land and premises. This required regular inspections (by a qualified person) of all trees and woodlands within a Council's ownership, implementing essential tree maintenance (so there was no danger or unacceptable risk to persons or property), and maintaining adequate records of surveys and inspections.</p> <p>Trees could, at times, be contentious for residents who often expressed strong and vocal views on their presence, especially those which were in residential locations where concerns about the safety of trees, potential damage and other perceived nuisance factors were a particular issue for officers to deal with. However, as part of the ongoing climate change challenge, the wider benefits of trees should not be underestimated, including the removal of air pollution, providing a valuable habitat for insects and birds, and acting as a natural flood defence, as well as the proven mental health benefits that a green environment brings.</p> <p>Judgements about the impact of trees and whether or not a tree should be removed or reduced, was always carried out by qualified staff following relevant legislation and best practice. The determination of nuisance or detrimental impact will often appear to be a subjective matter and efforts would always be made to set out the rationale for any judgement. Where the determination was complex or necessitates consideration of wider factors, the decision would be considered by the Director in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.</p> <p>One of the key themes within the Council Plan was clean and green spaces, and the Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy</p>

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		<p>2022-2032 also had implications for the future levels of tree stock, as do new tree planting schemes and land adoptions / transfers from new developments across the Borough. It was therefore important, and timely, to review the Council’s existing tree management policy, covering inspection and operational arrangements, to ensure that it was equipped to deal with both existing and planned tree assets.</p> <p>As the revised policy document covered a substantial amount of required technical information and legislative detail, and to ensure appropriate dissemination and communication, a ‘readable’ summary document would be prepared to publish key messages and principles of the policy for residents.</p> <p>An all-member briefing would be arranged to ensure members were fully aware of the detail within the tree management policy.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the tree management policy be approved.</p> <p>3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u></p> <p>It was resolved by Cabinet in February 2023 that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council refreshed its tree management policy. Officers have now completed their review of the tree management policy and present a revised policy for consideration.</p> <p>4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u></p>

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		<p align="center">None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u></p> <p align="center">None</p> <p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u></p> <p align="center">Midnight Friday 21 March 2025</p> <p>Proper Officer</p>
A8	Drug Strategy Grants 2025/2026	<p align="center"><u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p> <p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <p>1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u></p> <p align="center">Drug Strategy Grants 2025/26</p> <p>2. <u>Record of the Decision</u></p>

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		<p>Consideration was given to a report that provided a summary of the planned expenditure of the ring-fenced drug strategy grants provided by the Department of Health and Social Care via the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) for 2025/26.</p> <p>This was the fourth year of funding, which complemented the core contract for substance misuse services, and provided an additional £2.5million for 2025/26. The terms and conditions for these grants included an obligation to maintain levels of investment in drug and alcohol services and to use this additional funding to implement activities from a ‘menu of interventions’.</p> <p>The core contract for community-based substance misuse services was funded from the Public Health Grant. The paper referred to additional year-on-year grants provided via a memorandum of understanding with OHID and this was detailed within the report.</p> <p>Drug and alcohol treatment and recovery improvement grant (DATRIG) was a single payment to SBC which covered both the SSMTRG and the IPD. Funding for these streams was at the same allocation as 2024/25. IPS was a stand-alone grant and had increased by £22k for North of Tees (SBC and HBC). £1.8m of the above funding was captured in the annual procurement plan (Cabinet, 13/03/25). This briefing set out broader context to Cabinet, on the package of proposals against the drugs strategy grant, submitted to OHID on 28/02/25.</p> <p>The planned expenditure would build on activity that had led to improved outcomes and delivery of national targets in 2024/25.</p>

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		<p>RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u> Report for noting only.</p> <p>4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u> None</p> <p>5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u> None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u> None</p> <p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u> N/A</p> <p>Proper Officer</p>
A9	Sexual Health Service Procurement Update	<u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u>

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		<p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p> <p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <p>1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u></p> <p>Sexual Health Service Procurement Update</p> <p>2. <u>Record of the Decision</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the procurement of a Tees Sexual Health Service (SHS).</p> <p>Public Health had tendered, evaluated and awarded a contract for Sexual Health Services, securing a local provider group to deliver an improved service that will improve health outcomes.</p> <p>There was a statutory duty for Local Authorities, NHS England (NHSE) and Integrated Care Board (ICB) to commission or provide sexual and reproductive health services, which were commissioned collaboratively across Teesside.</p> <p>The procurement, led and implemented by SBC on behalf of the Collaborative, ran to agreed time and cost parameters with contract mobilisation commencing in 2025 and a service start date of 1/08/25. The Contract had been awarded to North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust as the lead member of a newly formed consortium, Tees Alliance Partnership, comprising the Tees Hospital Trust group and North and South Tees GP Federations (Hartlepool & Stockton</p>
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		<p>Health and ELM Alliance Limited).</p> <p>The model aimed to enable more locally focused and community-based provision, balanced with efficiency of scale across Tees where appropriate. The providers operated as an existing integral part to the local health system. The Lead Cabinet Member had been briefed throughout the process.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u></p> <p>Report for noting only.</p> <p>4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

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A10	Procurement Plan / Higher Value Contracts and Social Value Update Report	<p align="center"><u>STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p align="center"><u>CABINET DECISION</u></p> <p align="center"><u>PROFORMA</u></p> <p>Cabinet Meeting 13 March 2025</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Title of Item/Report</u> Procurement Plan Higher Value Contracts and Social Value Update Report 2. <u>Record of the Decision</u> Consideration was given to a report that sought approval for the award of planned higher value contracts where the value exceeded 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. The constitution defined a range of decisions that required a specific Cabinet approval, the financial threshold for which was set at a level of £500k or more.

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		<p>Annex 1 to the report listed contracts that exceeded the financial threshold and had not otherwise been delegated to officers.</p> <p>Cabinet approved a Social Value Policy in March 2023 and Annex 2 of the report provided an update of the financial proxy value of social value delivered during 2024. Annex 3 of the report provided 2 case studies of social value achieved during 2024. The first was by Change Grow Live (Integrated Substance Misuse contract). A good example of what a small contractor can achieve. The second case study was provided by Esh Construction and covered various schemes across the Borough. Annex 4 of the report provided the list of Social Value measures (TOMs) for reference.</p> <p>Cabinet noted the inevitable variation in social value delivered which was caused by some large-scale construction contracts which could be affected by the contracting cycle, where there was often a front loading of social value at the start of a contract or due to the very nature of the contract. This variation was normal and did not indicate poor performance. Social Value was particularly high in 2023 due to the amount of demolition waste from the Swallow and Castlegate Centre that was recycled and also the completion of The Sycamores estate.</p> <p>The approach to Social Value had developed further during 2024/25 and included:</p> <p>a. Embedded the TOMs measures relating to donating to the VCSE sector which meant suppliers, providers and contractors could donate time, equipment or money to the sector through the Catalyst website. These were linked to the 'asks' from individual Catalyst member organisations. £38,301 had been</p>

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		<p>committed to the following TOMs measures:</p> <p>C-NT15 – Provision of Business advice to VCSEs / SME C-NT16 – Equipment or resources donated to VCSE C-NT17 – Number of voluntary hours donated to support VCSEs C-NT28 – Donations or in-kind contributions to local community projects.</p> <p>Contract management processes would continue during 2025/26 to ensure the commitments were delivered.</p> <p>b. Introduced a Social Value calculator for use in direct awards under a framework agreement.</p> <p>c. Converting an existing Contract Management Officer role to a Social Value Officer to increase capacity to deliver more social value.</p> <p>d. [Introduced a new TOMs measure for care leavers:</p> <p>NT4a - No of full time equivalent local 16 – 25-year-old care leavers (FTE) hired on the contract]</p> <p>e. Working regionally to improve the delivery of social value through NEPO contracts. NEPO had developed a new approach to measuring social value which would be used for those NEPO contracts that do not require a further competition at local authority level. A review would be undertaken during 25/26 to determine the effectiveness of the new methodology and whether to migrate the use of TOMs to this methodology.</p>

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		<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. The progress on social value be noted. <p>3. <u>Reasons for the Decision</u></p> <p>To enable Cabinet to exercise its strategic oversight of higher value planned procurement projects, in accordance with the constitution.</p> <p>4. <u>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>5. <u>Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>6. <u>Details of any Dispensations</u></p> <p>None</p>

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		<p>7. <u>Date and Time by which Call In must be executed</u></p> <p> Midnight Friday 21 March 2025</p> <p>Proper Officer</p>
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