

Date: Thursday 13 March 2025 at 4.30 pm

Venue: Conference Room, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, TS17 6BJ

Cllr Robert Cook (Leader)

Cllr Pauline Beall
Cllr Nigel Cooke
Cllr Lisa Evans
Cllr Clare Besford
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 10 February and 13 February 2025. (Pages 9 - 18)
- 5 **Adult Social Care - Cllr Pauline Beall**
Regeneration and Housing – Cllr Nigel Cooke

Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant - Final Report of People Select Committee (Pages 19 - 66)

Leader of the Council – Cllr Bob Cook
- 6 **Minutes of Various Bodies** (Pages 67 - 92)

Environment and Transport – Cllr Clare Besford
- 7 **Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report** (Pages 93 - 106)
- 8 **Tree Management Policy** (Pages 107 - 170)

Health, Leisure and Culture – Cllr Steve Nelson

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| 9 | Drug Strategy Grants 2025/2026 | (Pages 171 - 174) |
| 10 | Sexual Health Service Procurement Update | (Pages 175 - 180) |

Leader of the Council – Cllr Bob Cook

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| 11 | Procurement Plan / Higher Value Contracts and Social Value Update Report | (Pages 181 - 208) |
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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

Dunedin House Emergency Evacuation Procedure

In the event of an emergency alarm activation, everyone should immediately leave by the nearest available signed Exit route.

The main evacuation assembly point is the overflow car park, located across the road from Dunedin House.

Once there await further instructions.

- Do not re-enter the building under any circumstances without an “all clear” which should only be given by the Incident Control Officer.
- And please do not leave the area without permission.

Dunedin House Emergency Evacuation Procedure

CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Monday 10 February 2025.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Garry Cummings, Clare Harper (DCE&F, T&P), Reuben Kench (DoCS,E&C), Tracey Carter (IG&D), Majella McCarthy (DoChS), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Peter Bell (DoCS), Marc Stephenson (AH&W).

Also in attendance: Cllr Syliva Walmsley, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Lynn Hall.

Apologies: Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member).

CAB/87/24 Evacuation Procedure**CAB/88/24 Declarations of Interest****CAB/89/24 Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy**

Consideration was given to a report on the Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy.

This was the final report in setting the Council's 2025/26 Budget and Council Tax and outlining the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position to 2028. The report also included an update on the financial performance for 2024/25.

The report outlined the budget for 2025/26 and indicative MTFP for future years. The provisional finance settlement was received on 18th December 2024, and this indicated the funding for 2025/26, with the final allocations to be confirmed in February. In order to prepare a Medium Term Financial Plan, assumptions had been made in respect of future years, however, this funding was extremely uncertain and subject to future Government spending reviews.

The Provisional Financial Settlement had provided funding allocations for 2025/26 only. The Government had indicated that there would be reforms to Local Government Finance from 2026/27 onwards and would take forward the fair funding review, also considering the reset of Business Rates. Government had indicated there would be a multi-year settlement from 2026/27 onwards.

The MTFP report for 2025/26 to 2027/28 was attached to the report.

The report also provided an update on the financial position for 2024/25. As reported previously, inflationary pressures were having a significant impact upon the financial position in 2024/25. The Council continued to see increased costs in maintaining vital services.

The Report outlined the Council Tax proposals and Budget for 2025/26 and the indicative MTFP for the next two years.

It provides an update on the position from that reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2024 and reflected implications arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26.

The Provisional Financial Settlement had provided funding allocations for 2025/26 only. The Government had indicated that there would be reforms to Local Government Finance from 2026/27 onwards and would take forward the fair funding review, also considering the reset of Business Rates. Government had indicated there would be a multi-year settlement from 2026/27 onwards, therefore the funding shown in 2026/27 onwards in the MTFP was subject to change.

The Council had a long history of providing value for money and delivering strong financial management. This had again been reinforced by the External Auditor in the Independent Auditors Annual Report on the 2022/23 accounts, which was issued in May 2024. The auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the 2022/23 financial statements and did not identify any significant weaknesses or recommendations in relation to value for money arrangements.

Section 25 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 required that when a local authority was agreeing its annual budget and setting its Council Tax, the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) must report to it on the following matters:

- The robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the Council Tax requirement calculations
- The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves

The Council was required to have due regard to this report when making decisions on the budget.

RECOMMENDED to Council:-

1. That in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, Members note that the Section 151 Officer confirms that the following recommendations:
 - a) represent a robust budget which has been prepared in line with best practice;
 - b) provide adequate working balances;
 - c) that the controlled reserves and provisions are adequate for their purpose.

General Fund Budget

2. Approve a 2025/26 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council of £124,538,859.

3. Approve a 2025/26 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inclusive of Parish Precepts £x – this information will follow for Council

4. Approve the 2025/26 budget and indicative 2026/28 MTFP as outlined in paragraphs 20-46, the level of General Fund Balances and the release of reserves to balance the 2024/25 in year financial position as set out in paragraphs 14-19.

5. To revise the existing £6m prudential borrowing approval for investment in Children's Services residential homes and Spark of Genius, and replace with a Council wide investment fund of £20m from prudential borrowing for self-funding capital investments linked to transformation of Services. This could include investments relating to climate change. Individual schemes will need to be approved by Cabinet.

6. Agree the use of £950,000 of Prudential Borrowing to fund the investment required at Preston Park covered within the Levelling Up Fund Preston Park Museum and Grounds Enhancements report to Cabinet on 16th January 2025.

Taxation

SBC

7. Approve the Council Tax for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council prior to Parish, Fire and Police Precepts be increased by 4.95%, which includes the Government Levy of 2% in respect of Social Care, i.e. to £2,038.98 at Band D (£1,359.32 at Band A).

Fire, Police & Parish

8. The Council note the Police & Crime Commissioner is proposing a precept of £19,406,631 which equates to a Council Tax of £317.73 at Band D (£211.82 at Band A)

9. The Council note the Fire Authority is proposing a precept of £5,769,522 which equates to a Council Tax of £94.46 at Band D (£62.97 at Band A).

10. The Council note the Parish precepts as set out in paragraph 69 of the budget report - to follow for council

Capital

11. Approve the Capital Programme attached at Appendix A & B.

Organisational and HR

12. Council approve the Pay Policy Statement including the pay and grading structure at Appendix C and C(1).

Members Allowances

13. Approve that Members allowances are frozen for 2025/26. This will mean that these allowances have been frozen since 2013/14.

Council Tax - Statutory Requirements

14. Members approve the statutory requirements for Council Tax as shown in Appendix D. to follow for Council

15. The Council must set its Local Council Tax Reduction scheme annually by 11 March of the preceding financial year. Cabinet therefore recommends to Council that

the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is retained for the financial year 2025/26 incorporating the updates for the prescribed requirements in regulations and to reflect updated income figures in the table at Schedule 1. The scheme is available here www.stockton.gov.uk/CTR.

16. That the Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance and Deputy Chief Executive be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader, to make further adjustments to the income table and/or disregard additional funds should the government issue revised publications with regards to these matters after 19th February, to ensure that Government's intentions for additional support is maintained.

Capital Strategy

17. Approve the Capital Strategy as set out at Appendix E to the report, including the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Policy, the MRP Strategy and the Capital Programme Management Arrangements.

Treasury Management/Prudential Code

18. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix F to the report.

Investment Strategy

19. Approve the Investment Strategy as set out at Appendix G to the report.

Cabinet RESOLVED that:-

20. The Officer Appointments to outside bodies and governing bodies at Appendix C(1) be approved and noted.

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CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 13 February 2025.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Garry Cummings (DCE&F, T&P), Reuben Kench (DoCS,E&C), Tracey Carter (IG&D), Majella McCarthy (DoChS), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Peter Bell (DoCS), Marc Stephenson (AH&W) .

Also in attendance: Cllr Syliva Walmsley, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Lynn Hall.

Apologies: Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member).

CAB/90/24 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

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

CAB/91/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CAB/92/24 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025 be approved.

CAB/93/24 School Performance 2023 - 2024 for Vulnerable Pupils

Consideration was given to a report that presented a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2023-2024 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It was informed by the latest available data, some of which remained unvalidated and compared to national and regional averages where they exist. It included performance outcomes for:

- Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding;
- Performance by gender;
- Performance by ethnicity;
- Children and Young People in Our Care;
- Children with Special Needs;
- Children from Service Families;
- Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

Some of the key figures included:-

In Stockton in 2024*:

- a. 9599 of Stockton's 29297 pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium and are classified as disadvantaged. This is 31.6% of the cohort. This is 4.7% higher than the national average of 27.3%
- b. 27.1% of pupils in primary schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSMEver6). This is 2.9% higher than the national average of 24.2%
- c. 27.3% of pupils in secondary schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSMEver6). This is 3.3% higher than the national average of 24%
- d. 1.3% pupils are identified as Children in Our Care (CIOC). This is 0.64% higher than the national average of 0.66%.
- e. 4,194 of Stockton's 32,182 pupils are classified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support provision, this is 13.0% of the cohort. This is 0.3% lower than the national average of 13.3% (Source NCER Census Data - Spring 24 Census exc. subsidiary pupils)
- f. 1,499 of Stockton's 32,182 pupils are classified as having SEN Education Health and Care Plan provision (EHCP), this is 4.7% of the cohort. This is 0.1% higher than the national average of 4.6% (Source NCER Census Data - Spring 24 Census exc. subsidiary pupils)
- g. 8.1% of pupils in primary schools have a first language other than English. This is 14.6% lower than the national average of 22.7% (Source NCER Census Data - Spring 24 Census exc. subsidiary pupils).
- h. 7.1% of pupils in secondary schools have a first language other than English. This is 11.4% lower than the national average of 18.5% (Source NCER Census Data - Spring 24 Census exc. subsidiary pupils).
- i. 12% of pupils in North East are identified as long-term disadvantaged (3). The highest percentage is in London (15%). Long-term disadvantage varies considerably across the country.
- j. Disadvantaged pupils tend to do worse than their better-off peers.
- k. Those who are disadvantaged for the longest time do worst of all.
- l. 2021/22 data (4) evidences 32.6% of children in Stockton are living in poverty, compared to 29% in the UK. This is an increase of 7.1% points since 2014/15, whilst the UK average is the same as at that point.
- m. There is no longer any statutory reporting of pupil outcomes at the end of KS1.
- n. Pupil progress data for the end of KS2 is not available in 2024 because these pupils were not assessed at the end of KS1 due to covid restrictions.

*based on the spring census

RESOLVED that:-

1. The standards and achievement across the Borough for vulnerable groups of children be noted.
2. The strong overall performance of Stockton schools at both primary and secondary phases be noted.
3. The work undertaken to further reduce educational attainment gap be noted.

CAB/94/24 Procedure for Admission of Pupils to Primary and Secondary Schools in September 2026

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) was proposing, for entry into both primary (Reception) and secondary (Year 7) schools in September 2026. To comply with legislation for admission in September 2026, the report included the co-ordinated timetable, the Published Admission Number (PAN) for all Primary and Secondary Schools for that year and the LA's proposed Admission Policy (Oversubscription Policy) for Community maintained and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools for entry in September 2026.

Appendix 1 to the report provided further detail of the proposed Co-ordinated Admission arrangements timetable – 2026/27.

Appendix 2 to the report provided the proposed PANs for September 2026 in Community, VA, Academies and Free Schools and highlighted those schools to be considered for expansion and remodelling.

Appendix 3 to the report provided further detail on the proposed LA's Admission Policy for September 2026 for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools only, that would give priority to applications for admission to a school if that school was oversubscribed.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Secondary, Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, Academies and Free School (points 5-6 and Appendix 1 of the report) be agreed.
2. The proposed PANs for Primary and Secondary schools for September 2026 (points 7-10 and Appendix 2 of the report) be agreed.
3. The proposed Admission Policy for September 2026 (point 11-14 and Appendix 3 of the report) be agreed.

CAB/95/24 Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030

Consideration was given to a report on the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030.

The local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-30 aimed to unite ambitions and commitments across the Council, local organisations, partners and the community to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities. The Strategy was owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) as the local statutory group responsible for strategic direction, oversight and assurance on improving health, wellbeing and health inequalities.

The new draft Strategy focused on supporting local action on the building blocks of health and wellbeing, bringing a greater focus on the socio-economic determinants of health and helping maximise collective resource.

The Strategy had been developed through a collaborative, evidence-based approach to ensure it aligned with local needs and aspirations. The focus had been on strategic alignment, ensuring fit with the Council Plan, Powering our Future and a range of

Council and partner strategic documents e.g. the Integrated Care Board (ICB) plan Better Health and Wellbeing for All.

RESOLVED that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-30 be approved.

CAB/96/24 Annual report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG)

Consideration was given to a report on the Annual report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG).

The Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) brought together a range of professionals to scrutinise and advise upon event safety processes and systems for outdoor events. The ISAG looked at plans for a wide range of events and festivals in Stockton-on-Tees, focusing on events of a significant scale or complexity. All events of scale on Stockton Council land were subject to review by the ISAG, and where requested ISAG would review event safety plans which were hosted on private land.

The ISAG did not take decisions on whether or not an event should go ahead but provided specialist advice and recommendations to landowners, including the Council to enable them to make informed decisions to allow an event or require changes to an event plan. The ISAG provided practical advice and guidance to event organisers and aimed to drive up the quality of event plans/safety planning.

The ISAG's independent Chair produced an annual report for information, to highlight significant findings and make recommendations for areas of further work.

The full ISAG Annual Report, including an improvement plan, was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The ISAG's annual report 2024/25 be noted.
2. The resignation of the current ISAG Chair be noted, and the Chair be thanked the Chair for his service.

REPORT TO CABINET

13 MARCH 2025

**REPORT OF PEOPLE
SELECT COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care – Cllr Pauline Beall

Lead Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Housing – Cllr Nigel Cooke

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

SUMMARY

The attached report presents the outcomes of the People Select Committee's review of Disabled Facilities Grant.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024-2025. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the People Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommend that:

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 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.
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.
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.

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.
6. Communication to residents and applicants be improved by:
 - 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 Housing Investment & Migration Support team is in place.
 - a singular customer feedback survey covering all processes and services involved in a DFG is developed, to ensure this is only collected once.
7. Officers explore streamlining processes to understand their impact and benefit of implementing:
 - 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
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
9. Use of flat pack extensions is explored in more detail to see if they would provide a viable and cost-effective option.
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.

DETAIL

1. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide grant aid for a range of adaptations to eligible individuals (following an assessment) home and this is carried out via Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which is a capital grant governed by the Housing Grants and Construction Act 1996. It is 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 enable people to continue living safely and independently in their own home.
2. Demand for DFGs is rising at a time when building costs have significantly increased. As a result of this there is an increasing number of DFG applications costed above the maximum threshold of £30k. There is 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 impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and potentially their ability to remain living independently in their own home. The aim of this review was to explore both current and potential alternative options to ensure the service is delivered in an efficient, effective and customer focused way.
3. The Committee has 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 are 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.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

4. DFG's helps some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer and supports the Stockton-on-Tees Plan Priority 2: Health & Resilient Communities key move "Working with our residents to build resilience and independence in their own homes". As noted in the report, the long-term implications of delays in provision of a DFG adaptations could have negative impact on an individual's quality of life and health outcomes, along with a need for re-housing or admission to long term residential care. SBC's delivery model for DFG's of providing caseworker and technical officer support ensure that residents are supported throughout the process to receive the adaptations they need to live independently, however improvements can be made to streamline the process and improve communication.
5. An Equality, Poverty & Impact Assessment has been completed for the review. As the recommendations concentrate on further exploration of improving the current service they were assessed as having a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability, as well as poverty.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

6. There are no direct implications in the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. The increase in both the number of people applying for a DFG as well as the increase in the average cost, is causing budget pressures. The DFG budget must have a nil return each year, overspend in 2023/24 had to be met from other budget sources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no direct implications in the report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

9. 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

10. This review is relevant to all Wards across the Borough.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

11. None.

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn

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Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants

People Select Committee, February 2025

Contents

Select Committee – Membership.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	3
Forward.....	4
Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Chair	4
Original Brief.....	5
1.0 Executive Summary.....	7
Recommendations.....	10
2.0 Introduction.....	12
3.0 Background.....	12
4.0 Evidence.....	14
Stockton-on-Tees Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.....	14
Stages of Disabled Facilities Grant.....	17
2023/24 Annual Report.....	23
Registered Housing Providers.....	25
Regional and National Comparison.....	26
Customer Feedback.....	30
Foundations Workshop.....	32
5.0 Conclusion.....	34
Recommendations.....	36
Appendix 1.....	38
Glossary of Terms.....	43

Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Marilyn Surtees (Chair)

Councillor Paul Weston (Vice Chair)

Councillor Ian Dalgarno

Councillor John Gardner

Councillor Niall Innes

Councillor Eileen Johnson

Councillor David Reynard

Councillor Hugo Stratton

Councillor Barry Woodhouse

Acknowledgements

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

- Sam Dixon (Service Lead – Housing Investment and Migration Support) Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Chris Donnison (Building and HVE Service Manager) Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Krasan Saltikov (Occupational Therapy Team Manager) Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Jane Edmonds (Assistant Director – Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees) Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Rachel Russell (Senior Regional Advisor) - Foundations
- Emma Zenaj (Co-Chair) Stockton Parent Carer Forum
- Ian Bartlett (General Manager) Stockton & District Advice & Information Service
- Stuart Green (Staying Put Agency team Leader) Middlesbrough Council

Contact Officer

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Forward

Following the People Select Committee’s review of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), we are pleased to present the Committee’s final report.

DFG’s are a means tested grant to make an individual’s home suitable to their needs, enabling them to live independently and preventing pressure on other council and health services. The review examined how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council delivers the service, which supports some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities. In doing so, the review considered the current policy and processes, along with the guidance from Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and Disabled Facilities Grants. Other models of delivery were also presented to the Committee as well as feedback from the Stockton Parent Carers Forum on their members experience of the service.

During the course of the review extra funding for DFG’s was announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. The Royal British Legion also launched their Credit their Service campaign, which asks local authorities to use their existing discretionary powers to ensure that military compensation is never included in means tests for locally administered benefits, including DFG.

Our recommendations seek to both improve communications with those applying for DFG’s as well as streamline current processes. They also support closer working with Registered Providers, and reviewing the impact of extra funding announced in January 2025.

We would like to extend our thanks to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers, Foundations, and other stakeholders that have contributed to the review. We would also like to thank Stockton Parent & Carer Forum for providing vital input from a client viewpoint.

Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Chair

	<p>Councillor Marilyn Surtees</p> <p>Chair – People Select Committee</p>		<p>Councillor Paul Weston</p> <p>Vice-Chair – People Select Committee</p>
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Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Disabled Facilities Grant directly supports the following Council plan priority: "To support people to remain safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible" (Council Plan Objective - 'A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm').

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

A Disabled Facilities Grant is a means tested grant provided by the Council to make an individual's home suitable to their needs. Works may include:

- widening doors and installing ramps or grab rails
- improve access to room and facilities via stairlifts or level access showers
- building extensions to accommodate a downstairs bedroom/bathing facilities
- adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use

Monies to fund DFG's is provided to Councils via the Better Care Fund.

An individual must occupy the property the grant is applied for as their main residence and intend to occupy the property for the full grant period of 5 years. An individual can also apply if they are a landlord and have a disabled tenant. The Local Authority needs to be satisfied that the work is necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs and that the work is reasonable and can be done, depending on the age and condition of the property.

Demand for DFGs continue to rise at a time when building costs have significantly increased. The result of this is an increasing number of DFG applications costed above the maximum grant threshold (£30k) and a growing waiting list (in terms of numbers of those waiting for a DFG and time taken from the point of application to DFG works commencing). This impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and potentially their ability to remain living independently in their home

The significant rise in building costs has resulted in an increasing number of residents needing to make greater financial contribution to the cost of their DFG, specifically in instances where the value of DFG works is above the maximum £30,000 threshold. SBC has adopted measures to support individuals who do not have the financial means available to contribute to a DFG in the form of discretionary loans with the aim of preventing residents 'falling out' of the system.

This review will explore both current and potential alternative options to ensure the service is delivered in an efficient, effective and customer focused way.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What is the customer journey when applying for DFG?
 - How do residents find out about DFG?
 - How is the Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment carried out and how long does this take?
 - What is the process once a referral is made by an OT and passed to the Housing Investment (HI) team?
 - What is current the current waiting list with HI?
 - How long does it take from application to receiving DFG?
 - What is the current waiting list with HVE and external contractors?
 - How are residents kept informed throughout the process?
 - What checks take place to ensure quality of the work once DFG has been received?

- Is Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's current approach to delivering DFG providing enough support to vulnerable residents?
- How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?
- Should SBC implement any of the Good Practice Guidance issued by Central Government in 2018.
- How many residents are needing to access discretionary funding (financial loan assistance) to make financial contribution to the cost of their DFG?
- Are there any other measures that can be taken to assist residents who do not have the financial means available to contribute to their DFG?
- How many residents applying don't meet the criteria and what advice/support is provided to those not eligible for any funding for DFG?
 - Are there any Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) organization that provide assistance that is/can be signposted to?

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

DFG's helps the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer, preventing pressures on other council and health services and supporting hospital discharge. The review will consider how SBC can deliver this crucial service in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs. It will also explore whether SBC is offering sufficient support to enable residents secure a DFG in the face of rising building costs.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 1.2. DFG's are means tested grants of a maximum £30,000 provided by the Council via the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) programme to make an individual's home suitable to their needs, and may include widening doors, installing ramps, improving access to facilities via stair lifts or level access showers, or building extensions to accommodate downstairs bedroom/bathing facilities. DFG's are means tested for applicants over 18 and based on the income and savings of both applicant and any partners, although the first £6,000 household savings is exempt from the means test. There are passported benefits where the means test does not apply, such as Universal Credit, Income Support, Income-based Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Guarantee Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit. In January 2025 members were made aware of a request made to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) from the Royal British Legion, as part of their Credit their Service campaign, to use existing discretionary powers to ensure that military compensation is never treated as income in means tests for locally administered benefits, which includes DFG.
- 1.3. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide the grant to eligible residents and legislation governing DFG's sets out the following duties:
 - [make residents aware of options available to meet their needs](#)
 - [give reasons if DFG is not granted](#)
 - [make residents aware of how to complain or appeal](#)
- 1.4. Legislation contained within the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 (HGRA) states that an application must contain a detailed schedule of works and 2 estimates from different contractors (unless the case is fast-tracked or where the works are part of an approved single contractor scheme). In addition, adaptations must be necessary and appropriate.
- 1.5. The Care Act 2014 states that LA's have a legal duty to carry out assessment of need to anyone who "appears to have a care and support need" and a general duty to arrange provision of preventative services
- 1.6. There are also statutory timescales for the time it takes from DFG application to approved (6 months) and certification of works (12 months)
- 1.7. DFG's helps some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer, preventing pressure on other council and health services and supporting hospital discharge. The review has therefore focused on how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) delivers this crucial service, to ensure it is done so in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs.
- 1.8. While SBC will only fund the minimum specification required to meet the applicants need, the Committee was assured that the applicant can fund adaptations above the basic offer themselves. The Committee also noted the conditions contained within SBC's DFG policy are fully explained when the applicant is notified that their DFG application has been successful. These include eligible works only being carried out by the contractors whose estimates accompany the formal

application and in accordance with the specification in the grant approval document, works must be carried out within 12 months of date of approval, payment/part payment of the grant is conditional upon works being completed to the satisfaction of SBC, the applicant must intend to live in the property as their only or main residence for 5 years, and SBC may require any specialist or portable equipment to be returned when no longer needed

1.9. There are five stages of a DFG as outlined below:

Stage 0	First Contact	Public information and advice Contact Centre
Stage 1	Assessment	Triage to identify appropriate response Assessment of needs
Stage 2	Compile the Application	Application form and eligibility information Design and costing of adaptations
Stage 3	Approval	Check application is correct Issue approval letter
Stage 4	Carry out the works	Arrange and carry out the works Ensure all is satisfactory and make payment

1.10. Assessments are carried out by the Occupational Therapy (OT) service who receive referrals for assessments via First Contact or SBC internal Social Care Team. Referrals can also come from the Nomination and Letting Team and Registered Providers (RP's) such as Thirteen. Once the assessment has taken place and a referral for a DFG is made to the Housing Investment & Migration Support Team (HI&MS), the person joins the waiting list to apply for a DFG, and this ensures a fair and transparent process is adhered to. They will receive written confirmation of the referral. SBC's in-house Home Improvement Agency (HIA) provides lower-level adaptations and support (under £1,000), and any immediate measures that can be put in place. The OT can decide if the application should be "fast tracked" to the top of the list due to their need.

1.11. When the person reaches the top of the waiting list an appointment is made to commence the formal grant process. The HI&MS Team offers an Agency Service to all applicants to help them in compiling their application and provide help, advice and support through the whole of the DFG process. As stated above the application must contain a detailed schedule of works and two estimates from different contractors, along with proof of future occupation. Application forms are completed by the technical officer (TO) at the initial visit. Draft plans are drawn up by a TO during a home visit, on return to the office the TO produces a CAD drawing and provides a schedule of works to accompany the drawing. These are sent to the referring OT for review, with a two week deadline for approval. Very few schedules of works are amended, and this may be causing unnecessary delays for straightforward cases. The application is approved or refused within 6 months of applying. If it is refused then reasons for this will be provided.

1.12. The TO provides initial design and schedule of works to the relevant building contractor. Building Services (the Councils internal building team) carry out Level Entry Showers which make up the majority of the DFG adaptations works, as well as door widening if capacity allows. Other adaptations are carried out via one of four builders that have a Minor Works Contract with SBC. Applicants can organise for their own contractor to carry out the work, but work can not start until the DFG has been approved. All work carried out for DFG is inspected by the TO whether this is carried out by Building Services, one of the four SBC contractors, or the applicants own contractor.

Applicants are asked to sign a letter to confirm their satisfaction with the work. If the applicant has any issues with the works within the first 12 months, they can contact the team to rectify the issue. After 12 months it is the responsibility of the applicant to maintain their adaptations.

- 1.13. When comparing SBC's performance in delivering DFG's with the regional and national data, SBC delivered significantly more DFG's for 0-17 year old age group and fewer DFG's to the 66+ age group. The data also shows that SBC's delivery times for the overall process are average nationally, and faster than most Local Authorities at approval stage, Stage 3. However, SBC took longer to compile the application (stage 2, which has no statutory time limit) when compared both regionally and nationally. Members were informed that this has been affected by both reduced staff levels, which were being addressed, and discussions with clients to manage expectations. SBC also took longer at stage 4 – carrying out the works, which has a statutory timeframe of being completed within 12 months of approval. This had been affected by the number of extensions that had been carried out in the year data was reported, which take longer to complete.
- 1.14. The Committee notes that the waiting list for those wishing to apply for a DFG is growing, standing at 322 in December 2024 with a two-year timeframe from referral to installation of the adaptation. This has been attributed to several factors including a greater awareness of the OT service and lockdowns/COVID's impact on older residents remaining active. It is further noted that although fast track applications ensures that those who have critical or time-sensitive needs receive timely adaptations, it has an impact on the remaining people on the waiting list. In addition to the growing waiting lists, the average amount of grant approved is also rising, due to inflation and rising building costs, creating budget pressures.
- 1.15. The Committee were particularly concerned that the waiting lists includes a rising number of people who live in RP rented properties While there is no legal obligation for RP's to fund all adaptations to their properties for their tenants, there is an expectation that they will do so within their own resources. Thirteen are the exception to this as they have a commitment within the Stock Transfer Agreement to spend £1m per year for 30 years on adaptations to properties within the Borough. Details confirming the properties Thirteen have adapted to meet their commitment and type of adaptations carried out have been requested but still outstanding in December 2024. In addition, the Committee found that not only are applications for a DFG from RP tenants increasing but there is an absence of information on all RP properties i.e., a register of adapted properties which details the number of properties and type of adaptations completed.
- 1.16. The Committee found that communication with DFG applicants is an area that needs to be addressed. This includes the information available on SBC website, communication with applicants during the waiting periods to ensure the processes are fully understood and manage expectations, and information for those who do not qualify for a DFG such as next steps and advice on where to go for further assistance which appeared to be missing. In addition, customer feedback is important, and this has historically been collected via different services involved: OT's, Building and Housing Services. Members heard how this is now being streamlined into one survey and are keen that it captures feedback on all stages of the process.
- 1.17. Members believe that further exploration is required of the streamlining of processes to fully understand the impact and whether they would reduce delays and allow for quicker processing. These include reviewing referral forms used by OT to ensure it captures all relevant information, removing the requirement for OT to approve the scheme of works for straight forward cases, allowing electronic forms to be uploaded, and attaching only two quotes for the works to the application as per the statutory requirement.

- 1.18. Improvement to processes and communication will not, however, address the growing pressure as demand continues to outstrip funding. Previously this shortfall in funding has been met from other budgets. While bespoke meetings have been put in place to monitor the DFG budget and ensure there is no further overspend, the implications of this will be that the waiting list will continue to grow. In January 2025 the MHCLG announced a further £86m additional funding for 2024/25, and SBC's share of this will be £270,856, taking the total government funding for 2024/25 to £2,239,284. Confirmation on 2025/26 allocation for DFG was also received in January 2025, and this was also £2,239,284. This would allow 49 extra Level Entry Showers, Ramps or Stairlifts, the most required adaptations, to take place and reduce the waiting list by approximately 100. However, Members noted that it is not possible to predict how many new referrals will be received.
- 1.19. SBC's in-house HIA provides lower-level adaptations and support, and the Committee believes this could potentially be utilized to further provide early help and prevention to ease budgetary pressures for DFG. Further consideration and investigation of this should be taken.
- 1.20. The Committee acknowledges that the long-term implications of delays in provision of a DFG adaptations could have a negative impact on an individual's quality of life and health outcomes, along with a need for re-housing or admission to long term residential care. The recommendations include exploring ways to manage expectations and improve processes, however without finding alternative means to provide adaptations or further funding there will be a limit on the number of DFG's that SBC is able to approve each year. Therefore, closer working with RP's and reviewing the impact of the recent announcement of extra funding for DFG's on our Borough is also being suggested within the recommendations.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

1. In relation to the recent announcement from the 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 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.
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, lobby government to make the relevant Building Regulations mandatory.
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.
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.
6. Communication to residents and applicants be improved by:

- 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 Housing Investment & Migration Support team is in place.
 - a singular customer feedback survey covering all processes and services involved in a DFG is developed, to ensure this is only collected once.
7. Officers explore streamlining processes to understand their impact and benefit of implementing:
- 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.
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
9. Use of flat pack extensions is explored in more detail to see if they would provide a viable and cost-effective option.
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.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 2.2. Disabled Facilities Grants are means tested grants provided by the Council to make an individual's home suitable to their needs. This may include widening doors, installing ramps or grab rails, improve access to facilities via stair lifts or level access showers, building extensions to accommodate downstairs bedroom/bathing facilities or adapting heating/lighting controls. The main aim of this review was to explore both the current and potential alternative options for delivering this crucial service to ensure it is done so in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs. It also sought to explore whether sufficient support is offered to enable residents to secure a DFG in the face of rising building costs.
- 2.3. The Committee undertook several key lines of enquiry:
- What is the customer journey when applying for DFG?
 - Is Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's current approach to delivering DFG providing enough support to vulnerable residents?
 - How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?
 - Should SBC implement any of the Good Practice Guidance issued by Central Government in 2018?
 - How many residents are needing to access discretionary funding (financial loan assistance) to make financial contribution to the cost of their DFG?
 - Are there any other measures that can be taken to assist residents who do not have the financial means available to contribute to their DFG?
 - How many residents applying don't meet the criteria and what advice/support is provided to those not eligible for any funding for DFG?
- 2.4. Contributions were sought and subsequently received from several Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) departments including Housing Regeneration and Investment (HRI), Occupational Therapy, and Building Services Teams. The Committee also considered evidence from Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and Disabled Facilities Grants. Stockton Parent Carer Forum provided vital input from a client viewpoint, along with Stockton & District Advice & Information Service, Middlesbrough Council, and Teesside & District Society for the Blind.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a capital grant governed by the Housing Grants and Construction Act 1996, funded as part of the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) programme. This is a pooled budget between the NHS and Local Authorities (LA) and passed to the LA's to administer. They enable people to continue living safely and independently in their own home.
- 3.2 Local Authorities therefore have had a statutory duty to provide grant aid for a range of adaptations individuals may require in their home. Legislations governing DFG's sets out the following duties:
- Residents have the right to receive an Assessment of Need carried out by an Occupational Therapist (OT)

- Councils have a duty to make residents aware of options available to meet their needs
- Councils must give reasons if DFG is not granted
- Councils must make residents aware of how to complain or appeal

3.3 Legislation contained within the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act (HGRA) states that an application for grant must contain:

- A detailed schedule of works
- Two estimates from different contractors (unless the case is fast-tracked or where the works are part of an approved single contractor scheme.).

The legislation also states that adaptations must be necessary and appropriate.

3.4 In addition, the Care Act 2014 states that LA's have:

- A legal duty to carry out assessment of need to anyone who "appears to have a care and support need"
- A general duty to arrange provision of preventative services

3.5 The maximum grant under the DFG is currently set at £30,000, this figure has not changed since 2008 and is currently under government review. The DFG is means tested for applicants over 18 and based on the income and savings of both the applicant and any partners, although the first £6,000 household savings is exempt from the means test. There are passported benefits where the means test does not apply, such as:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based (NOT contribution-based) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based (NOT contribution-based) Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Guarantee Pension Credit (not Savings Pension Credit alone)
- Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit (where your annual income for the purposes of the tax credits assessment was below £15,050)
- Housing Benefit

3.6 In January 2025 members were made aware of the Royal British Legion Credit their Service campaign, which aims to address the unjust treatment of military compensation as income across welfare benefit means test by Local Authorities. They argue that compensation is unjustly regarded as income by many welfare benefit means test while civil awards, such as personal injury or medical negligence compensation, are typically exempt. They are urging Local Authorities, including SBC, to ensure that compensation awarded for injury or bereavement in His Majesty Armed Forces is never treated as income across benefits means tests, by using their existing discretionary powers. Further investigation on the implications of this needs to be carried out for all means tested benefits, including DFG, before a decision can be made.

3.7 There are statutory timescales for time it takes from DFG application to approved (6 months) and certification of works (12 months).

3.8 In addition, the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) gives local authorities a general power to introduce policies for assisting individuals by providing grants, loans and advice for the purpose of repairing, improving, extending, converting, or adapting housing. This is used for those who need to top up their grant to carry out works and is detailed in the published Housing Assistance Policy.

3.9 The Age UK Disabled Facilities Grant report ([The Age UK Disabled Facilities report](#)) reviews the administering of DFG's and outcomes for people across the country. It includes several case

studies of clients seeking support in the DFG process and notes that the population is aging therefore the need for accessible homes and adaptations will also increase. The report makes suggestions for improvements in the DFG process, which include ensuring that the information about DFG is easy to find, clear and comprehensive. They would also like the Government to allocate funds specifically to improve awareness of the grant, consult on the role of housing associations, make building regulations regarding accessibility mandatory for all new builds, include adaptations along with guidance in Decent Homes Standards, and use measures to ensure that accessibility of existing stock is improved.

- 3.10 Demand for DFGs is rising at a time when building costs have significantly increased. As a result of this there is an increasing number of DFG applications costed above the maximum threshold of £30k. There is 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 impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and potentially their ability to remain living independently in their own home.
- 3.11 Further background information in relation to this scrutiny topic includes:

Good practice guidance issued by Central Government (produced on their behalf by 'Foundations').
[Foundations Guide](#)

Government Guidance [DFG Government Guidance for Local Authorities](#)

4.0 Evidence

Stockton-on-Tees Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

- 4.1. SBC's DFG Policy outlines the eligibility for DFG's, works that are eligible, processes, conditions, and completion of works. It also notes local discretion and flexibilities available, which are contained in the separate Financial Assistance Policy. The Committee was informed that these policies have not been updated since 2020.

Eligibility

- 4.2. Owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords can apply for a DFG. Tenants must obtain their landlord permission. Applications will only be processed on receipt of a referral and assessment from the Occupational Therapy (OT) team. Successive applications for the same property are permitted if/when circumstances and needs change.
- 4.3. Only SBC residents can apply for a DFG from the authority. SBC will, however, pay the costs of adaptations to a property for a child placed in care outside of the Borough. This system is reciprocated, and the Committee were informed that there has been a case where Durham Council has paid for adaptations to a property in the Borough where a child under their care was living.
- 4.4. The Policy makes clear that applicants may have to contribute towards the cost of works depending on the means test, as well as any costs over £30,000, and these must be paid in advance of works commencing.
- 4.5. Eligible works include:

- Facilitating access or making a dwelling or building safe e.g. ramped access or wheelchair accessibility indoors
- Access to a room usable for sleeping or access to a bathroom e.g., ground floor bathroom & toilet facilities, stair lift or through floor lift, wash and dry toilet facility
- Facilitating preparation and cooking food
- Heating, lighting, and power
- Adaptations for dependent residents
- Common parts e.g., where a resident is living in a block of flats
- Bespoke adaptations for an individual's specific circumstances

4.6. The above can include extensions if necessary. SBC will only fund the minimum specification required to meet the applicants need. The Committee were assured, however, that the applicant can fund adaptations above the basic offer themselves.

Enquiry, Application, and Approval Process

4.7. The Policy outlines the process for applying and these are outlined in paragraphs 4.22 – 4.34 below.

Grant Conditions

4.8. There are several conditions to receiving a DFG. The eligible works should only be carried out by the contractors whose estimates accompany the formal application and in accordance with the specification in the grant approval document. For those using their own contractors rather than the services of SBC's approved contractors, the specifications will be produced by SBC, upon consideration of a surveyor's report submitted by the applicant. Works must be carried out within 12 months of date of approval; however, SBC may consider extending this period where unforeseen circumstances have prevented the works being out.

4.9. Payment or part payment of the grant is conditional upon works being completed to the satisfaction of SBC. The payment is made direct to the contractor. Any interim grant must be repaid if the conditions have been breached, for example using a different contractor to the one specified, or because the works were not completed in 12 months due to the applicant's actions.

4.10. The applicant must intend to live in the property as their only or main residence for 5 years starting from the date SBC confirms the eligible works have been completed satisfactory, the grant condition period. SBC may agree to a shorter grant condition period depending on the applicant's health or other relevant circumstances. SBC may require any specialist or portable equipment to be returned when no longer needed and SBC must be contacted as soon as it is no longer needed.

4.11. If a DFG exceeds £10,000, and depending on the work carried out, SBC will seek to place a land charge of up to a maximum of £10,000 against the property which lasts a maximum of 10 years. If

the owner of the property decides to sell or otherwise dispose of the property within that period, SBC will demand payment of the charge. Applicants are advised of the exact amount they will be expected to pay at approval stage.

- 4.12. These conditions of the DFG are fully explained when the applicant is notified that their DFG application has been successful.

Undertaking Works

- 4.13. For those making their own applications, work in progress visits are made at regular intervals to check the progression and quality of works. To ensure value for money two estimates are needed by those making their own applications or if Building Services team cannot carry out the works, unless the works are classed as urgent, or part of a contractual agreement where the schedule of works is added to the ProContract system to receive quotes.
- 4.14. Pre-start meetings between the technical officer, contractor, and client take place for larger works such as extensions or conversion to determine start/completion dates and responsibilities. The DFG team will assess the quality of the work on completion and sign it off. Applicants are asked to sign a letter to confirm their satisfaction with the work. If the client has any issues with the works within the first 12 months, they can contact the team to rectify the issue. After 12 months it is up to the applicant to maintain their adaptations.

Local Discretion and Flexibilities

- 4.15. SBC's Housing Service Financial Assistance Policy outlines the following assistance available:
- Homeowner Top up Loan for adaptations above £30k
 - Homeowner DFG Loan which, dependent on the clients' circumstances, can be either a Capital or Interest Repayment loan, an Equity Loan, or an Interest Free Loan
 - Tenant DFG Loan for those who are living in private rent or Registered Provider. These loans are considered by the Director of Finance, Development & Business Services along with the Director of Adults & Health, are limited to an interest or interest free loans and the loan will continue to be their responsibility should they vacate the rented property.
- 4.16. If an applicant who is required to contribute to works being carried out advises they are unable to do so they are referred to the Local Administrator, Five Lamps. Five Lamps check whether they can secure a mainstream loan on the open market, and signpost to these if possible. If it is confirmed they cannot obtain a loan on the open market then they offer them one of the above products. This prevents people from dropping out and cancelling their application for the adaptations that they need. The Committee was informed that the policy for these local discretions has not been reviewed since 2017.

Government Recommendations for DFG Service Delivery & Policy

- 4.17. In 2018 Foundations issued guidance on how to deliver a DFG service on behalf of the Government

which includes recommendations that go beyond the statutory requirements. Further guidance was issued in 2022 which brought together existing policy frameworks, legislative duties and powers, and replicated the 2018 recommendations. The Committee received a breakdown of how these recommendations can be implemented by SBC, which is attached at **appendix 1**. The first recommendation highlighted is regarding good working relationships with Registered Providers (RP's) and the Committee were informed that RP's can apply for funding and carry out works on behalf of their tenants with their own contractors. In addition, Thirteen made a commitment in the Stock Transfer Agreement to spend £1 million per year for 30 year on adaptations for their tenants (see paragraph 4.62). While this may not reduce the impact on the budget it will reduce the number of in-depth cases technical staff deal with and thereby the waiting list, therefore further promotion of landlord applications with RP's will be useful. It will also be helpful to have a database of all RP's properties in SBC that have adaptations already fitted, either by SBC or RP's. This will assist residents who wish to move to adapted homes be matched with suitable properties when they become vacant. However, members recognised that there is currently a high demand for social/affordable housing, and they may face a lengthy wait to be rehoused.

- 4.18. Another recommendation highlighted is fast-tracking with no means testing applications up to £5,000 for those with highly debilitating conditions. This will enable people to get their adaptations while still working, and work as long as they are able, rather than having to rely on benefits before they qualify for a DFG. However, it may not speed up the process for the individual as they will still be added to the waiting list for works, and impact on the rest of the people on the waiting lists as well as budgets.
- 4.19. The recommendation regarding information on SBC website was considered and also highlighted as an area for development when Foundations gave evidence at the Committee, as well as within the feedback from their workshop with the team (see paragraphs 4.93 – 4.99 below). Foundations gave Plymouth and Coventry as examples of best practice for the DFG information on their website, who display their full policy. Foundations are developing a template for websites, and this can be duplicated. Foundations also currently provide a simple toolkit online, adaptmyhome.com, which advises those looking to apply for a DFG if they are likely to qualify. It was suggested that signposting to this toolkit on SBC website may positively impact the waiting list, as those who are advised that they are less likely to qualify if applied may not join the local waiting list for an assessment. While Members were initially concerned that people may need assistance to complete this assessment or be put off from applying when they might be successful, they feel assured that it is simple to complete and does not prohibit people from applying for the DFG locally regardless of the advice given.
- 4.20. The final government recommendation highlighted by the Committee was the use of flat pack extensions. This will need to be explored in more detail to see if it is viable in SBC, but if so could speed up the extension process as well as reduce costs.

Stages of Disabled Facilities Grant

4.21. There are five stages of a DFG as outlined below:

Stage 0	First Contact	Public information and advice Contact Centre
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Stage 1	Assessment	Triage to identify appropriate response Assessment of needs
Stage 2	Compile the Application	Application form and eligibility information Design and costing of adaptations
Stage 3	Approval	Check application is correct Issue approval letter
Stage 4	Carry out the works	Arrange and carry out the works Ensure all is satisfactory and make payment

Enquiry Stage (stage 0 First Contact – stage 1 Assessment)

- 4.22. Assessments are carried out by the OT service, which aims to help people live in their own homes independently and reduce, prevent and delay escalation in care and support needs, thereby reducing the likelihood of admission to hospital and/or long-term residential care settings. People are referred to the OT service via First Contact or SBC internal Social Care Team. Referrals can also come from the Nomination and Letting Team and RP's such as Thirteen.
- 4.23. There has been an increase in demand for OT services over a five-year period, with 4,152 referrals in 2023/24 compared to 2,072 referrals in 2018/19. When members questioned the reason for the increase, this was attributed to improved promotion of the service, improved accessibility, and building good working relationships with Nomination and Letting Teams, Thirteen and care services, and other local health and social care teams.
- 4.24. The OT team triage processing time can take 3-5 days, while the initial contact and background established within 7 days. OT Assessments mainly take place in a person's home, although they can also take place in residential care settings, day care settings and the local prison too. The assessment and planning will consider:
- [The person – their own perception of their needs, personal circumstances, strengths and challenges etc.](#)
 - [The environment – barriers to participation in day to day living at home](#)
 - [Analysis of/conversation around how people carry out activities](#)
- 4.25. As part of this the OT will have discussions with the person about suitable alternative housing e.g., if they would be willing to move to flat or bungalow if they are unable to access the upstairs of their current property. The OT service works with Tees Valley Home Finder and RP's to ensure those on the housing register are applying for housing that meet their needs. Foundations has highlighted this proactive housing options approach during the OT assessment as a positive. However, and as stated above, it must be noted that there is a high demand for affordable/social rented housing and difficulty in finding suitable properties to meet a persons need which means moving is not always a viable option.
- 4.26. The OT will then co-produce and agree solutions with the person to maximise their independence in day-to-day living at home. A referral to apply for a DFG is just one of the measures that the OT may put in place, and they can also refer to SBC's in-house Home Improvement Agency which provides lower-cost essential adaptations, as well as other services. Referrals for a DFG will

depend on a person's long term needs e.g., for the next five years, and adaptations recommended must be reasonable and practical. Any short-term measures that can be put in place are done so immediately to support while the person is waiting to apply for a DFG to look at more suitable adaptations. A person may be reassessed should their needs change. In such cases they are able to apply again for a DFG. In most cases the OT Assessment and planning stage can take 7 – 10 days.

- 4.27. The total lead time for this process is up to 28 days depending on priority. Once the referral is made the person joins the waiting list to apply for a DFG, and this ensures a fair and transparent process is adhered to. They will receive written confirmation of the referral. The OT can decide if the application should be "fast tracked" to the top of the list due to their need. When the person reaches the top of the waiting list an appointment is made with them to commence the formal grant process.
- 4.28. Comparisons from before and after the person come to the OT service are made to measure the impact of OT interventions/provisions on personalised outcomes, including functional independence measure e.g. measuring people's level of independence and safety following provisions of adaptations, and quality of life measures. The long-term Implications of non-provision, or delays in provision, of adaptations recommended by the OT, which may or may not include a DFG application, can include:
- a need for re-housing
 - admission to long term residential care which can cost approximately £766 - £834 per week
 - a delay in hospital discharge until adaptations are in place if the person is currently in hospital, which can cost approximately £250-£483 per day
 - if remaining in their current accommodation then poorer health outcomes and quality of life

Application and Approval Stage (stage 2 – 3)

- 4.29. The DFG Team offers an Agency Service to all applicants to help them in compiling their application, funded through a 'top slicing' of 15% from the allocated budget per year. Foundations highlighted this as a positive, not only as SBC offer assistance to those applying, ensuring the best possible outcome for the application, but by top slicing the funding for the agency service the applicant benefits from being able to access the full DFG they are granted.
- 4.30. As noted in paragraph 3.3, the application requires a detailed schedule of works and two estimates from different contractors, unless the case is fast-tracked, or part of the single contractual arrangement used by the SBC agency service. There are four contractors that have a Minor Works Contract with SBC and jobs are put through the ProContract platform. The four contractors are then invited to bid for the works.
- 4.31. Application forms and draft plans are completed by a technical officer (TO) during a home visit. On return to the office, the TO produces a CAD drawing and provides a schedule of works to accompany the drawing, these are then sent to the referring OT for review with a two week deadline for approval. Members were informed that very few schedules of works are amended and believe

it may be worth exploring whether all cases require OT sign-off, so to prevent unnecessary delays, as suggested by Foundations. Preliminary or ancillary services and charges can be included in the application. They must also include proof of future occupation which can be a Land Registry certificate/copy of the deeds that the DFG team will obtain (for owner-occupiers), written consent from a landlord (for a rented property), or occupiers certificate (for houseboats and park homes).

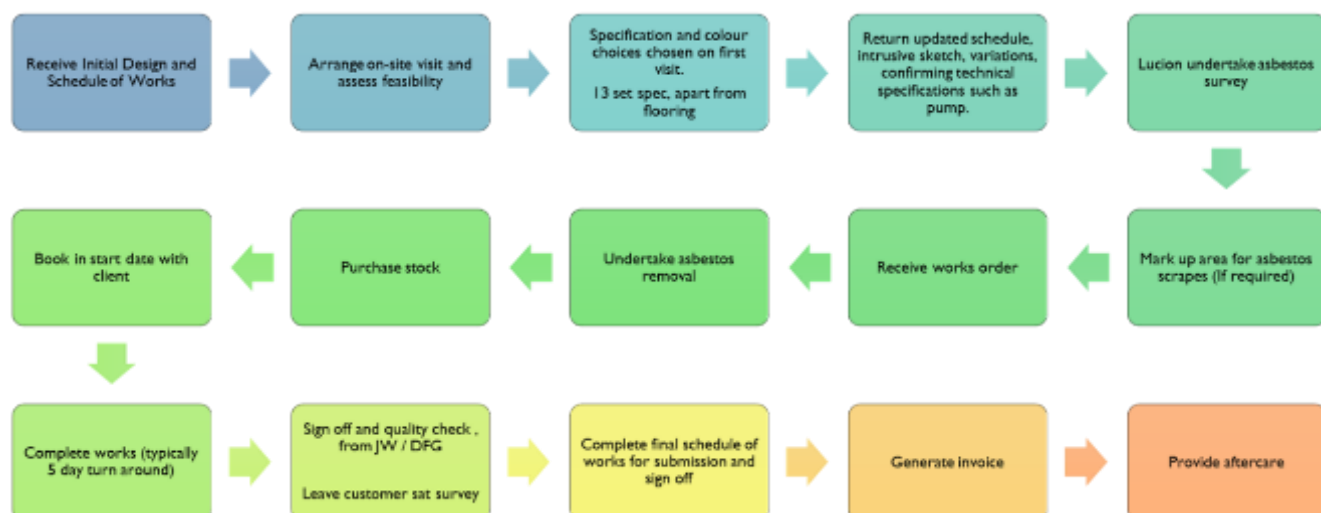
- 4.32. The application is approved or refused within 6 months of applying. If approved, and as noted in in paragraph 4.12, SBC will specify in writing details of any specialist equipment and/or portable accommodation that may be recovered when no longer needed so that it can be reused, along with information on any warranties and that equipment becomes their responsibility once these have expired. They will be informed of the conditions of the grant and any land charges that apply.
- 4.33. If an application is refused, reasons for refusal will be provided.
- 4.34. This stage uses paper forms which are sent and returned via post, and the Committee felt the process could be improved and simplified by using electronic forms to prevent any delays. Papers versions of the forms will still need to be available for those who are unable to access online forms.

Carrying out works (stage 4)

- 4.35. The DFG Officer provides initial design and schedule of works to the relevant building contractor. Building Services carry out Level Entry Shower which make up the majority of the DFG adaptations works, as well as wash/dry toilets and door widening, if capacity allows. Other adaptations are carried out via four builders that have a Minor Works Contract with SBC, and tender for the works via the ProContract system. As noted above, applicants can organise for their own contractor to carry out the work but must provide two quotes with the application and work can not start until the DFG has been approved.
- 4.36. All work carried out for DFG is inspected by the Technical Officers whether this is carried out by Building Services, one of the four SBC contractors, or the clients own contractor.

Building Services

- 4.37. The Building Services DFG Team compromises of a Building Supervisor, Tennant Liaison Officer (TLO), 3 Multiskilled Operatives and 1 apprentice. Members were informed that as the operatives are multi skilled, with a base trade in plumbing but also trained in several other trades, operatives from other teams are unable to cover for staff sickness/holiday.
- 4.38. If using Building Services, their process is fully explained to the applicant prior to starting works by TLO / Supervisor, as outlined in the diagram below, and they are given contact details for the TLO on the first site visit.



- 4.39. If they are carrying out intrusive work on a home built prior to 1999 the team will check for asbestos. This will delay the start date for works, as they will need to wait for the contractor to carry out the asbestos report. Scrapes are carried out as part of the pre-work checking where wiring and pipes are needed etc., ready for the asbestos report. Thirteen carry out their own asbestos reports for adaptations to their properties but Building Services do not experience any issues with additional waiting time for these surveys.
- 4.40. The client can choose colour and specification of equipment that meet their needs. They are also given plenty of notice for when the works will start so that they can arrange alternative washing facilities or accommodation while the work is being carried out. No works are carried out for a three week period over Christmas, as they found that clients do not want them in their homes over the Christmas period and this give staff the opportunity for a break.
- 4.41. Challenges for the team can occur when the client has different expectations and requirements to what the team has been given to carry out. There may also be changes in requirements due to the wait they have had since starting the process, and the design/specification may not be appropriate. The team has experienced frustration from the client when they first visit due to the time it has taken and the team can become a mediator between issues.
- 4.42. When they start the work, operatives will explain to the client what will happen each day along with what will happen the next day. The applicant will also receive information regarding any additional contractors that are needed etc. along with a demonstration of the equipment/adaptation during a handover once the works have been completed. The team also provide necessary documentation to the DFG team via email and have quarterly meetings with the team.
- 4.43. The Building Services team install three wet rooms a week, which take five days each. The time frames for carrying out works from first receiving the proposed works pack until submitting pricing back to the DFG officer and receiving authorisation to proceed are outlined below:

Aspect	Days Between (Av)
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Referral and 1 st onsite visit	12
Onsite visit and return schedule	5
Asbestos Report	26
Asbestos scrapes and removal	6.5
Approval to proceed and start date	136
Total	185.5

- 4.44. There is a 1 year warranty on all works carried out and clients are provided with key contact details if they experience future issues, which is the TLO. However, all three services (OT, DFG and Building Service) can receive aftercare requests which can be escalated to Building Services.
- 4.45. There has been a 16.5% increase in the total number of completed adaptations by Building Services from 2021 – 2024. Overall cost has increased by 26.16% from 2021- 2024 and average cost has increase by 8.2% from 2021 to 2024. There have been more wet rooms installed with less staff, and between April - September 2024 the team had carried out 63 wet rooms.
- 4.46. If a client is fast tracked by the OT team, there is a 28-day turnaround for carrying out the work, dependent on the information the team have available e.g. specification, asbestos reports etc. Fast tracking clients impacts on the wider team, services and clients, delaying the current waiting list and putting pressure on stock storage/acquisition. There were 14 fast tracks between April - September 2024
- 4.47. Building Services carry out contractor reviews every three months to ensure a good service is provided, and it was noted that the flooring contractor had recently changed due to performance. The team engage regularly with suppliers, building good professional relationships which help to secure discounted rates and thereby drive down costs. The team also bulk purchase commonly used items which reduces prices and ensures that stock is always available from the stores. However, some items are bought in smaller numbers rather than in bulk as the need for them is dependent on the client requirements. There is storage for 4 weeks’ worth of stock.

Overall Process

- 4.48. Foundations highlighted that the strategic alignment of SBC’s delivery and processes with the Better Care Fund and Council Strategic plan is a strength of SBC’s delivery. It ensures there is a

strong vision of what the DFG's are achieving and keeping people safe and healthy while living independently in their own home.

2023/24 Annual Report

4.49. The 2023/24 DFG end of Year Annual report stated that the Council spent £2,252,770.05 on 400 adaptations for 376 people. The budget was overspent by £116,918.25 and had to be met from the overall Housing & Fairer Stockton On Tees budget (end of year position). This was a decrease in the numbers for the previous year, 2022/23, with 47 less adaptations delivered for 63 less people. Spend in 2022/2023 was £2,311,172.84, £58,402.19 more than 23/24.

Financial Breakdown

4.50. The adaptations delivered in 2023/24 are broken down into DFG's and Equipment Loans (which are recycled when no longer needed)

	Completions	Cost	% of Budget
DFG	161	£1,041,188.58	46%
Stairlift Loans	141	£548,246.12	24%
Ramp Loans	74	£229,085.39	10%
Total Cost of Adaptations in 2023/2024	376	£1,818,520.09	81%
Team Costs & Abortive Cost		£226,000.00	10%
Other costs incurred within year*		£208,249.96	9%
TOTAL SPEND 2023/2024		£2,252,770.05	100%
Over Spend		£116,918.25	

*part payments on adaptations

DFG Information

4.51. 185 Adaptations were installed to 161 homes, with 69% of adaptations being level entry showers (127 installed), 5% being wash/dry toilets (10), 4% being stairlifts (8), and extension (7). The remainder of adaptations included ramps, door entry systems, and garden safety measures amongst other adaptations. Fast-tracks, urgent cases that are dealt with immediately, made up 28 of the 161.

DFG Breakdown	Amount	%
Level Entry Showers	127	69%
Stairlifts	8	4%
Ramps	5	3%
Wash / Dry Toilets	10	5%
Extension	7	4%
Through Floor Lift	5	3%
Fencing	4	2%
Dropped Kerb	4	2%
Door Entry System	4	2%
Door Widening	3	2%
Shower Over Bath	2	1%
Step Lift	1	1%

Shower Pod	1	1%
Bath	1	1%
Safe Space/Wall Padding	1	1%
Garden Safety	1	1%
Safety Gates	1	1%
	185	100%

- 4.52. DFG's were granted to 86 people (53% of the 161 people) who owned their own home, 57 people (35%) who lived in an RP property and 18 people (11%) who lived in a privately rented property.
- 4.53. The average time taken for DFG's to be processed from first enquiry to completion of works was 137 Days an increase of 14 days from 22/23.
- 4.54. The average DFG grant was £6,911.33, an increase of £334.94 from 22/23. Six residents received the maximum grant available of £30,000, and all six were approved for extensions. 18 residents had to contribute towards their DFG ranging from £281.81 to £41,626.80 and of these, three residents accessed SBC's loan schemes to enable them to receive their DFG adaptation.
- 4.55. The number of people on the waiting list at the end of March 2024 was 181 people, the person at the top joined the list in June 2023 (9 months).

Equipment Loan Scheme

- 4.56. Stair Lift Loans: Of the 141 stairlifts loaned, 108 were to those that own their own home (77%), 19 to those living in a privately rented home (13%), and 14 to those living in a RP home (10%). The average time taken for Stair Lift Loans to be processed from first enquiry to completion of works was 44 days, 11 days less than 22/23. The average Stair Lift Loan was £3,888.27, £773.10 more than 22/23's average.
- 4.57. Ramp Loans: Of the 74 ramps loaned, 56 were to those that own their own home (76%), 12 to those living in a privately rented home (16%), and 6 to those living in a RP home (8%). The average time taken for Ramp Loans to be processed from first enquiry to completion of works was 53 days, 3 days more than 22/23. The average Ramp Loan was £3,095.75 which is £260.72 more than 22/23.
- 4.58. The Committee were informed that in December 2024 the number of people on the waiting list to apply for a DFG after being assessed and referred by the OT service had increased to 322, and the overall timescale from referral to installation date was two years. There were 42 people who had received approval and were waiting for installation of a level entry shower and 13 waiting for other works following approval. The reasons given for the increase included funding issues as well as a rising number of people who live in RP rented properties applying. In addition to the growing waiting list, the average amount of grant approved is also rising, and this is attributed to inflation and rising building costs.
- 4.59. In January 2025 the MHCLG announced a further £86m additional funding for 2024/25, and SBC's share of this will be £270,856, taking the total government funding for 2024/25 to £2,239,284.

Confirmation on 2025/26 allocation for DFG was also received in January 2025, and this was also £2,239,284. This would allow 49 extra Level Entry Showers, Ramps or Stairlifts, the most required adaptations, to take place and reduce the waiting list by approximately 100. However, Members noted that it is not possible to predict how many new referrals will be received.

Registered Housing Providers

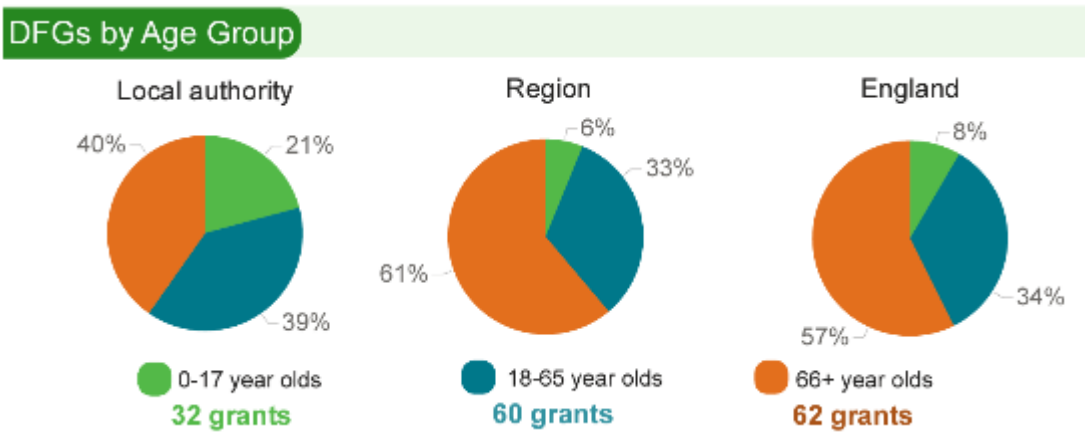
4.60. There has been an increase in applications from RP tenants for a DFG and as noted above, 35% of DFG's were granted to people living in RP properties in 2023/24. Approximately 50% of the properties the Building Services team carried out works on are RP properties and the number of Building Services clients living in RP homes has increased from 8 in 2020/2021 to 45 in April - September 2024, as indicated in the table below:

2020 – 2021	8
2021 – 2022	31
2022 – 2023	35
2023 – 2024	47
2024 – to date (September)	45

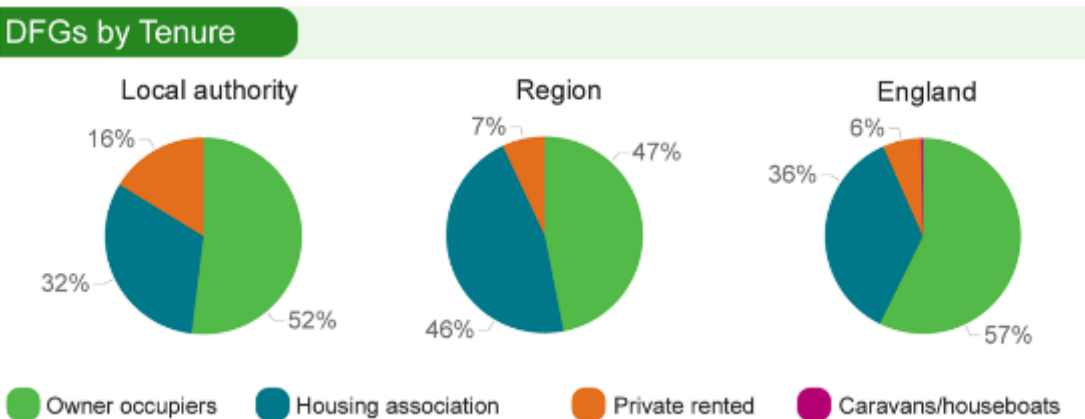
- 4.61. While there is no legal obligation for all RP's to fund all adaptations to their properties for their tenants, and their tenants have the same rights to access DFG funding as those living in private rented or owner occupied homes, there is an expectation that they will do so within their own resources.
- 4.62. As noted in paragraph 4.17, Thirteen are the exception as they have a requirement within their 2010 stock transfer agreement to commit £1m per year for adaptations to properties for 30 years. During the review officers from the Senior Management Team met with Thirteen to discuss their role in carrying out adaptations on their properties and the outcome of these discussions were fed back to the Committee by the Assistant Director of Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. Thirteen had stated that they have spent more than the £1m commitment for the past four years on adaptations and asked to provide a list of adaptations made to properties, which properties these had been made to, and the number of tenants on their waiting list. This information is still outstanding. It was also found that Thirteen are not carrying out all adaptations, such as installing level entry showers to single storey properties but will grant permission for these adaptations to be carried out to the property via a DFG.
- 4.63. The increase of RP tenants applying for a DFG rather than receiving adaptations from their landlord adds pressure to SBC's waiting list and resources. In addition, as DFG's are means tested there may be a possibility that the application is refused, whereas if they apply direct to their landlord the adaptation may be approved. Officers are explaining this at the application stage.
- 4.64. The Committee were assured that currently properties are being advertised on Tees Valley Home Finder with adaptations, and these are only being removed from RP properties if they are no longer viable. The reasons for adaptations no longer being viable include coming to the end of their lifespan or no longer being under warranty. A database of all RP properties in SBC that have adaptations already fitted, either by SBC or RP's does not currently exist, however would be useful.

Regional and National Comparison

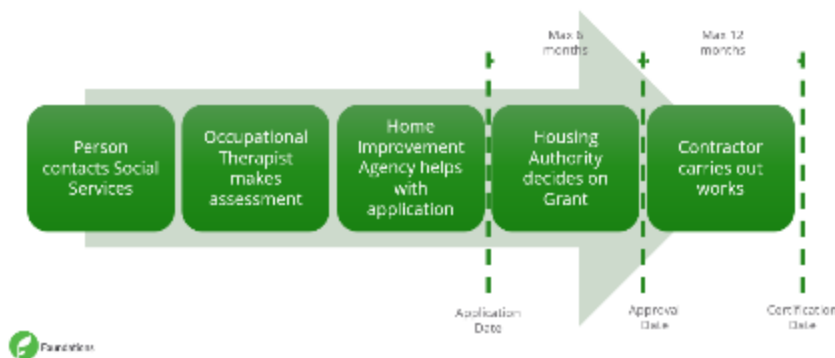
- 4.65. As part of Foundations work they collate the delta data on performance. The data is collected annually via a survey completed by local authorities. The information is not audited and therefore the Committee were advised that caution is needed when comparing regional and national data.
- 4.66. When compared against the regional and England averages, SBC delivered significantly more DFG's for 0-17 year old age group, 21% of all DFG's, compared to 6% regionally and 8% nationally). In addition, SBC delivered fewer DFG's to the 66+ age group (40%) than the regional (61%) and national average (57%). The Committee were informed that, due to their circumstances, those in younger age groups may have had more of an urgent need for adaptations in their home. This can, however, have an impact on the needs of older people which may change while waiting for adaptations and subsequently require more social care interventions.



- 4.67. There was an unusual trend for SBC with regards to tenure in that SBC had a higher than average Private Landlord uptake (16%). There was no significant difference both regionally and nationally for other tenures i.e. owner occupiers and registered providers. It is suggested by Foundations that private rented landlords may be reluctant to apply for adaptations to their properties due to negative perceptions however SBC are bucking this trend.



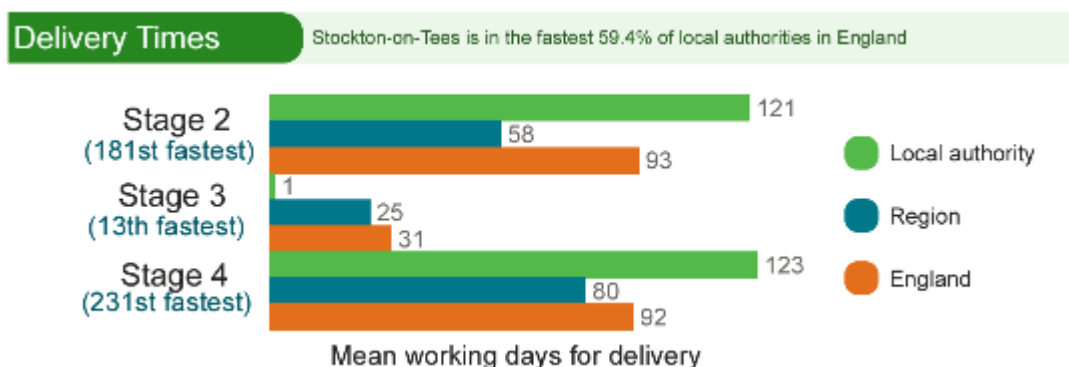
- 4.68. Statutory maximum timescales apply to stages three and four of a DFG only, with 6 month maximum timescale from applying for the DFG to approval (stage 3) and 12 months maximum from approval date to certification of the works (stage 4).



4.69. While there are no statutory timescales for the first stages of a DFG, from the person contacting the LA for adaptations receiving an OT assessment and then moving to the application stage, there was best practice guidance on these. The target timescales for each stage are outlined below.

Type	Target timescales (working days)				
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total
Urgent & Simple	5	25	5	20	55
Non-urgent & Simple	20	50	20	40	130
Urgent & Complex	20	45	5	60	130
Non-urgent & Complex	35	55	20	80	180

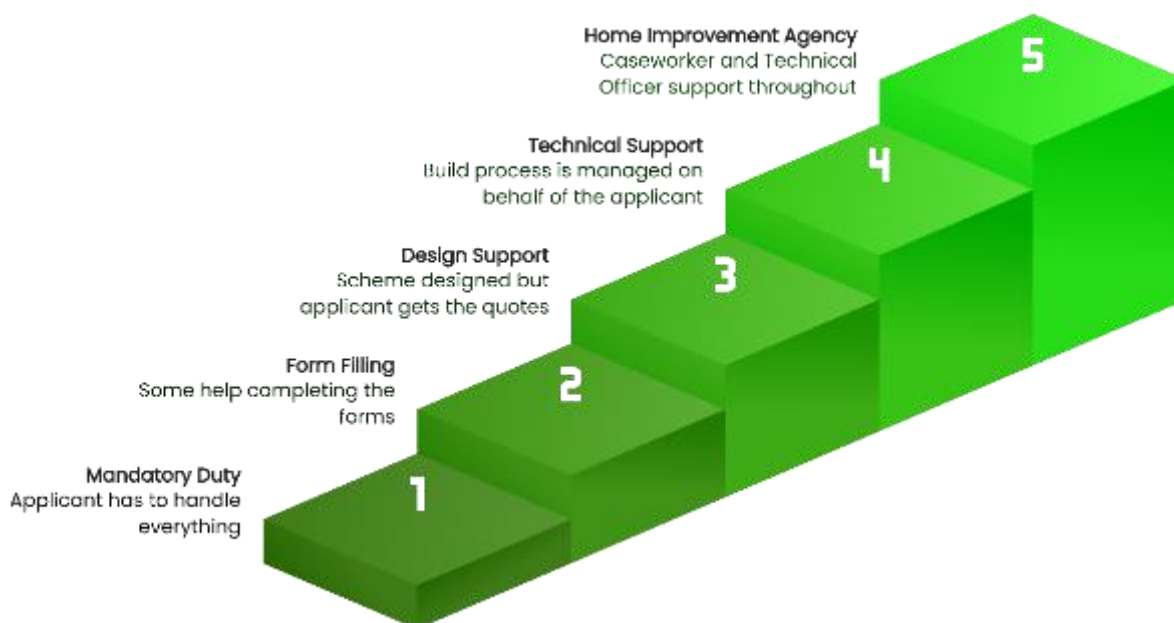
4.70. Delta Data on delivery times showed SBC was average nationally for the overall process, and faster than most local authorities at the approval stage, Stage 3 – checking the application is correct and issuing an approval letter. However, SBC took longer both regionally and nationally at stage 2, compiling the application, and stage 4 carrying out the works. Stage 2 timescales had been affected by staffing issues and discussions required to manage expectations, while the reasons for delays at stage 4 was accredited to there being several DFG’s for extensions which took longer to complete. The Committee questioned whether stock and procurement processes could be a reason for this, and informed that SBC had recently gone through a procurement process for suppliers of adaptations and therefore should not impact.



4.71. The current delivery time is approximately 150 days.

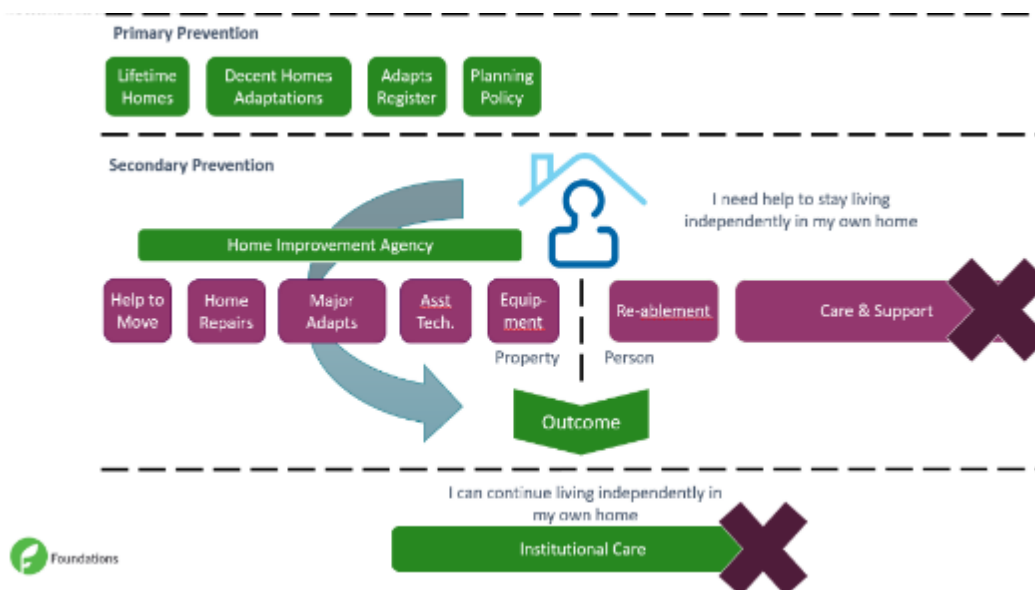
Delivery model - Maturity of DFG Delivery

4.72. Foundations outlined the different levels of delivery models that LA's implement, with level one only carrying out the mandatory duty and the applicant having to handle everything themselves. Other models include assisting to fill in forms only, designing the scheme but applicant gets quotes, and managing the build process. The different delivery models are outlined in the diagram below.



4.73. SBC's delivery of DFG's is assessed by Foundation as level 4/5, as caseworker and technical officer support is provided throughout the process. The Committee heard how providing this level of support benefits the applicants, and they are less likely to drop out of their application before receiving the adaptations they need. As shown on the diagram, Foundation name the top level model of delivering DFG's a Home Improvement Agency (HIA), and they considered the service provided by SBC's HIA, carrying out adaptations which cost up to £1,000 and sits separately to the DFG team, a handy person service. For SBC's model to be considered a level 5 the DFG and HIA would need to come together and offer further assistance to residents such as moving, repairs, and assistant technology/equipment.

4.74. Foundations explained how they believed that implementing HIA's at a secondary prevention level were the best way to assist individuals to continue living independently in their own home, and this is illustrated in the diagram below.



4.75. Middlesbrough were highlighted by Foundations as an example of best practice. Their DFG service is part of their Staying Put Agency which also includes preventative measures for social isolation, improving digital inclusion, a handy person service, and a hoarding service, amongst other things. Like SBC, Middlesbrough top slice the fee for the service. They spend approximately half the DFG budget on major adaptations and the top up fund comes from other council funding, not DFG funding. They do not have a loans system in place to cover Top Up payments like SBC does. Another difference to their service is that they use contractors for all adaptations, unlike SBC who use Building Services to carry out Level Entry Showers, that make up the majority of the adaptations, and contractors for other works.

National trends

4.76. Foundations informed that despite increases in DFG allocation from the government since 2015, there have been several national trends that are impacting on SBC's delivery. A major impact is the increasing demand for DFG's and the Committee heard that reasons for this include: the changes in government policy focus on ensuring people can live in their own homes for longer; the impact of COVID and lockdown on older people's ability to stay active therefore their increasing frailty and need for adaptations; and the higher number of children and people with complex needs applying for DFG's.

4.77. Other national trends highlighted are the rising cost of materials, prioritisation of statutory duties over discretionary power which LA's struggle to offer due to funding constraints, and relationships with the RP's who own some of the properties that those applying for DFG's live in. In addition, the funding for Housing Revenue Accounts and Stock Transfer Agreements has not mirrored DFG allocation from the Department of Level Up, Housing and Communities.

4.78. As highlighted by the Age Concern report (paragraph 3.9) Members observed that the design of new housing should be built to meet the needs of the aging population, which would ensure they did not require as many adaptations in future. The National Planning Policy Framework promotes safe, inclusive and accessible places and encourages the planning polices for housing to make use of the Governments optional technical standards associated with this. SBC currently have a

requirement for optional standards under policy H4 of the Local Plan. This states:

To ensure the homes provide quality living environments for residents both now and in the future and to help deliver sustainable communities, from 1st April 2019 the following Optional Standard will apply, subject to consideration of site suitability, the feasibility of meeting the standards (taking into account the size, location and type of dwelling proposed) and site viability:

A. 50% of new homes to meet Building Regulation M4(2) “Category 2 – accessible and adaptable dwellings”

8% of new dwellings to meet Building Regulation M4(3) “Category 3 – Wheelchair User Dwellings”. Where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling, homes should meet building regulation M4 (3) (2) (b). When providing for wheelchair user housing, early discussion with the Council is required to obtain the most up-to-date information on specific need in the local area.”

The opportunity for SBC to review and build upon this would come through any future local plan.

Customer Feedback

4.79. Members were interested in the experiences of residents who had applied for a DFG, and therefore sought to collect feedback in several ways. This included reviewing the service’s customer satisfaction survey, asking Stockton Parent Carer Forum to carry out a survey of their members, and approaching different forums to ask their members for their experiences.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

4.80. Members were informed that the three services involved, the OT team, DFG team, and Building services, had been carrying out separate customer satisfaction surveys. However, during the course of the review the services were working together to provide a singular survey to gain feedback on the whole client experience and reduce the number of times a person accessing a DFG is asked to complete feedback. The April – September 2024 results from the joint DFG/Building Services survey were shared with the Committee.

4.81. The survey asked respondents to rate the following aspects of service on a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent:

- Standard of information & communication prior to works commencing
- Standard of communication & updates received throughout the works
- Appearance and conduct of staff
- Quality of works on completion
- Service overall

4.82. Most respondents rated all aspects as 10, with only two respondent rating slightly lower (8/9) on two aspects: information and communication prior to and throughout the works. One other respondent also rated lower (7/8/9) on all aspects. All comments received were very positive,

praising the professionalism of the workers and quality of their work. Two further comments that were received via other methods were shared with the survey results, and these were also positive noting the impact that the adaptations had on their lives.

- 4.83. The questions asked in the survey have a strong focus on the works being carried out, with only the first question focussing on the experience prior to works being carried out, and members believe that it would be useful in future to ask further questions regarding the application process and waiting period to better capture this feedback.

Stockton Parent Carer Forum

- 4.84. The Stockton Parent Carer Forum was approached to give their views on the service as several of their members have experience of applying for DFG's. They carried out a survey of their members and presented the results to the Committee. There were 19 responses to the survey, and a case study was also circulated.

- 4.85. Questions in the survey were:

- Have you applied for a grant and was the application successful?
- If successful how was your experience from starting the application to the finished works?
- If you were unsuccessful, were you given advice and information as to other options?
- Are you happy with the work that was completed?
- What could be done to improve the DFG based on your personal experience?

- 4.86. Of those that responded, six people were unsuccessful in their application, and one person stated that were not given the opportunity to apply. Only one stated that they received advice and information on other options, and that was "to avoid making same mistakes in future".

- 4.87. For those who had received a DFG, the responses were mixed, with some finding the process easy and being happy with the works, while others found it stressful, too long a process, and were unhappy with the work carried out. One respondent called the process "horrific", while another respondent felt dismissed, and one respondent stated they were made to feel bad for asking for help. The suggestions put forward for improving the service were listening to those applying to find out what they need, make the process quicker, give more options for families, and use better builders.

- 4.88. The case study came from a respondent who had received a DFG five years previously for a new garden fence and was happy with the process as well as the work that was carried out. It enabled the family to have full use of their outdoor space, without fear of injury, and gave them more privacy.

- 4.89. Overall, the survey highlighted that both consistency and communication need to be addressed in the delivery of DFG's.

Further Engagement

4.90. The Committee approached Teesside & District Society for the Blind to ask if any of their members in the Borough had experience of applying for a DFG. They responded that one person had, and they were happy with the adaptations received. The Community Partnership members were asked to provide feedback if they have experience of applying for/receiving a DFG's, as well as if they are aware of any organisations other than the Council giving advice/information on adaptations. Unfortunately, no feedback was received. Similarly, the Committee approached the Eastern Raven Trust to gain an insight of the DFG process from their perspective, but no response was received.

Stockton & District Advice & Information Service

4.91. Contact was made with Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) to learn whether residents are contacting their services for advice on adaptations. They informed that their data recording system has the category Housing Q AIC (Adaptations for Disabled People), and the number of people requesting this type of advice is relatively low: 22 people requesting advice under this category in 2021/22, 7 in 2022/23 and 10 in 2023/24. This information is broken down by housing type with Owner Occupier property being the biggest in 2021/22 (9) and 2022/23 (3), while Housing Association property being the biggest in 2023/24 (5).

4.92. SDAIS advise their clients of their ability to request an Occupational Therapy Assessment to address any aids and adaptations that they may require. They also advise on the eligibility criteria and an overview of the process involved. This will include advice on DFG's where applicable. Clients are referred to the OT team and the majority are happy to progress this themselves by contacting First Contact. For those who require additional support with the referral SDAIS will either provide that support or refer them onto an advocacy service such as People First. SDAIS were not aware of issues or problems with DFG.

Foundations Workshop

4.93. Foundations carried out a one day workshop with SBC's DFG team and their findings were reported back to the Committee. They highlighted the teams commitment to supporting residents, their strong collaboration with social care, and an effective fast-track process for stairlifts and ramps. The areas identified for improvement focus on enhancing communication with applicants during the waiting period and ensuring detailed information is provided for complex cases, as well as streamlining processes to improve efficiency, as outlined below.

4.94. Before Application and on First Contact

- There is a need to ensure that potential applicants receive comprehensive information, particularly regarding the test of resources and the overall process, to support informed decision-making on applying. This includes updating and expanding information on SBC website to give residents a clearer understanding of the DFG and process involved, help set expectations and provide essential details upfront.

- Consider increasing outreach efforts to make more residents aware of DFGs, thereby engaging those who may benefit from adaptations but are currently unaware of the available support. This suggestion for wider advertisement of DFG's may increase the number of people on the waiting list.

4.95. Assessment

- At the assessment stage, consistent information regarding necessary and appropriate adaptations and realistic waiting times should be provided. Transparency about these factors will help manage customer expectations and reduce confusion or frustration later in the process.
- The OT and DFG team should consider reviewing together the referral forms used by the occupational therapy team to ensure it captures all relevant information to be able to decide on eligible works.
- A tracking system to keep applicants informed of their position on the waiting list and check if their circumstances have changed during the wait should be introduced, helping to manage expectations and mitigate delays.

4.96. Compile the Application

- An enhanced offer be provided to support residents with the application process. This could include more hands-on guidance and assistance to ensure that applications are completed accurately and efficiently. This was already in place.
- To streamline the process, applicants should be allowed to upload required documents electronically. This would help reduce paperwork delays and allow for quicker processing.
- To speed up the process, it was suggested that the means test for adaptations below £5,000 be removed. While this would simplify the approval process for smaller projects and ensure quicker delivery of adaptations, it would not decrease the waiting list.
- As noted in paragraph 4.31 the scheme of works developed by the technical officer is sent for approval to the occupational therapist. It was suggested, to streamline the process, to review with the occupational therapy team whether all cases need to be signed off, particularly for straightforward adaptations that are unlikely to be changed.
- Tasks such as financial assessments and asbestos checks could be re-evaluated to ensure the technical officer's time is used more effectively, given their significant workload.
- The requirement for three quotes rather than two required by legislation could be reconsidered to reduce delays, which currently add up to a month to the process.

4.97. Approval

- Applicants should be informed of the waiting time after grant approval for installation of adaptations upfront to avoid any misunderstanding and a follow-up call should be made to explain the next steps in the process. This would ensure that the applicant is fully informed and comfortable with the timeline and expectations.

4.98. Carrying Out Works

- Consider introducing a client liaison officer who can keep applicants informed about the start dates of their works and any changes to the schedule. This role would help maintain clear communication throughout the installation process. This role was in place for when Building Services carry out level entry showers, however, would be the contractor for other works.

4.99. Overall, the challenges to the team at the time of the workshop due to staff retirement, sickness and recruitment issues were recognised. Foundations noted that this limits the volume of work that can be processed and suggested increasing capacity would improve service efficiency and reduce delays. Members were informed that staffing levels were increasing with the appointments of an experienced DFG Manager, an apprentice, and further recruitment of technical officers.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. DFG's helps some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer, preventing pressures on other council and health services and supporting hospital discharge. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide this grant aid for eligible households for installing a range of adaptations. The review has therefore focused on how SBC delivers this crucial service, to ensure it is done so in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs.
- 5.2. The £30k maximum amount of a DFG and means test system is set by the government and has not changed since 2008. The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper in 2021 had indicated consultations were needed on these and during the review a government review on the maximum limit was announced. SBC officers have met with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to take part in the review.
- 5.3. When comparing data both regionally and nationally, Members felt reassured that SBC has been faster than most local authorities at checking the application is correct and issuing an approval letter (stage 3). However, reduced staffing levels and managing expectations of clients has led to SBC taking longer to compile the application (stage 2, which has no statutory time limit). Members were confident that staff levels were being addressed, which will help to improve the time taken for this. SBC also took longer at stage 4 – carrying out the works, which has a statutory timeframe of being completed within 12 months of approval. This had been affected by the number of extensions that had been carried out in the year data was reported, which take longer to complete.
- 5.4. The Committee notes that the waiting list for those wishing to apply for a DFG is growing, standing at 322 in December 2024 with a two-year timeframe from referral to installation of the adaptation. This has been attributed to several factors including a greater awareness of the OT service and lockdowns/COVID's impact on older residents remaining active. It is further noted that although fast track applications, which automatically go to the top of the waiting list, ensures that those who have critical or time-sensitive needs receive timely adaptations, it has an impact on the remaining people on the waiting list.
- 5.5. The Committee is particularly concerned that the waiting lists includes a rising number of people who live in Registered Provider (RP) rented properties. While there is no legal obligation for RP's to carry out adaptations to properties for their tenants, there is an expectation that they will do so within their own resources. Thirteen are the exception to this as they have a commitment within the Stock Transfer Agreement, to spend £1m per year for 30 years. Details confirming the properties Thirteen have adapted to meet their commitment and type of adaptations carried out

have been requested. In addition, the Committee found that not only are applications for a DFG from RP tenants increasing but there is an absence of information on RP properties i.e. a register of adapted properties which details the number of properties and type of adaptations completed, which would assist when a resident is looking to move.

- 5.6. The Committee believes that communication with DFG applicants is an area that needs to be addressed. This includes the information available on SBC website which has been highlighted as an area to be developed by the national body, communication with applicants during the waiting periods to ensure the processes are fully understood and manage expectations, and information for those who do not qualify for a DFG such as next steps and advice on where to go for further assistance which appeared to be missing. In addition, customer feedback is important, and this has historically been collected via the different services involved, OT's, Building and Housing Services. Members heard how this is now being streamlined and are keen that it captures feedback on all stages of the process.
- 5.7. Members believed that further exploration is required of the streamlining of processes suggested by Foundations, to fully understand the impact and whether they would reduce delays and allow for quicker processing. These suggestions were:
- [referral forms used by Occupational Therapy Team be reviewed to ensure it captures all relevant information to enable 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 in the procurement process, which can add up to a month of delay](#)
- 5.8. Improvement to processes and communication will not, however, address the growing budget pressure as demand continues to outstrip funding. Previously the shortfall in funding has been met from other budgets. While bespoke meetings have been put in place to monitor the DFG budget and ensure there is no further overspend, the implications of this will be that the waiting list will continue to grow. The Committee welcomes the MHCLG announcement in January 2025 for extra funding in both 2024/25 and 2025/26, which will allow approximately 49 extra Level Entry Showers, Ramps or Stairlifts, the most required adaptations, to take place, however, it is not possible to predict how many new referrals will be received.
- 5.9. The Council's in-house Home Improvement Agency provides lower-level adaptations and support, and the Committee believes that this could potentially be utilised to further provide early help and prevention to ease budgetary pressure for DFG. Further consideration and investigation of this should be taken.
- 5.10. The Committee acknowledges that the long-term implications of delays in provision of a DFG adaptations could have negative impact on an individual's quality of life and health outcomes, along with a need for re-housing or admission to long term residential care. The recommendations include exploring ways to manage expectations and improve processes, however without finding alternative means to provide adaptations or further funding there will be a limit on the number of DFG's that SBC is able to approve each year. Therefore, closer working with Registered Providers and reviewing the impact of the January 2025 announcement of extra funding for DFG's on our Borough is also being suggested within the recommendations.

Recommendations

5.11. The Committee recommends that:

1. In relation to the recent announcement from the 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 recommendations.
2. Officers explore the potential to engage with Teesside University to 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.
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, lobby government to make the relevant Building Regulations mandatory.
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.
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.
6. Communication to residents and applicants be improved by:
 - 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 Housing Investment & Migration Support team is in place.
 - a singular customer feedback survey covering all processes and services involved in a DFG is developed, to ensure this is only collected once.
7. Officers explore streamlining processes to understand their impact and benefit of implementing:
 - 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
- 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
- 9. Use of flat pack extensions is explored in more detail to see if they would provide a viable and cost-effective option.
- 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

Appendix 1

Foundations – Suggested DFG Policy Improvements

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
<p>1. Working well with Private Registered Providers (RP) and housing associations (HA). Have a database of adapted properties in LA area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RP tenants refer themselves through First Contact for an Occupational Therapist assessment. - Once Assessed referral comes to DFG Team - DFG Team carry out Means Test - DFG assess whether adaptation can be provided and produce plans and Schedules of Works - Permission from Landlord is sought once adaptation plans are agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SBC would have to meet with all RP's operating within our area to promote the use of landlord applications. - SBC would have to meet with all RP's operating within our area to promote the use of landlord applications. - Try to encourage them to manage the delivery of adaptations in their own stock. - Start collating a database of all properties that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlords would be able to access the DFG funding and carry out works on behalf of their tenants with their own contractors. - Would reduce the DFG waiting list if RP's dealt with their own adaptations - Having a database of adapted properties would hopefully reduce the number of adaptations that 'get ripped out' upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no legal obligation for RP's to submit landlord applications - No legal obligation on RPs to provide information on their adapted properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They would have one point of contact i.e. their landlord, thus creating a streamline customer journey for them. - Landlord applications bypass the means test which means all who applied would qualify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would not reduce the overall impact on the DFG budget - It would reduce the number of in-depth cases Technical staff would have to deal with (producing drawings and schedule of works etc) they would check to ensure works were carried out in line with plans etc - It would reduce the DFG waiting list because RP/HA tenants would not be sat waiting for

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asbestos removal if required is carried out by some RP's themselves - All other works are carried out by SBC Contractors, work in progress visits are carried out by the DFG Team, some RP's also attend these. - DFG Team sign off works and advise RP's that adaptation is complete. 	<p>are adapted in the Borough.</p>	<p>change of tenancy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better partnership working 			<p>SBC to deal with them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RP's/HA's could charge a fee for dealing with their own
<p>2. Highly debilitating conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nothing specific currently in SBC DFG Policy with regards to this. - Any applicants with these conditions would go through the above process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out research on how many cases we have had dealt with in the past to see what impact this may have - Report to Cabinet to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents with these conditions would be able to carry on working longer - Residents would receive adaptations earlier which would enable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would have to assess the impact this may have on the waiting list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They would be able to continue to work as long as possible preventing them having to rely on benefits before they qualify for a DFG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would have to monitor how many cases we receive to know the exact impact on the Service/DFG Budget

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
	<p>detail above, they would be means tested, which would take into account all there income, which if working would generally mean they would not qualify for a DFG</p>	<p>agree to a Policy change to incorporate a fast-track process with no means testing for DFG works up to £5,000 or for larger scale works ignore the earnings of the person with MND in the means test when works are assessed as being necessary and appropriate.</p>	<p>them to live longer and have a better quality of life</p>			
<p>3. Working with private landlords</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlords are able to apply under our current policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update Information including website to promote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenant would not be means tested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlords may be reluctant to apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlord applications bypass the means test which means all who applied would qualify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nil - we already allow Landlord Application
<p>4. Dementia Grants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently offered via DFG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often less than £1,000 – something for HIA to consider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Interventions could help a resident live longer in their own home and prevent slips and falls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently offered and HIA budget is under pressure just like DFG

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
5. Local land charges for DFGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land Charges placed on all DFG's over £10,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities are encouraged not to place local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would may only affect a few residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No money recycled back into DFG budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would not be able to sell their property without paying back charge. - Depending on type of adaptation this could increase the value of their home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimal effect on service
6. Public information and self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DFG is accessed through Adults Service page on SBC website - DFG Policy not on website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put policy on website - Have a link on SBC website to adaptmyhome.com so people can check if they maybe eligible before applying to First Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information fully available to all residents - Residents can check if they qualify before applying to prevent disappointment and waiting for a decision 12 months down the line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May generate more interest in DFG's and increase waiting list more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fully informed of SBC Policy - Able to check if they qualify before applying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimal - Would maybe reduce waiting list if clients self-assess
7. Flat pack extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore these in more detail to see if they would be viable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would save money - Would quicken up Extension process - Residents would receive adaptations quicker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not known whether these would be available locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents would receive adaptations quicker - Potentially if cost less than traditional extension then they would not have to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would need to explore in more detail and check with Planning and Building Regs - Could help spread budget further - Could reduce waiting list if

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
					contribute at all or as much	quicker to install
8. Assistive technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Currently included in DFG Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Cabinet to change policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The world moves on at a pace with technology so residents could get most up to date equipment to help them live longer in their own homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some older residents not up to speed with Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More available to help them remain in their homes for longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of Equipment unknown so cannot comment on whether this would affect the budget
9. Children living in joint residency arrangements (previously 'custody')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not currently included in DFG, only provide to main home i.e. the parent who gets Child Benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to cabinet to change policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child can live with each parent equally. Child would have equally adapted homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could impact on the budget available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can co-parent more easily when separated Child would be able to live equally with both parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could effect the overall DFG budget
10. Successive applications and nil grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently already in SBC Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

AGE UK Report

What Age UK would like to see:

Part M4, Category 2 of the building regulations made mandatory for all new build

Glossary of Terms

DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
IBCF	Improved Better Care Fund
HGRA	Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HIMS	Housing Investment & Migration Support
LA	Local Authority
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
OT	Occupational Therapist
RP	Registered Provider
SBC	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
SDAIS	Stockton & District Advice & Information Service
TLO	Tenant Liaison Officer
TO	Technical Officer

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

13 MARCH 2025

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 – 20 December 2024
SSP – 27 November 2024
TSAB – 9 October 2024

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



TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday, 20 December 2024 at 10.00am

Meeting held at 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 Brenda Harrison	Leader Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Stephen Harker	Leader, Darlington Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Leader, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Bob Cook	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Officers	
Julie Gilhespie	Group Chief Executive, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Gary Macdonald	Group Director of Finance and Resources, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Emma Simson	Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Tom Bryant	Director of Infrastructure, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Connor Malone	Governance and Scrutiny Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Erik Scollay	Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Council
Denise McGuckin	Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council
Richard Horniman	Director of Regeneration, Middlesbrough Council
John Sampson	Chief Executive, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Mike Greene	Chief Executive, Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Apologies	
Helen Kemp	Business Solutions Director, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Ian Williams	Chief Executive, Darlington Borough Council

TVCA 27/24- 25	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were noted as above.</p>
TVCA 28/24- 25	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Mayor Houchen declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters arising from his membership of STDC Board, HDC Board, MDC Board and Freeport Board.</p> <p>Councillor Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters arising from his membership of STDC Board and Freeport Board.</p> <p>Councillor Harrison declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters arising from her membership of HDC Board.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters arising from his membership of MDC Board.</p>
TVCA 29/24- 25	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.</p>
TVCA 30/24- 25	<p>MAYORS UPDATE</p> <p>The Chair introduced a report which provided a general update on the key activities of the Mayor and Combined Authority since the last Cabinet meeting.</p> <p>Mayor Houchen reported on the White Paper on devolution and the potential changes to Mayoral powers.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke discussed the population targets, and the potential combination of the constituent authorities plans.</p>

	<p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the update.</p>
<p>TVCA 31/24- 25</p>	<p>QUARTER 2 FINANCE POSITION AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE</p> <p>The Group Director of Finance and Resources submitted a report which detailed the quarter two finance position and medium-term financial plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I) Noted the quarter 2 outturn position for 2024/25; and II) Approved the revised Medium-Term Financial Plan.
<p>TVCA 32/24- 25</p>	<p>TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2024-25</p> <p>Cabinet received a report from the Group Director of Finance and Resources which detailed the mid-year performance against the treasury management and prudential indications set in the Treasury Management Strategy.</p> <p>The Group Director of Finance and Resources reported that the Bank of England had held rates, with a query raised on the Authority’s prediction on rates. The percentage confirmed was 5% currently and this was kept under review as part of the Authority’s Treasury Management Strategy.</p> <p>Members queried the proposed additional powers considered in the English Devolution Paper, and were keen to understand how the Authority planned to manage additional responsibility. The Group Director of Finance and Resources noted that it was something to assess as more information came forward, and there was a requirement to model the scenarios associated with any powers, however the Authority was unable to do so with the current information available.</p> <p>Members sought to understand the purpose of Table 5, under paragraph 41. The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that the table provided the value limits on the loans the Authority provided to the listed groups. The Authority was able to lend money to its subsidiaries, constituent Local Authorities as part of its investments to support delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan and stimulate local economic growth.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the contents of the report.</p>

<p>TVCA 33/24- 25</p>	<p>INVESTMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT</p> <p>The Group Director of Finance and Resources submitted a report which provided an update on the Investment Plan Performance.</p> <p>Members queried arrangements for job safeguarding and job projections. The Group Director of Finance and Resources informed members that information was provided at a regional level and was based on national performance datasets. In terms of safeguarding, there were definitions on the requirements based on the Green Book.</p> <p>Members noted a desire to be provided with additional information on business statistics and ratios of investment returned. With constituent authority breakdowns to better understand which investments had performed better overall.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the contents of the report.</p>
<p>TVCA 34/24- 25</p>	<p>ADOPTION OF INVESTMENT PLAN, BUDGET 2025-26 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN</p> <p>The Group Director of Finance and Resources submitted a report which detailed the adoption of investment plan, budget 2025-26, and medium-term financial plan.</p> <p>The Group Director of Finance and Resources informed Members of the proposed consultation route following approval, noting that the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee for finance and resources was meeting later in the day to review the proposed budget and report back.</p> <p>There was some concern about the consultation period and the reach / accessibility for residents. The Group Director of Finance and Resources informed Members that the consultation was to be published on the Authority’s website with details on how to provide feedback. Communications on social media was to be undertaken to enhance the level of reach.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Reconfirmed the high-level financial allocations for the investment plan 2024-29; and ii) Approved the draft budget for 2025-26 for the purposes of consultation.

<p>TVCA 35/24- 25</p>	<p>MIDDLESBROUGH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION UPDATE</p> <p>Cabinet was provided with an update on the activities of Middlesbrough Development Corporation since its establishment in 2023.</p> <p>The Group Chief Executive informed members that following the Tees Valley Review, Cabinet was to receive updates on the work of the Development Corporations twice a year with the MTFPs to be provided at March Cabinet.</p> <p>It was noted that whilst the Authority awaited the response from the Secretary of State in relation to the Tees Valley Review, that asset transfer had been paused.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the contents of the report.</p>
<p>TVCA 36/24- 25</p>	<p>UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE</p> <p>Cabinet was provided with an update on the Tees Valley UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Julie Gilhespie informed members that the allocation for UKSPF for the 2025/26 year was greater than predicted as the expectation was the funding was to be reduced.</p> <p>Members welcomed the additional funding and noted the importance to maximise and ensure a timely spend. There was a query about the requirement to allocate before March 2025 as it was considered a tight timeframe. The Group Chief Executive informed members that it was a complicated process, with requirements to spend rather than allocate. The funding was allocated for a single year period which was a challenge.</p> <p>Clarification was sought about what would happen if businesses dropped out and the potential return of funding if not spent. Members were informed that it would likely need to go through another procurement exercise for the suppliers and consider reallocation of funds to ensure spend.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the contents of the report.</p>
<p>TVCA 37/24- 25</p>	<p>TRANSPORT PROGRAMME UPDATE</p> <p>The Director of Infrastructure submitted a report which presented an update on the Transport Programme. The Director of Infrastructure informed members that the paper had been received by Transport</p>

	<p>Committee in advance of Cabinet to ensure an appropriate level of oversight.</p> <p>Members queried whether Transport Committee had been consulted on the BSIP proposals. The Director of Infrastructure informed members that they had been, however, additional consultation was to occur to ensure all views were expressed.</p> <p>Members were keen to consider free travel for care leavers as an option. The Director of Infrastructure informed members that this was an area to be considered alongside all other proposals, however, nothing had been predetermined, and decisions were to be agreed by Cabinet.</p> <p>There was a query about concessionary fares and the difficulty faced by residents with service availability. Officers noted that concessionary fares reimbursement was set by Government and based on a formula, the Authority was liaising with the constituent authorities on this.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the contents of the report.</p>
<p>TVCA 38/24- 25</p>	<p>LOCAL GROWTH PLAN</p> <p>The Group Chief Executive submitted a report which provided detail on the Local Growth Plan. The report detailed the background and provided recommendation to approve the proposed high level Tees Valley priorities.</p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Approved the proposed high-level Tees Valley Local Growth Plan priorities; and ii) Noted that the Local Growth Plan itself will be reported back to Cabinet for approval.
<p>TVCA 39/24- 25</p>	<p>ZETLAND CAR PARK</p> <p>Cabinet was provided with a report from the Group Chief Executive detailing the proposed sale of the Zetland Car Park in Middlesbrough.</p> <p>Members were informed that the purchase of the site at that point in time was to protect future plans. It was purchased under delegated decision as there was concern the asset was to be demolished.</p>

	<p>The proposed sale price hasn't been agreed, but the Authority could not sell it for less than best consideration in line with red book valuation. It would not receive less than it bought it for.</p> <p>RESOLVED - That Cabinet;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Noted the exercise of the delegation; and ii. Approved the sale of the Zetland Car Park in Middlesbrough with the delegation to Statutory Officers.
<p>TVCA 40/24- 25</p>	<p>GOVERNANCE AND APPOINTMENTS</p> <p><i>(Appendix 1 to this report was not for publication by virtue of paragraph 1 (information relating to any individual) and paragraph 2 (information which may identify an individual) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.), Appendix 4 was not for publication by virtue of paragraph 1 (information relating to any individual) and paragraph 2 (information which may identify an individual) and Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.) and Appendix 5 to this report was not for publication by virtue of paragraph 1 (information relating to any individual) and paragraph 2 (information which may identify an individual) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.)</i></p> <p>The Group Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer submitted a report which detailed the appointments required for approval by the Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet.</p> <p>To discuss appendix four, the Chair noted a requirement to go into private session.</p> <p><i>(Mayor Ben Houchen moved to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting during the consideration of appendix four. This was seconded by Councillor Brenda Harrison and approved by Cabinet. TVCA Officers were excluded from the private session with the exception of the Monitoring Officer and the Governance and Scrutiny Officer.</i></p> <p><i>Members of the press and public were then invited back into the meeting room following the consideration of appendix four.)</i></p> <p>RESOLVED – That Cabinet;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Ratified the appointment of the individual named in appendix one;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Approved the appointment of Councillor Carl Quartermain to the position of Vice-Chair of the Transport Committee; iii) Approved the appointment of Councillor Mandy Porter as Chair, and, Councillor Nicky Walker as Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee. iv) Approved the appointment of Councillor Melanie Morley to the HDC Audit and Governance Committee; v) Approved the appointment of Councillor Nicky Walker to the MDC Audit and Governance Committee; vi) Approved the proposal from Freeport Board to appoint substitutes and the required constitutional changes. vii) Approved the appointment of Sarah Brackenborough to Director of Operations, as detailed in appendix five. viii) Approved the appointment of Beverley Bearne to Chief Operating Officer of Middlesbrough / Hartlepool DC, as detailed in appendix five.
TVCA 41/24- 25	<p>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</p> <p>The Chair informed members that 50 public questions had been received and these were to be answered in line with the public participation protocol.</p>
TVCA 42/24- 25	<p>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Friday, 31 January 2025 at 10.00am</p>

SAFER STOCKTON PARTNERSHIP

A meeting of Safer Stockton Partnership was held on Wednesday 27 November 2024.

Present: Cllr Norma Stephenson (Chair), Cllr Steven Nelson, Cllr Pauline Bealle, Sarah Bowman-Abouna, Sarah Wilson, Vanessa Houghley, Mandy Mackinnon, Sharon Cooney, Marc Stephenson, Gary Knight, Angela Corner, Lucy Owens, Dawn Tyerman, Leanne Maloney-Kelly, Anna Waddington, Adam Bateman, Kellie Wrigley

Officers: John Devine.

Also in attendance:

Apologies: John Wrintmore, Lucy Owens, Richard Brown, Eddie Huntington, Matt Storey.

SSP/3624 Evacuation Procedure

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

SSP/3724 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held 2nd October 2024 were agreed as a true record.

SSP/3824 Operation Autumnus Update (Mischief and Bonfire period)

The Operation Autumnus Update was presented to members, Officers noted that experience from previous years had enabled them to put affective planning in place.

Officers were able to use data collected from previous years operations for targeted patrol plans. Staff rotations were also altered to accommodate the need for extra staff to be on hand during the period. There had been a slight increase in anti-social behaviour and damage, but Officers were keen to note that the incidents were handled effectively. However there had been no significant incidents that Officers needed to bring to members attention.

During the Bonfire period drones had been used to identify waste gathering points, which allowed Officers to remove them. Joint patrols had also been undertaken between the Fire Brigade, Police and Council Officers.

Members noted the report.

SSP/3924 Serious Youth Violence Strategy

As had previously been agreed a Serious Youth Violence Strategy were being completed. Officers gave members an update on the strategies progress, self-

assessment tools had been sent out to a number of local authorities with the result being used to shape the strategy.

The Strategy plan had also been presented to the Youth Justice Board for their feedback to be incorporated. Once that work had been completed the strategy would be brought back to members in the new year.

Officers also spoke to members of the struggles that are associated with the Serious Youth Violence Strategy, there was a lack of acknowledgement of serious youth violence nationally and a lack of comprehensive guidance from central government targeting the underling causes of the serious youth violence.

Members agreed to note the report.

SSP/4024 Problem Solving Plans

Officers introduced themselves to Members as they and gave some more details on what their role would be. Officers would be working in conjunction with the Clear Hold Build strategy which was used in Project Harmony.

This had taken the form of attending community engagement meetings being held in the Ropner Ward, feedback from the community would then be taken into account on how best to help supplement Operation Harmony.

Some areas which had already been discussed and had begun to focused on was around graffiti, although it was a low level nuisance any work done to rectify graffiti had the benefit of making communities perceptions of crime to diminish.

Another issue that Officers would work on was Street Drinking which the public had raised as an issue. Officers were looking at evidence-based approaches from other local authorities and would seek to use existing legislation to provide solutions.

Members agreed to note the report.

SSP/4124 Recorded Crime and Disorder Report

Representatives of Cleveland Police presented the Recorded Crime & Disorder Report to partners. Officers highlighted several sections of the report to partners they were as follows:

- 13.3% reduction in recorded crimes compared to the same period of the pervious years.
- 7.3% reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour compared to the previous 12 months.
- Reductions in reported Vehicle Crime, although Officers did state that due to the nature of vehicle crime spikes in activity do occur.
- Increased numbers of drug trafficking offences, more work had been undertaken to tackle organised crime and Officers indicated that this was the reason for the increase.
- Overall there had been a reduction of 7.9% in October 2024 versus October 2023.

Members of the Partnership were pleased by the overall reduction, however asked if Officers would be able to provide clarity on if the overall reduction was being driven by

Operation Harmony or if it was a Borough wide reduction. Officers confirmed that they would be able to provide that break down to the Partnership.

Members Agreed to note the report.

SSP/4224 Project Harmony Update

Work had continued through Project Harmony with Officers keen to highlight the reductions in crime being almost double that of other areas within the borough. But Officers were aware that the public's perception of crime did not reflect that.

Partners had undertaken joint patrols around the ward to in part increase the public's awareness of Officer presence. Monthly drop in sessions for the community had continued with all partners. The drop in sessions would also include community groups in the future.

Members agreed to note the update.

SSP/4324 Prevent (CT) Update

Officers informed members of the Partnership that refresh training was available to Councillors and School Governors, with a new updated training package being included.

Members agreed to note the update.

SSP/4424 Any Other Business

Members were informed that the Data Information and Sharing of Intelligence scheme had moved forward. Officers were looking at other areas of the Country for best practices to incorporate going forward.

Members agreed to note the update.

SSP/4524 iQuanta Report

Members were presented with a restricted report that provided an overview on crime comparisons against other similar CSPs utilising iQuanta.

This report was a restricted document due to the statistical information only made available as an intelligence tool for partnerships until released by the Home Office.

AGREED that the report be noted.

SSP/4624 DARD Consideration

Due to the connection to an ongoing Police investigation this Agenda Item was restricted.

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Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 9th October 2024**

Time: **9.30am – 12.00pm**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

Minutes

Attendees

Name	Role	Representing
Janet Alderton	Assistant Director of Nursing & Patient Safety	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Cllr Pauline Beall	Lead Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Jane Bell	Administration Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Clare Beresford		Catalyst
Lee Brown	Area Manager	Cleveland Fire Brigade
Lindsay Britton-Robertson	Assistant Director of Safeguarding	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Elaine Godwin	Admin Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Adrian Green	Independent Chair	Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
Jill Harrison	Director of Adult and Community Based Services	Hartlepool Borough Council
Neil Harrison	Head of Safeguarding & Specialist Services	Hartlepool Borough Council
Gina Hurwood	SAR Co-Ordinator	TSAB Business Unit
Molly Larkin	Deputy Director of Nursing Safeguarding	NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB
Amy Mahoney	Business Manager	TSAB Business Unit
Sam Midgley	Project Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Caroline McGlade	Detective Chief Superintendent	Cleveland Police
Ruth Musicka	Head of Access and Safeguarding	Middlesbrough Borough Council
Carolyn Nice	Director of Adults and Health	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Bianca Porter	Service Manager – Social Work and Safeguarding	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Elise Pout	Temporary Assistant Chief Executive	Office of Police & Crime Commissioner
John Rafferty	Compliance Business Partner - Safeguarding	Thirteen Group
Karen Rees	Independent Reviewer	402K Consultancy Limited
Carol Sansum	Admin Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Nikki Smith	Associate Director of Safeguarding	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Angela Storm	Data Analysis and Performance Monitoring Officer	TSAB Business Unit
Gary Watson	Business Manager	South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership
Kellie Woodley	North East Director	People First

Apologies

Name	Role	Representing
Richard Baker	Assistant Chief Constable	Cleveland Police
Angela Connor	Assistant Director Adult Social Care/PSW	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Lead Member	Middlesbrough Borough Council

Rachelle Kipling	Temporary Assistant Chief Executive	Office of Police & Crime Commissioner
Alyson Longstaff	Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader	Durham Tees Valley Department for Work and Pensions
Kay Nicolson	CEO	A Way Out
Lucy Owens****	Chief Executive	Catalyst Stockton
Chris Piercy	Director of Nursing	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Ann Powell	Head of Stockton & Hartlepool PDU	National Probation Service
Patrick Rice	Corporate Director of Adults and Communities	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Erik Scollay	Director of Adult Social Care	Middlesbrough Borough Council
Jeanette Scott	Director of Nursing	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Absent		
Name	Role	Representing
Cllr Gary Allen	Lead Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
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
Kati Cowley	Safer Custody and Equalities Hub Manager	HMP Holme House Prison
Elsbeth Devanney	Group Director of Nursing & Quality	TEWV
Natasha Douglas	Healthwatch Manager	Healthwatch Stockton
Mike Fleet	Principal Lecturer (Programmes) Department of Nursing & Midwifery	Teesside University
Mark Davis***	Chief Executive	Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Dean Johansen-Berg	Engagement & Events Officer	Healthwatch South Tees
Dr Hilary Lloyd	Chief Nurse	South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
John Lovatt	Assistant Director	Hartlepool Borough Council
Michelle Monty	Inspector	CQC Hartlepool
Beverley Murphy	Chief Nurse	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Peter Neal	CEO	Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency
Cara Nimmo	Assistant Director for Adult Care Operations	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Julian Penton****	Development Officer	Hartlepower
Iain Richardson	Head of Safer Prisons & Equality	HMP Holme House Prison
Karen Sheard	Deputy Chief Nurse	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Leanne Stockton	Business Manager	Hartlepool & Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership
Katie Tucker	Inspector	CQC Hartlepool
Stephen Thomas	Development Officer	Healthwatch Hartlepool

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

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

Agenda Item 1	Introductions and Apologies	Presenter: Chair
Independent Chair, Adrian Green (AG), welcomed members to the October meeting. A number of apologies have been received and will be noted on the minutes.		

Agenda Item 2	Minutes from the meeting held on 11th September	Presenter: Chair
<p>The minutes from the meeting that took place on 11th September were agreed as a true and accurate record.</p> <p>Outstanding actions from the meeting were reviewed:</p> <p><i>1.1: Reminder to Helen Wilson (HW) regarding Safe Lives recommendations</i> - A reminder has been sent but a response has not yet been received. Caroline McGlade (CM) will follow this up. During the course of the meeting an update was provided to advise that the report had been emailed to the Business Unit on 12th September but does not appear to have been received. CM will ask HW to resend.</p> <p><i>2.2: Categorisation of Financial Abuse to be raised at the National Network</i> – Still pending</p> <p><i>4.1: Terminology used in reference to status to be check with SBC legal team</i> – Amy Mahoney (AM) has forwarded the request to the Legal Team but has not yet received a response. Carolyn Nice (CN) will follow this up with the team.</p> <p><i>6.1: Nominations to be submitted for the SAB Managers Network Awards</i> – Members are reminded that the deadline for nominations is 18th October. Nominations can be made for both individuals or teams and is an opportunity to provide recognition of good work.</p> <p><i>7.2: Members to review the meeting schedule for 2025-26 and contact the Business Unit if there are any issues</i> – No issues have been raised in relation to the schedule.</p> <p>AG thanked Angela Storm (AS) for her prompt action to resolve the query in relation to data mapping figures for East Cleveland.</p>		

Agenda Item 3	Susan SAR	Presenter: Karen Rees
<p>Karen Rees (KR), Independent Reviewer, attended the meeting to present the Susan SAR. A copy of the Overview Report was circulated with the agenda and KR advised members that the report has followed the usual process via the Governance Group. KR provided a presentation to focus on the learning from the review. The presentation provided a summary of the case and the methodology used, identified key episodes and provided feedback on the process. The presentation also provided details of meetings with family which have taken place over the phone rather than face to face at the request of family and noted areas of effective and good practice. KR advised that the Mental Health Trust have already implemented a number of changes in response to the incident, so these have not been included within the report. Learning is focused primarily on professional curiosity and the impact on Susan when she declined help and support, and the significance of Mental Health issues. The presentation concluded with a set of recommendations that have been approved by the agencies involved. A copy of the presentation will be circulated to members with the minutes.</p> <p>AG thanked KR for the presentation and the work that has gone into producing the report.</p> <p>Jill Harrison (JH) echoed these thanks on behalf of the SAR Sub-Group and reiterated that the Governance Group have met twice and that agencies have had the opportunity for single agency sign off and legal checks prior to the final version of the report that was shared on the agenda for approval. A Learning Briefing has been produced to reflect the report and the Business Unit are looking at the best</p>		

way to present and share the learning in an accessible format.

Members approved the report and the recommendations.

JH advised that family have not yet seen the final report, which will be shared following this meeting with the support of Karen Rees and Calum Titley. The draft report has also been shared with the coroner for information. Sensitive dates have been taken into account and the aim is to publish the report in early November. The SAR Sub-Group will link with the Communications team to prepare a press statement ahead of publication.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Copy of Susan SAR presentation to be circulated with the minutes	JB	23/10/2024

Agenda Item 4	Q1 24/25 Data Dashboard	Presenter: Angela Storm
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The link to access the report was circulated with the agenda. AS reminded members to contact her if they are unable to access the report, as they do need to be given permission to view this online.

AS provided a summary of the report.

Page 1 links the data to the Board's 4 key priorities for 2022-25.

Joint Working – Provides details of the Multi-Agency Audits that have taken place during the quarter, the number of cases that have been referred to the High Risk Adults Panel (HRAP) and the percentage of individuals satisfied with their outcome. AS advised that the figure in relation to outcomes can fluctuate as a result of cases that are still open.

People – Details the numbers accessing TSAB's training provision and the number of SAR notifications considered during the quarter.

Communication – Includes figures for the Board's social media reach, website views and the percentage of individuals asked about their desired outcomes. Sam Midgley (SM) added that although the figure for social media reach has increased compared to Q1 in the previous year this no longer includes figures for Twitter, as this information is now chargeable.

Services – Links to the QAF Process. Statutory Partners are taking part in the process this year and the first submission is now at the evaluation stage. This priority also includes the number of Care Providers subject to the Responding to and Addressing Serious Concerns (RASC) Protocol.

Page 2 displays data in relation to the 4 Performance Indicators (PI). All 4 are being achieved Teeswide. As from last year, the figures are now broken down by Local Authority (LA) area. Under PI 1 Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) are rated amber. This figure is impacted by out of area placements with one provider within the Hartlepool area. Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (RCBC) are not currently achieving PIs 3 and 4. AS will re-check the data in relation to these but highlighted to members that where cases remain open due to their complexity they will not be included within these figures. A note has been added to the dashboard to highlight this.

AG queried if the PI 1 figure for HBC was creating a false narrative and was not a true reflection of the performance and risk issues within HBC. JH advised that this is an ongoing challenge within HBC as the one provider is responsible for 20% of all Safeguarding activity. Whilst the service is not commissioned by HBC they do have statutory safeguarding responsibility. Host commissioning arrangements have been put in place to work with the provider. A significant number of concerns don't progress to S42 Enquiries which highlights an issue in relation to the appropriateness of reporting. HBC is also working with ICB and other partner organisations to better support the people placed with the provider. The provider has undergone a recent CQC inspection and have improved their overall rating from Requires Improvement to Good, but it is acknowledged that it may take some time for the improvements to show within the data. Members debated if there would be a benefit in removing the data relating to this provider for the HBC figures, recognising that this could be camouflaging other trends within the data. It was agreed that the figure should remain as it is to give a true reflection of activity in HBC, but that narrative should be added to show the figure without this provider for comparison. AS will liaise with HBC to see what can be added in relation to this.

Concerns & Section 42 Enquiries

There has been a slight decrease in the number of Concerns received when compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The same categories of abuse make up the top five but appear in a different order. Own Home remains the main location of risk. The largest proportion of Concerns were received from Care Homes followed by the 'Other' category. Further work is being done to break this category down further. Section 42 Enquiries have increased slightly with the top five categories of abuse remaining the same. Again, the data can be broken down by location and source of risk for each category. AS reminded members that Physical Abuse includes Incidents Between Residents and Medication Errors which impacts the figures from Care Homes.

Lee Brown queried if there was data available regarding the quality of concerns received from Cleveland Fire Brigade. AS will be working with Cleveland Fire Brigade to include data under the Multi-Agency section of the report, but this would not record the quality of Concerns received. AS will raise this with the Operational Leads to obtain feedback.

Kerry Woodley asked if Advocacy could be recorded as a category within the data. Work is being done to review the pick lists that are used within the dashboard but this is dependent upon the categories that each LA records against; with some having longer lists than others. AS will enquire if this is recorded by the LAs.

Lindsay Britton-Robertson queried if members felt there was an issue in relation to the underreporting of Sexual Harm and Sexual Violence, as this has been identified as an issue within Children's services. AS advised that figures are not high enough for it to feature in the top five, however when checked there were 31 Section 42 Enquiries in Q1 this year which was the same figure as Q1 the previous year; adding that cases could also be recorded under the Sexual Exploitation category. Sexual Exploitation was featured as a theme for a recent Multi-Agency Audit and there was some cross over between the two categories of abuse. The Adult Sexual Exploitation strategy will be completed shortly which should help to raise awareness. TSAB commissioned a roadshow in May in conjunction with the Children's partnerships and the OPCC on Child Sexual Exploitation which also featured the impact on adults. A number of professionals from across Tees attended, so this may have an impact on the figures going forward.

Molly Larkin (ML) advised that research is taking place in the Cumbria area to look at Sexual Abuse in older adults, who aren't typically recognised as a key demographic for this type of abuse. ML is happy to discuss further within Health and feedback if members feel there is further work to do in this area.

Q1 Comparison

Data is shown for Q1 2023/24 and Q1 2024/25 and included types of abuse, Location and Source of risk. The page is interactive so can be filtered by various categories. The data does not show any significant changes when compared to the same time period the previous year.

Trends

Data has now been added for the previous year, allowing us to start monitoring trends. This section will be expanded going forward but does not highlight any issues at this stage.

Mapping

The mapping sections allow the data to be viewed geographically. AS added that the issue relating to RCBC data was due to filters not working correctly, which has now been rectified.

AG thanked AS for the work that has gone into producing the dashboard.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Members to contact Angela Storm if they are unable to access the Q1 report	All	23/10/2024
2. Liaise with HBC to enquire and agree about what narrative can be added to the PI1 data next quarter	AS	11/12/2024
3. Quality of Concerns received from Cleveland Fire Brigade to be queried with Operational Leads at the next OLSG meeting.	AS	14/11/2024
4. Enquire if Advocacy is included in the pick lists for each LA	AS	20/12/2024

Agenda Item 5	Annual Report 2023-24 Final Draft	Presenter: Sam Midgley	
<p>The draft report was shared with members for feedback at the September meeting and the final version was circulated with the agenda for approval.</p>			
<p>SM advised that the report aims to highlight the work that has taken place by the Board, it's partners and Sub-Groups in line with the Strategic Plan. A number of changes have been made from the draft version:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Data pages have been updated • Thirteen Housing have provided a partner contribution which is included on page 23 • Figures for Concerns and Section 42 Enquiries have been added on page 25 • Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Application figures are included on page 26 			
<p>There is still some DoLS data to be provided by Middlesbrough Borough Council (MBC). Once this is added SM will circulate the report again prior to publication in November.</p>			
<p>Any final comments should be provided to the Business Unit by Friday 18th October. AG added that any changes at this stage should be minor in relation to grammar or spelling. SM will share a copy with SBC's media team to prepare a statement in preparation for any press interest.</p>			
<p>The Annual Report was approved by members.</p>			
<p>AG thanked SM, AS and the wider Business Unit for creating a visually clear and impactful report.</p>			
Action Points		Action Owner	Deadline
<p>1. Final comments on the Annual Report to be provided to the Business Unit by Friday 18th October</p>		<p>All</p>	<p>18/10/2024</p>
<p>2. Updated version of the Annual Report to be circulated to members once the MBC data has been added</p>		<p>SM</p>	<p>18/10/2024</p>
<p>3. Annual Report to be shared with media team prior to publication</p>		<p>SM</p>	<p>18/10/2024</p>

Agenda Item 6	Strategic Plan Monitoring Framework – Mid Year Progress	Presenter: Angela Storm	
<p>The Strategic Plan Monitoring Framework shows progress against the Strategic Plan at the mid-year point. The objectives have been RAG rated to show their status and the criteria for the ratings are included at the start of the document. At the mid-point, all actions are on track, with no areas of concern to highlight. Against each objective, evidence of achievement has been attached where possible, highlighting the amount of work that has been completed.</p>			
<p>A copy of the Framework was circulated to members with the agenda. AS provided a summary of some of the key points:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1.1 – A number of Multi-Agency Audits have taken place and the reports presented to Board. A HRAP summary report was presented to Board in June and will continue on a regular basis. • Objective 1.2 – A considerable amount of work and interaction has taken place with Carers, the Voluntary Sector, Hartlepool Deaf Centre and Recovery Connections to produce a number of documents including guidance on Making services easier to engage in. • Objective 1.3 & 1.4 – An update on the Adult Sexual Exploitation Strategy was provided at the June TSAB meeting. The Task & Finish Group continues to meet and aims to have this work completed by the end of this year. • Objective 2.1 – Impact Assessments for managers have been introduced to provide assurance that learning from training is being used and embedded within the organisations that attend. TSAB, the OPCC and Safeguarding Children Partnerships across Tees commissioned a roadshow delivered by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. 			

- Objective 3.1 – A full review of the Annual Survey has taken place for 2024-25. This has been shared with Stockton’s Lived Experience Forum for feedback and an easy read version has been created with the help of Inclusion North.
- Objective 4.5 – This objective has been rated green. A considerable amount of work has taken place with the Voluntary Sector which has resulted in a significant increase in training registrations from the sector. SM attended an Online coffee morning with Hartlepool Healthwatch to raise awareness about Safeguarding and to highlight the TSAB training and resources that are available. This does cross over with some of the other objectives in terms of joint working with wider partners.

AG thanked everyone who has contributed to the considerable amount of work that is evidenced within the framework and noted the value of having the Business Unit as a collaborated Board.

Agenda Item 7	Sub-Group and Task & Finish Group Update	Presenter: Sub-Group Chairs
<p>Sub-Group chairs provided updates from the meetings that have taken place since the Board last met in September.</p>		
<p>Communication & Engagement Sub-Group – Neil Harrison The Sub-Group met on Monday 7th October. Discussion took place around National Safeguarding Adults Week that will take place between 18th – 22nd November. The focus for the week set by the Ann Craft Trust is around Working Together. The task and finish group coordinating the activity for the week have met twice, with a final meeting scheduled for Wednesday 16th October. Activity already planned for the week includes articles in resident magazines, a radio advert on Hits Radio, pre-recorded interviews between independent chair Adrian Green and CVFM, the launch of two BSL safeguarding videos and a number of workshops covering Professional Curiosity, Autism and Suicidality and Financial Abuse and Scams will be delivered.</p> <p>The annual survey has undergone a thorough review involving members of the Lived Experience Forum and an easy read version of the survey has been produced by Inclusion North to ensure the annual survey is accessible. The Survey will be launched this week and will be open until 29th January 2025. Feedback from the Survey will support the development of the strategic plan 2025-28.</p> <p>A gap analysis on Safeguarding Champions has been conducted and as a result targeted promotion has taken place to increase representation across certain organisations.</p> <p>The Safe Place Scheme meeting took place on 25th September. Audits have taken place over the summer, with positive feedback received. LA areas have agreed to write a report summary of audit feedback and this will be presented at the December Board meeting. Work has also been undertaken with Independent Voices and Larchfield Community to support with the redevelopment of the Safe Place Scheme training video. This will be launched during National Safeguarding Adults Week.</p> <p>Learning, Training & Development Sub-Group – Amy Mahoney on behalf of Patrick Rice The Sub-Group met on 26th September. An update was provided on the migration of the e-learning system to a new platform which took place in April. This involved a considerable amount of work on the administration side to ensure the least impact for learners. The Sub-Group Workplan includes an action to prepare to commission e-learning provision from March 2025 onwards, when the existing contract comes to an end. Work has taken place to review feedback from learners and following a meeting with the Children’s Partnerships Business Managers it has been agreed to continue with Me-Learning as the provider. AM has met with SBC’s procurement team to progress this.</p> <p>The Training Budget has been updated to include the costs relating to the Child Sexual Exploitation event and is on track to be fully spent by the end of the year. An amount has been allocated for a joint learning event on Transitions which will take place in Quarter 4 in conjunction with the Children’s Partnerships.</p> <p>The format for the annual Training Needs Analysis was agreed and this will take place towards the end of this year.</p>		

Actions from SAR's relating to LTD were reviewed and members took away a number of actions in order to provide evidence for the action plans.

The Strategic MARAC Group have developed 2 e-learning packages: an overview for all professionals and a course for Single Point of Contact and MARAC representatives. Members agreed that they were happy for these to be hosted on the TSAB training page once they have been approved and published.

AG thanked the group for the relevant work that has taken place.

Safeguarding Adults Review Sub-Group – Jill Harrison

The SAR Sub-Group continues to be very busy and are currently monitoring 14 open cases. 2 cases have recently been closed due to the outcome of No Further Action under S44.

The SAR Sub-Group has met once since the last Board meeting to discuss a new SAR Notification. This case involves criminal proceedings and a Coroner investigation. A recommendation has been made to the Independent Chair and a SAR has been agreed. JH thanked Ruth Musicka who chaired this meeting on her behalf.

JH provided an update on cases:

Gordon - Independent Reviewer, Chris Hogben, has been commissioned to lead this review. This case has similar themes to the above case, so discussions are taking place around the possibility of completing a thematic review to look at both cases together.

Sadie Leigh - A discretionary SAR is in the early stages and the Sub-Group are currently in the process of recruiting an Independent Reviewer.

Jade - The SAR is in the very early stages with Mike Ward appointed as reviewer. The Terms of Reference have been agreed, single agency authors are currently writing their reports and a practitioners' workshop will take place in November. It is unknown at the moment when the report will come to Board as the timescales need to be flexible to ensure that Jade is consulted with throughout and the SAR is carried out in her best interests.

Molly - JH reminded members that the High Risk Adults Panel Survey is open until 18th October. The survey hopes to gain views of how the new HRAP process is working in practice and any improvements to consider. JH encouraged partners to complete this if they have not done so already. Despite several attempts it has not been possible to complete one of the actions linked to the Crown Prosecution Service and how they are implementing Operation Soteria into local practice. Members agreed that all options have been exhausted and the action has been marked as incomplete.

James – One of the actions to share a good news story within TSAB's newsletter about the substance misuse social worker in Redcar has not been possible so the action has been marked as incomplete.

Bernadette – A reminder that the Bernadette survey is open until 29th November to provide additional assurance and feedback on how learning has been embedded into practice. JH encouraged members to complete.

Colin – Concerns were raised regarding the LeDER process, which has recently undergone changes, and the timescales involved. The ICB were contacted in relation to this and have provided feedback on how this will progress. Members of the Business Unit recently attended a webinar hosted by North East and North Cumbria ICB to talk about a new centralised process. The recorded webinar and PowerPoint slides can be shared with members once available.

At the September meeting an update was provided to members regarding a care provider in Hartlepool that is not commissioned by the LA but where there are safeguarding concerns. This is being overseen by a regional oversight group and therefore was not subject to local RASC procedures. CQC have

recently reinspected the home which is now rated 'good' across all domains. NHS representatives are visiting daily for some complex individuals and providing independent oversight.

Joseph – The SAR was a Sunderland case with links to Stockton. The SAR has now been published and the SAR Sub-Group have reviewed and provided feedback on the action plan on how the learning will be addressed in Tees.

JH thanked Gina Hurwood (GH) for keeping an oversight of all cases, noting that the workload will need to be taken into consideration for next year's budget.

LBR highlighted the severity of two of the recent cases that have been considered in close succession to each other, noting that the vicarious trauma element of this will need to be recognised.

National SAR Analysis – TSAB Report

A copy of the report was circulated to members with the agenda. GH provided a summary of the key points:

The report covers 652 reviews completed from 136 SABs between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2023. The North East completed 17 SARs which was the lowest compared to all other regions and 47% of those cases were TSAB SARs.

This TSAB report is separated into three sections looking at the quantitative data, the qualitative data and the conclusion and priorities from a Tees perspective. It has provided a good opportunity to reflect on the data we currently record and think about what we should record going forward; making sure it is for a clear purpose. The report was discussed at the last SAR Sub-Group meeting with a focus on the Considerations for TSAB column from page 5. The priorities set out by the national analysis are listed on the left-hand side and the Sub-Group looked at what is already ongoing to support those priorities and what could be done to further improve going forward. It is reassuring to see TSABs current approach is seen as good practice and how TSAB's current SARs and action plans pick up on themes highlighted within the analysis. If members are in agreement with the considerations for TSAB, the SAR Sub-Group and Business Unit can incorporate any actions into its ongoing work plan so that work can continue throughout the year. Discussions on how priorities are being taken forward at a regional and national level continue through the North East SAR Champions group and the National Business Managers Network.

AG advised that discussion has taken place at the National Chairs Group around CQC Board attendance. CQC had requested if they could limit attendance to one Board per region. The Group proposed an alternative suggestion that they attend the regional chairs meetings as this would then provide all Boards with the opportunity to pose any questions and to hear directly from CQC. Board members agreed with the option for CQC to attend the Regional Chairs meeting. AG added that the Business Managers have now also been invited to attend this meeting, which has provided a beneficial addition to the discussions.

Clarification is being sought in relation to timescales for SARs. Following discussion at the North East SAR Champions group a survey will be circulated via the National Business Managers Network to obtain feedback on when SABs deem the starting point to be. It was noted that the shortage of Independent Reviewers is impacting on timescales. On average it is taking 100 days to appoint a reviewer once a SAR has been agreed.

AG thanked GH for the report, noting that care should be taken around wording in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping and also to ensure that data is recorded for jointly commissioned SARs.

Operational Leads Sub-Group – Amy Mahoney

The Sub-Group have met once since the last Board meeting. The meeting included the Multi-Agency Audit by MBC on Sexual Exploitation and a themed discussion on the data. Power-Bi was discussed, and how the Leads are finding this to be a useful tool. Discussion took place around Financial Abuse

and Criminality. A number of cases were discussed and an action raised to liaise further with Cleveland Police in relation to these. It was noted that cases of Financial Abuse have increased so this may be something to explore further following the feedback from Cleveland Police.

The Unseen Care Sector Report and findings were reviewed in accordance with an action on the Sub-Group Workplan. The report shows a significant rise in cases involving abuse of workers in care settings. Although the numbers identified for Cleveland are low it was recognised that a preventative approach needs to be taken. A presentation by West Midlands SAB was shared with members and the QAF process has been strengthened to provide assurance on safe recruitment and DBS processes.

Actions from the JJ SAR in relation to out of area placements and guidance were discussed. The Sub-Group reviewed the Workplan and all actions are on track. The meeting provides the opportunity to discuss operational issues and areas of good practice. A number of examples were shared including a pilot scheme in SBC where an outreach community nurse is now working with those individuals who have health needs and find it difficult to engage with services. Details of guidance documents and training opportunities were shared with members.

AG noted that the figures for sponsored visas for migrant workers in the care sector and the health sector are high and remain something to be aware of. CN, as representative of the National Lead for Workforce, advised that a report is due out on 11th October which details the increase in international recruitment. In many instances this works well, but there have been high numbers of exploitation and challenge nationally, particularly in the South West area involving gangmasters and certain practices. JH added that although there have been no issues on Tees there have been some challenges further North. The North East ADASS have shared learning from related work to develop guidance and regional protocols.

Links to the Professional Curiosity Briefing and Professional Challenge Briefing were shared via the agenda. The topics were originally combined within one document but following the Susan SAR it was agreed to split them in order to make them more comprehensive. The Briefings have been shared with OLSG members and are now for final approval. SM advised that these are now web pages hosted on the TSAB website in order to comply with accessibility requirements. A considerable amount of work is going into ensuring that TSAB documentation meets national guidance in terms of accessibility. The appearance of documents will be slightly different to previous versions but will now allow us to record how many times the page is viewed and to see who is accessing the information.

AG queried section 5 of the Professional Challenge process around escalation to the Board. Noting that it is unclear what the expectation of the Board would be and who would feedback to the individual. SM will update the document to include this.

The Professional Curiosity Briefing was approved by members.

Members agreed that the Professional Challenge Briefing can be approved by AG on their behalf once the amendment has been made in order to avoid a delay in publication.

Multi-Agency Audit Report – Sexual Exploitation

Ruth Musicka attended the meeting to present MBC's Multi-Agency Audit Report on Sexual Exploitation. A copy of the report was circulated to members with the agenda.

Two cases were considered; One referred by a hospital trust and one referred by a commissioned housing support provider. Both cases were active to safeguarding and had also been heard in HRAP. The findings showed good evidence of close multi-agency working including referring agencies, homelessness teams, domestic abuse services and wider providers. In both cases there was appropriate information sharing and joint working, and case 2 provided a good example of professional challenge. Professional curiosity was shown by both referrers and was also evidenced in the safeguarding record. Concern Forms were factual and detailed, frequent safeguarding meetings were held and holistic approaches were taken to developing positive relationships. Following on from Operation Beech, led by Cleveland Police, the Sexual Exploitation Harm Panel was created to discuss

individuals at high risk. In the event that the risk becomes too high they would then be referred to HRAP. Areas for improvement were identified around targeted dates, ensuring that actions are measurable, providing feedback to the referrer and evidencing use of the TSAB guidance.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Professional Challenge Briefing to be amended and forwarded to AG for approval	SM	31/10/2024

Agenda Item 8	Any Other Business	Presenter: All
No further items raised for discussion.		

Next Meeting Date: **Wednesday 11th December 2024**

Time: **9.30am – 12.00pm**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

Minutes approved by Independent Chair:



Date: 23/10/2024

Appendix 1 - Attendance Matrix

The table below reflects named members of the TSAB, although deputies have been shaded.

Company	14/02/2024	13/03/2024	17/04/2024	12/06/2024	11/09/2024	09/10/2024	11/12/2024	6
Catalyst Stockton / Hartlepower	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	50%
ICB	3	1	2	1	1	1	0	100%
Cleveland Fire Brigade	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	83%
Cleveland Police	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	83%
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%
DWP	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	83%
Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Hartlepool Borough Council	1	2	1	2	2	2	0	100%
HBC Lead Member	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	50%
Healthwatch Hartlepool	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	67%
Healthwatch South Tees	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	33%
Healthwatch Stockton	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	33%
HMP Holme House Prison	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	50%
Middlesbrough Borough Council	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	83%
MBC Lead Member	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	17%
Middlesbrough VDA / Redcar & Cleveland VDA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
National Probation Service Cleveland	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	33%
North East Ambulance Service (attend for specific agenda items only)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	83%
Public Health	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	50%
Office of Police & Crime Commissioner (committed to 2 meetings per year)	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	67%
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	100%
RCBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	100%
SBC Lead Member	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	100%
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	100%
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	33%
Teesside University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	83%
Thirteen Housing	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	50%
TSAB Independent Chair	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	100%
TSAB Business Unit	7	7	7	7	7	7	0	100%

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

March 13th 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford

Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report

SUMMARY

Climate change poses a real threat to society and biodiversity. We are already seeing the increasing impacts of flooding, high winds, heat waves, significant wildfires and species collapse. If we wish to limit climate change by reducing carbon emissions, we need to take action, building on the work already achieved.

HM Government has 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, has been delayed in a number of key areas. However, it is likely that we will need to evidence further progress on CO₂, waste, water and air quality, in the coming years.

The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Net Zero Strategy incorporates priorities for homes & communities, public organisations, and nature & resources, alongside decarbonisation of industry and transport.

Stockton Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS), adopted in 2022 sets out the direction we need take and describes the actions that would contribute to the achievement of net zero. The Council has made significant progress within the resources available, achieving a steady decline in carbon emissions over a long period. However, substantial additional investment will be required in the coming years if we are to remain on target for Net Zero by 2032.

Continued concentration on measures to improve our energy efficiency and reduce emissions from our assets and fleet, are an urgent priority, alongside investing in solar energy generation and counterbalancing natural solutions.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

This report is to update Cabinet upon the actions following the adoption of the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32.

Cabinet is also invited to study the data which indicates the reduction of greenhouse gasses over a sustained period and the highlighted position of carbon emissions for the authority relative to targets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet note the annual monitoring report.

DETAIL

1. In 2022 the Council implemented the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32. The aim of the strategy is for the Council to become Net Zero by 2032, and Borough wide by 2050.
2. The strategy seeks to make a difference in three ways.
 - a. By focusing on Council operations and infrastructure
 - b. Through the delivery of strategies, policies, and work programmes, and
 - c. By influencing others.
3. The strategy has set four overarching aims for environmental sustainability and carbon reduction.

<p>Aim 1: Achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Reduce energy demand wherever possible B) Accelerate the shift towards use of sustainable energy C) Take other action to reduce harmful emissions D) Capture and store carbon in woodlands and other natural habitats 	<p>Aim 2: Protect and enhance the natural environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Protect, extend and connect areas of natural habitat and help address the decline in native species. B) Help to improve air quality by reducing harmful emissions. C) Take action to improve water quality and reduce local demand for water
<p>Aim 3: Use all resources efficiently and minimise waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Ensure sustainable purchasing and procurement of goods and services. B) Maximise the use of existing resources, minimise waste and achieve high levels of re-use and recycling. C) Minimise litter and waste crime and encourage responsible disposal of waste. 	<p>Aim 4: Adapt to the impacts of climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Ensure essential services and operations are resilient to the likely future impacts of climate change. B) Increase the preparedness and resilience of local communities and businesses. C) Plan and adapt the built and natural environment to withstand the impacts of climate change.

Fig 1: strategy objectives.

4. The examples of progress and good practice, highlighted in paragraph 19, are grouped within these aims.
5. To understand the mechanisms required to transition to a sustainable future and provide an early indication of the scale of the challenge we face, we have calculated the council's emissions using the industry standard Carbon Emissions Calculate provided by the Local Government Association.

Total emissions and change over time.

- Since carbon emissions data has been calculated in 2010, Stockton Borough Council has made significant efforts to reduce emissions and there has been an overall reduction of 75.18%, from 28,415T CO₂e to 7,052T CO₂e.

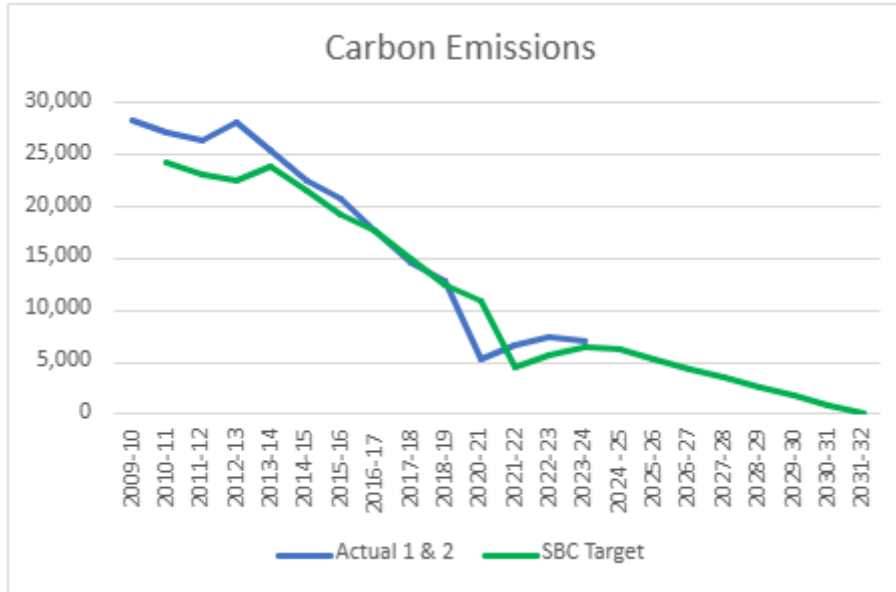


Fig 2: Carbon emissions since 2009/10

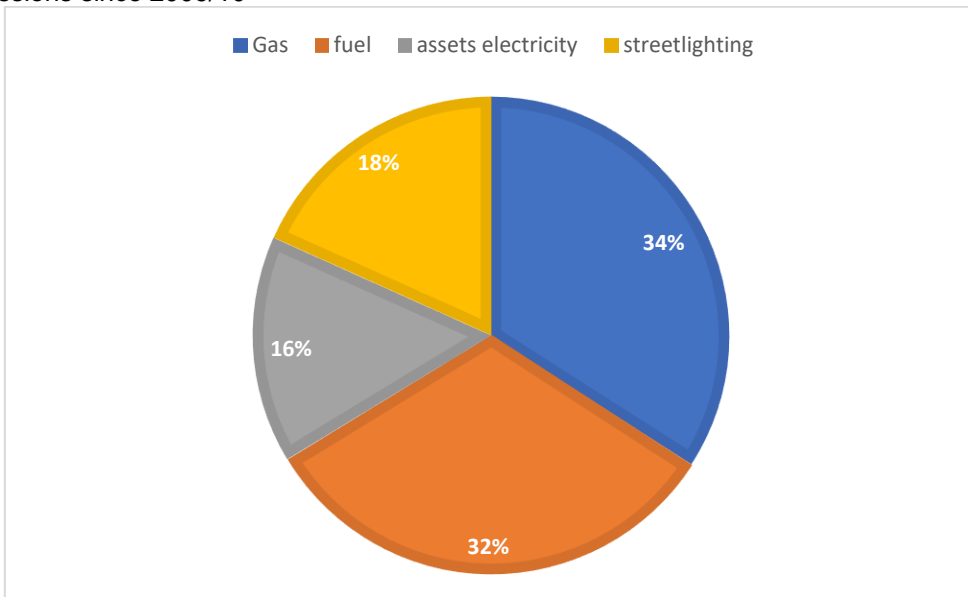


Fig 3: Breakdown of carbon sources

- The most significant reduction was demonstrated during the period of Covid-19 where cultural working changes were implemented such as working from home during lockdown and a reduction in the energy use of council assets. From 2021-22 there has been an increase in emissions, in part due to a return to pre-covid working conditions and service provision. Calculations are also affected by changes to the energy framework, from which schools were removed in 2019.
- To calculate the carbon emissions for Stockton Borough Council the following data is used.



Scope 1	Heating Gas Fleet Fuel use
Scope 2	Purchased Electricity – Building Use Purchased Electricity - Streetlighting
Scope 3	Supply chain

Fig 4: Scopes

9. In collaboration with the Procurement Team a new data tool allows us to review Scope 3 emissions for the first time. Oxygen Finance Insights provides real-time data on all procurement and calculate the carbon emissions associated with spending. It also provides an opportunity to compare carbon emissions with other Local Authorities. Although we currently do not have a legal obligation to report scope 3 emissions, we believe this will be a temporary omission and we expect legislation to change. Regardless of reporting requirements, any omission of scope 3 gives an incomplete picture.
10. In the last financial year, Oxygen Finance Insights indicates that Scope 3 emissions accounted for 47.3 Kt of carbon emissions. The top 3 carbon emitters were Elderly Residential Care, Property Construction and Waste Collection & recycling.

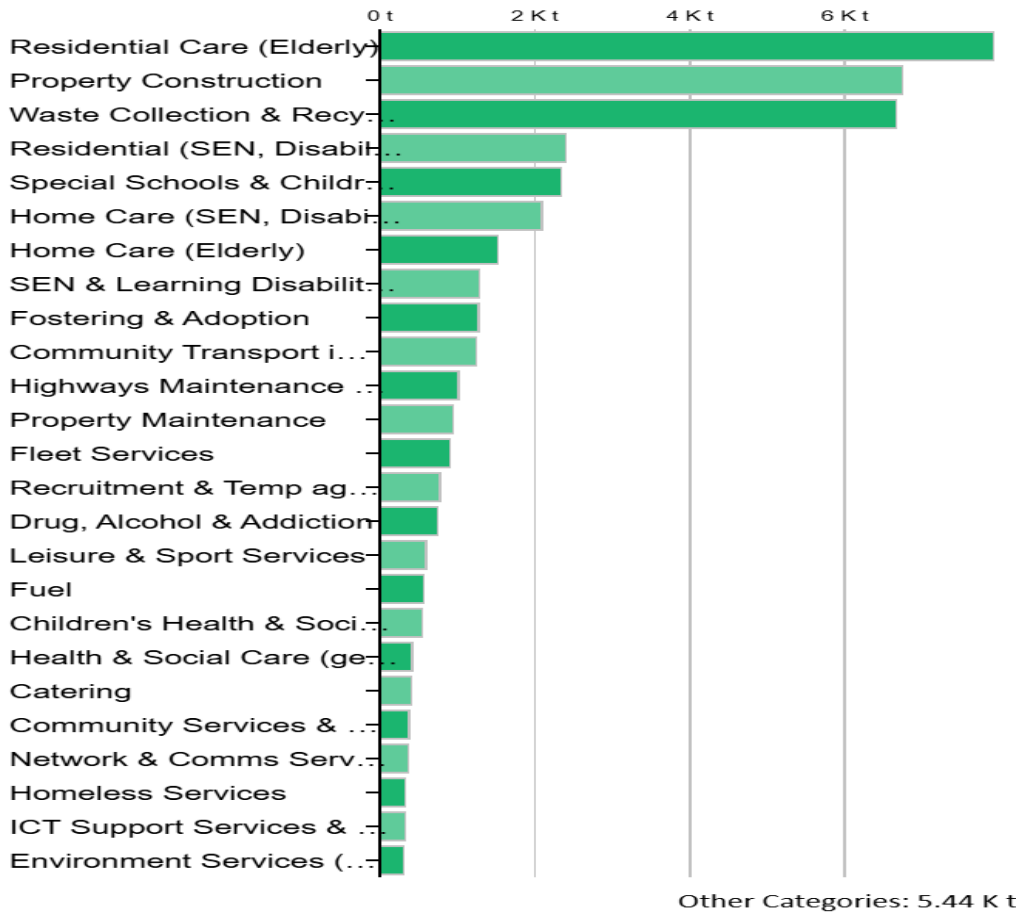


Fig 5: Scope 3 carbon emissions by service

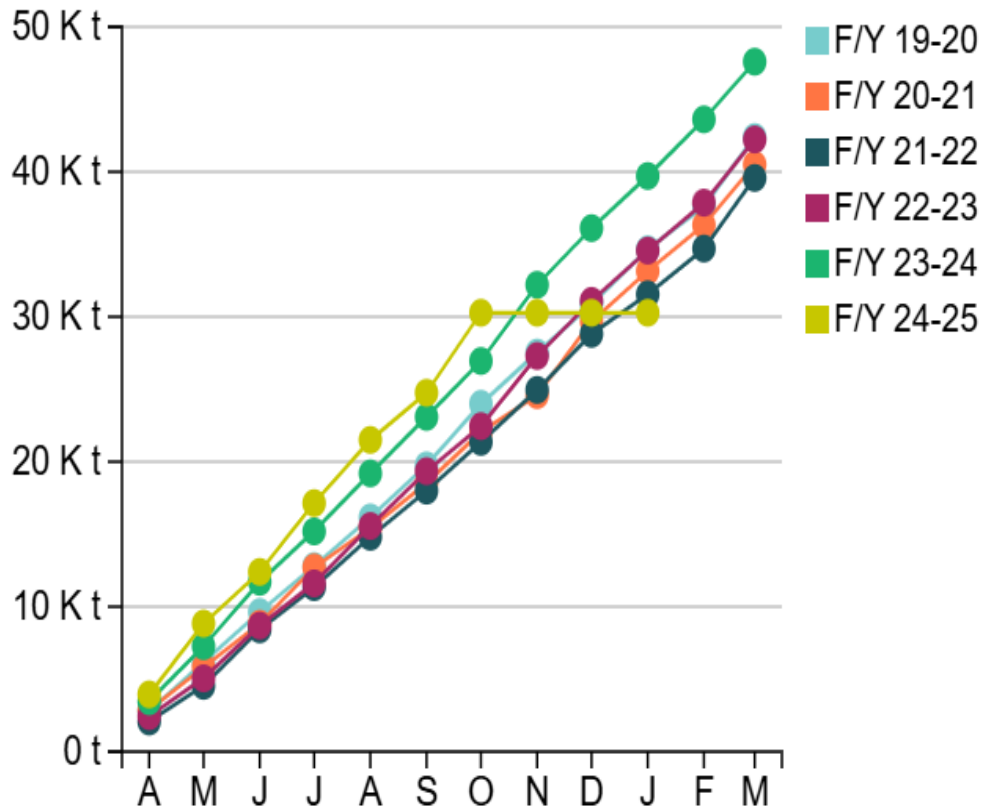


Fig 6: Scope 3 carbon emissions trajectory

11. The above data show that Scope 3 emissions for 2023-24 were the highest in the last 5 years, however currently the data for 24-25 shows the trajectory to be lower this financial year. The Scope 3 carbon emissions data is a direct result of Local Authority spending, in simple terms, this means, if Stockton Borough Council spends less then Scope 3 carbon emissions will be reduced. The apparent flat line of data in 2024/25 is unexplained, officers are investigating.
12. The tables above demonstrates that it was only in 2020/21 that the necessary rate of carbon reduction was achieved. However, this was an unprecedented year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. To reach Net Zero by 2032 from the current position, there needs to be a reduction of 881.5t per year. To visualise what 881.5T CO₂e looks like, it equates to the carbon produced by 572 average houses in one year.
13. The move to Dunedin House and subsequent decommissioning of other buildings will enable a future reduction and have a significant impact upon decarbonisation. However, without significant acknowledgement and need to reduce further, the targets from now until 2032 will only get higher each year. Any shortfall from 881.5 Tonnes will have to added to the next year. In the same way that any increase over 881.5Tonnes would have a positive impact on reduction targets for future years.

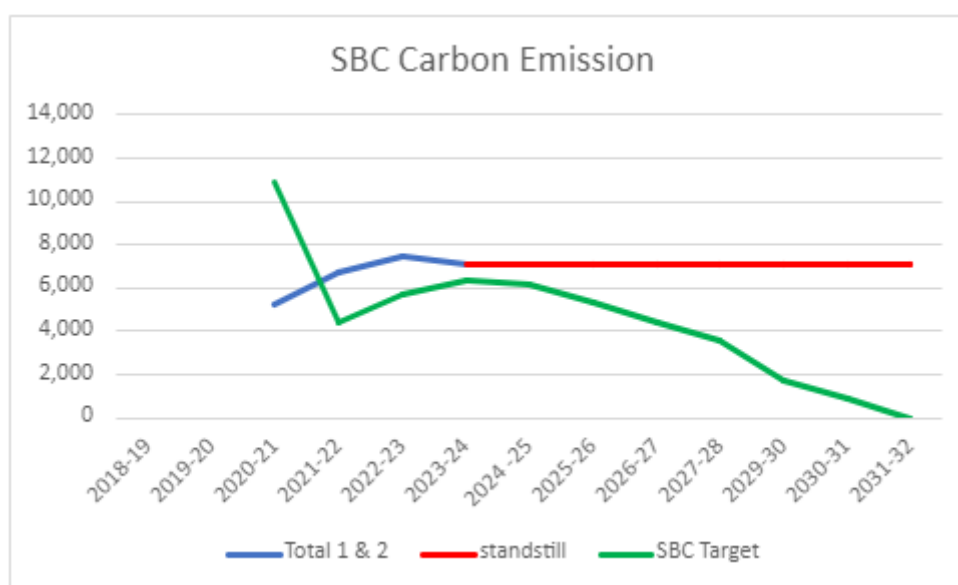


Fig 7: SBC carbon emission trajectory

14. The graph above indicates that without investment or reduction in carbon the authority will not achieve Net Zero by 2032. The red line in the table above shows the projected trajectory if Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council continues to operate without significant intervention, the net zero target is likely to be missed by 7,052T CO₂e at a minimum.

Leisure Centres

15. Our leisure centres have demonstrated a sustained reduction of carbon emissions since 2012, new measures recently installed such as photovoltaic panels on the roof of IB Leisure assist with energy efficiency and reduction on the reliance of purchased electricity.
16. There has been a 42.2% increase in visits to Ingleby Barwick Leisure in 2023/24 compared to the previous year. This is a wonderful, good news story however it does have an impact on emissions. During this year we have noticed a 9.02% increase on CO₂e emissions.
17. Tees Active have demonstrated commitment to reducing emissions and were awarded Silver in the Green Mark Accreditation scheme. Whilst the graph below shows a slight increase in

emissions, at the same time total visits across the whole of Tees Active sites has increased by 24.3%.

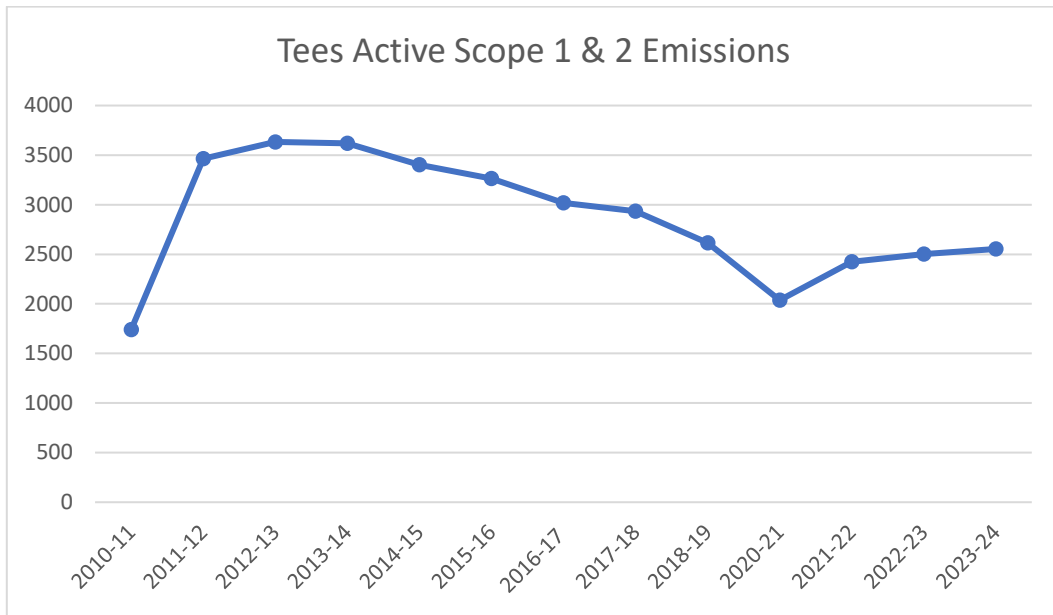


Fig 8: Tees Active carbon emissions.

Action plan monitoring

18. The ES&CRS is a Council-wide approach that covers all service areas. The action plan sets out what all service areas are doing to address carbon emissions. There has been genuine effort and real innovation across many services. For instance, the introduction of an Electrified Library Vehicle and a new build at Billingham South Primary that is operationally fully zero carbon by design, through the installation of heat pumps and high insulation standards.



Fig 9: Image of the Electrified Mobile Library Vehicle in operation

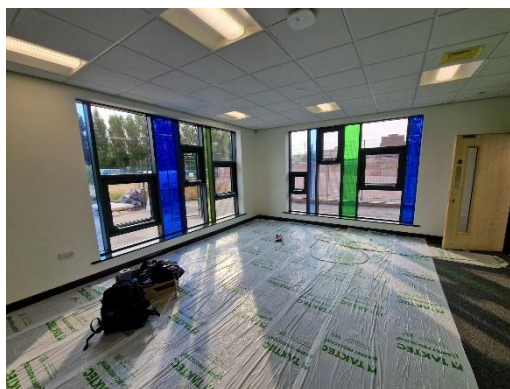


Fig 10: Inside view of Billingham South Zero Carbon Primary School building

19. The actions within the plan are categorised as

- Red – Not Started
- Amber – Progressing
- Green – Established

20. Some of the actions that are categorised as Red are because of aspirations that will be considered as part of the ongoing work on Powering our Future and related reviews or Member scrutiny. In many cases the carbon reduction will be made possible by a remodelling of the service toward different outcomes. The action plan highlights the need for carbon emissions to be considered as part of any service review.

21. The service area actions were formed within the budget parameters at the time of the development of the ESCR Plan. The majority of those are on track. However, to remain on target for Net Zero in 2032, additional actions will need to be developed.

22. On the 19th February 2025, council agreed the Medium Term Financial Plan update and strategy. Council agreed to revise the existing £6m prudential borrowing approval for investment in Children’s Services residential homes and Spark of Genius and replace with a Council wide investment fund of £20m from prudential borrowing for self-funding capital investments linked to transformation of Services. This could include investments relating to climate change. Officers are now working to prioritise schemes to bring relevant business cases forward to Cabinet for consideration.

23.

Objective	Established	Progressing	Not Started
Achieve Net Zero	22	16	2
Resource efficiency minimise waste	18	16	
Protect and enhance the natural environment	17	10	1
Adapt to climate change	16	14	

Fig 11: Action plan count

24. Illustrations of good practice are indicated below:

<p>Aim 1: Solar panels installed at Dunedin.</p> 	<p>Aim 2: No Mow Summer</p> 
<p>Aim 3: Recycling facilities at SIRF</p> 	<p>Aim 4: Flood alleviation works at Six Fields, Hartburn</p> 

Fleet

25. There remains a heavy reliance on fossil fuels (diesel) within fleet services, contributing 32% of the total emissions for 2023/24. This is partly due to limited charging infrastructure and insufficient, identified resources for the electrification/conversion/purchase of alternative fuel fleet vehicles.

26. Currently 3% of our fleet is electrified, this is stark contrast to our Local Authority neighbours who have decarbonised their fleet by 15-20% on average. Redcar and Cleveland for example have electrified 26% of their fleet, additionally 6 of their vehicles are running on biofuel.
27. A Fleet Transformation Review is currently in progress, the approach is holistic, considering the carbon emissions, financing and service provision.

Waste and recycling

28. Already agreed changes to waste collection and recycling regime, informed by a cross party scrutiny review, are expected to achieve significant improvements in recycling rates.
29. The following will be implemented in 2026.
- The Council will collect food waste and recycling every week and collect the other residual waste (non-recyclable waste that normally goes in residents' green wheeled bin) on a fortnightly basis.
 - Each household will receive an additional weighted bag for the collection of dry recycling and a new 5 litre indoor and 23 litre outdoor caddy (including caddy bags) for food waste, giving every household the opportunity to increase the amount of waste that can be collected and recycled on a weekly basis.
 - Work completed by WRAP on behalf of Stockton Council anticipated that a move to the fortnightly refuse collections with the introduction of a mandatory weekly food waste collection would see an increase in kerbside recycling on 12% taking our total recycling rate to around 36%, above the average for the Tees Valley and across the North East.

Solar generation

28. Renewable energy is currently the cheapest form of energy generation and the rate at which a project pays back the initial investment is increasing rapidly. For example, the solar PV installation on the roof of Dunedin House has a payback period of roughly four years.
29. In the last financial year 2023/2024 SBC has generated 215,704kWh of energy use through solar panels, and generated £29,753.65, through selling excess energy generation back to the grid. 215,704Kwh of energy divided by 3000 SBC staff members equates to 6.9 hours of computer use per person per week generated by renewable energy.
30. It would take 1,154,400 kWh of energy to power 3,000 computers for 37 hours per week over a year. Stockton Borough Council would need approximately 4,016 solar panels to generate 1,154,400 kWh of energy annually, assuming an average of 3.5 peak sun hours per day and 75% system efficiency. This would require approximately 6,827.2 square meters (or 72,288 square feet) of space to install 4,016 solar panels, Roughly the size of one football pitch.
31. There is potential for further solar regeneration as a cost-effective means of reducing our carbon emissions, however capital investment would be required to achieve this carbon saving. Officers will develop costed proposals for solar generation for consideration.

Resource needs and grants

32. There are several time limited Government grants linked to carbon reduction, biodiversity uplift and climate change. There are numerous schemes to support tree planting for example. However, the required changes such as fleet decarbonisation, improvements to building efficiency, climate change adaptation and modal shifts in transport, have limited

funding and are often confined to pilot projects and modest one-off grants with short lead-in times.

33. Further resource will be required to develop Building Decarbonisation Plans. Officers will develop costed proposals for technical work in the pursuit of Public Sector Decarbonisation funding.

Data collection

34. Improvement in data collection is required to ensure consistency in data, to enable better analysis, comparisons with other authorities, and to identify areas where further work is required. Officers are working on systems improvements.
35. We expect that Environment Act legislation will require Local Authorities to deliver and evidence progress against several targets. Although these targets and duties have not yet been set, we should plan for the formalisation and integration of monitoring into wider Council performance monitoring and data analysis processes. We understand that there will be an increased requirement around data collection on waste disposal in line with the requirement for 'waste tracking,' which will essentially digitise waste disposal data. We believe that future Extended Producer Responsibility payments will be based around diverting waste from landfill and energy from waste plants.

Engagement and partnerships - Climate Coalitions

36. As part of the Council's efforts to influence residents in reducing their carbon emissions and raising awareness of their environmental impact, four Climate Coalitions have been established across different sectors of the Borough. There are currently 214 members across the coalitions.
37. The aim of each coalition is to bring people and organisations together and work collaboratively to help the Borough to deliver the Government's 'net zero target'. That means achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it. Each coalition is tasked with forming an action plan of activities to help reach the target and create the best possible environment for the next generation with the support of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
 - The Creative Coalition for Climate Change is managed by the ARC and brings together those working in the creative sector to improve communication around climate change, offer sustainable productions and inspire creation of new work.
 - The Youth Climate Coalition has 12 member schools, is managed by BMBF
 - The Community Coalition is managed by Catalyst, and brings together VCSE's, community groups and charities working on projects related to climate action, with over 60 organisations signed up.
 - The Business Coalition has members from large industry to small SMEs based within Stockton Borough Council boundary. Quorn in Billingham for example has reduced the emissions per tonne of production by 87% compared to 2012 base year and have reduced their water usage by 19% per tonne of product. This is not only a great environmental success story, but it also leads to a more energy efficient business which saves money.
38. The Business Coalition has implemented a 'Greener Business' scheme in collaboration with Stockton BID which encourages businesses to make a pledge to be more sustainable or adopt greener practices. Business who makes a pledge receive a window sticker to display in their business premises.



Fig 11: images of businesses with Green Pledge stickers

39. **Festival of Thrift** - In 2024 the Council hosted the second of a three-year agreement at John Whitehead Park, Billingham. The festival is a celebration of sustainable living and attracts around 50,000 visitors to the region. The festival is a nationally recognised event championing sustainable living and has a very clear vision to create positive, sustainable change in people and places and the programme aims to do just that by celebrating ways to live more sustainably and look after the planet we call home. Thrift works to develop new relationships with local communities and business and partners, whilst delivering a high-quality festival which inspires, brings joy and helps us to imagine a better future together. During the weekend of the Festival of Thrift, Billingham Town Centre saw an increased footfall by 13% from the previous weekend.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

40. Climate change affects everyone, but there is a growing body of evidence that the poorest in society will experience the worst impacts. The Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy aims to address the threats to all the communities of Stockton on Tees through actions that target their circumstances. The ES&CRS follows the principles of the Council's Equality Strategy and will seek to reduce the inequality faced by disadvantaged communities where those inequalities are likely to be widened by climate change.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

41. The impacts of climate change will affect all communities; it is hard to distinguish between the effect on adults compared to children (including those in our care). However, in general children are more vulnerable and are at greater risk.

For example:

- Children are more vulnerable than adults to the effects of air pollution, due to their size and lung capacity whilst growing.
- Very young children are vulnerable to heat-related deaths including dehydration
- Children are worried about climate change, and this has a negative impact on their mental health.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

42. Saving energy can have a positive impact upon reducing emissions and finances, using less will cost less! By improving energy efficiency, the same tasks can be accomplished with less input, resulting in lower emissions and lower energy bills.
43. On the 19th February 2025, Council agreed the Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy. Council agreed to revise the existing £6m prudential borrowing approval for investment in Children's Services residential homes and Spark of Genius and replace with a Council wide investment fund of £20m from prudential borrowing for self-funding capital investments linked to transformation of Services. This could include investments relating to climate change. Individual schemes will need to be approved by Cabinet.
44. Officers continue to seek out external funding opportunities to support decarbonisation.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

45. None

RISK ASSESSMENT

46. There are several risks relating to the content of this report. The Council has established the ES&CRS to improve the local environment and to achieve net zero by 2032. Although this report demonstrates progress is being made, there are risks that carbon reduction is becoming significantly harder without financial investment and net zero may not be achieved. This could lead to reputational risk to the Council, potential legal risks and more significantly, the environmental and economic risks associated with the impacts of a warming climate on the borough and our most vulnerable residents disproportionately.
47. Stockton Borough Council have again responded to a FOI request from the charity Climate Emergency UK which will be published later in the year. Whilst we are hoping for an improved score, last year saw the charity rank Stockton council as the 'worst performing unitary authority'. Whilst we have publicly stated that we don't agree with the marking criteria of the scorecards and the weightings given, it is a league table that is published nationally and provides headlines, such as "Teesside councils under the cosh in withering assessment of net zero carbon credentials", Gazette Oct 2023.
48. The risks are currently managed through the implementation of a detailed action plan, an ES&CRS Oversight Group to oversee implementation, careful monitoring of carbon emissions and regular reports to Cabinet.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

49. As the strategy is a wide-ranging document all wards will be affected.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

13 MARCH 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Environment and Transport - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

SUMMARY

The attached report presents the revised tree management policy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 1) The tree management policy is approved.

DETAIL

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has a legal responsibility to inspect, maintain and manage its tree stock which is located across the Borough. There are currently 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).
2. Local Authorities have a legal duty of care to ensure they have a defensible system of tree inspection and maintenance for their land and premises. This requires regular inspections (by a qualified person) of all trees and woodlands within a Council's ownership, implementing essential tree maintenance (so there is no danger or unacceptable risk to persons or property), and maintaining adequate records of surveys and inspections.
3. Trees can, at times, be contentious for residents who often express strong and vocal views on their presence, especially those which are in residential locations where concerns about

the safety of trees, potential damage and other perceived nuisance factors are 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.

4. Judgements about the impact of trees and whether or not a tree should be removed or reduced, is 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 will always be made to set out the rationale for any judgement. Where the determination is complex or necessitates consideration of wider factors, the decision will be considered by the Director in consultation with the relevant cabinet member.
5. One of the key themes within the Council Plan is clean and green spaces, and the Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-2032 also has 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 is therefore important, and timely, to review the Council's existing tree management policy, covering inspection and operational arrangements, to ensure that it is equipped to deal with both existing and planned tree assets.
6. As the revised policy document covers a substantial amount of required technical information and legislative detail, and to ensure appropriate dissemination and communication, a 'readable' summary document will be prepared to publish key messages and principles of the policy for residents.
7. An all-member briefing will be arranged to ensure members are fully aware of the detail within the tree management policy.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

8. Every person within the Borough, whether resident, worker or visitor, is affected by the local environment. The benefits of a widespread and healthy tree canopy are widely acknowledged but the adequate maintenance of trees is equally as important in terms of sustainability and public safety.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no direct implications in the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no new direct financial implications as an immediate result of a review of the tree management policy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11. SBC must continue to ensure it meets its legal duty of care and that it has a defensible system of tree inspection and maintenance for its land and premises.

RISK ASSESSMENT

12. 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

13. This review is relevant to all Wards across the Borough.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

14. Tree Management Policy

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STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

MARCH 2025

DRAFT

CONTENTS

STOCKTON COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY PART ONE

- Why Have a Tree Policy?
- The Importance and Benefits of Trees
- Tree Planting
- Threats to Trees
- The Local Authority Approach to the Regulation of Private Trees: TPOs
- Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment

STOCKTON COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY PART TWO

- Tree and Woodland Management Services
- Requests for Work
- Summary of Policy for Public Service Requests

APPENDICES

- i. Summary of Legal Background
- ii Tree Management Service – FAQ's
- iii Explanation of Pruning Techniques
- iv Tree Planting Selection in The Urban Environment
- v Definitions of Statutory or Essential Inspection & Maintenance

Foreword

The quality of our environment is greatly enhanced by trees. Trees are integral to our wellbeing, health and quality of life. They define the landscape in which we live, work, and play, and bring the natural world into our towns and streets, minimising the impact of the built environment by providing colour, shade, and shelter.

Research proves that humans feel better and are healthier when they are living near trees. They act as way-markers, signposts, provide homes for wildlife, bring history into the present moment, and are a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Stockton Council are responsible for managing many tens of thousands of trees within its towns, parks, cemeteries, alongside its highways and open spaces.

We are fortunate in Stockton to have areas of parks and woodland that are freely accessible to the public, as well as trees lining our residential streets and grassed open spaces. By careful selection of species, it is possible to provide trees that will mitigate climate change, contribute to improved air quality, reduce noise, and control run-off from heavy rain.

Although the importance of trees is widely recognised, they can also become a source of conflict in some situations – for example, as trees mature, they require more space above and below ground, which can occasionally result in causing nuisance to property. The Council receives hundreds of enquiries from members of the public and outside agencies each year, requesting advice or for work to be undertaken to trees, hedgerows and woodlands. Stockton Council aims to provide a high standard of professional tree care to ensure our trees are maintained in good health and condition. Due to the perceived problems that trees can cause, it is important to have a clear policy on what action can be taken in various circumstances and the need to balance perceived problems against benefits.

1. STOCKTON COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY PART ONE

1.1. Why Have a Tree Policy?

- 1.1.1. The benefits of trees, woodlands, and hedges have long been acknowledged. Trees provide one of the most cost effective ways to improve the environmental quality of a town or city, delivering physical, social, and economic well-being as well as mitigating climate change, improving storm water management, air quality, biodiversity, and visual amenity amongst many other benefits.
- 1.1.2. This tree policy will provide a strategic framework for the management of Stockton Council's tree population and allow us to publicise these aims and objectives. It is also important to have practical and consistent procedures for dealing with the inspection and maintenance of trees, in a written statement.
- 1.1.3. This policy, therefore, also aims to guide and advise on Stockton Council's approach to dealing with requests for tree maintenance and how decisions are reached.
- 1.1.4. The guiding principles of this document are to:
- Outline how we will protect and care for Stockton Council's trees.
 - Explain how we will continue to enhance the borough's green canopy and environment.
 - Ensure compliance with the Council's legal obligations regarding tree management and continue to deliver a high standard of tree care.
- 1.1.5. Scope
- 1.1.6. This policy applies to trees in the following settings:
- Individual Council-owned trees in locations such adopted highways, parks, green spaces, town and village centres and other areas of public realm.

- Trees on private land which are deemed to require protection (e.g. though the application of Tree Preservation Orders)
- Some hedgerows in locations such adopted highways, parks, green spaces and other areas of public realm

1.1.7. The following are not within the scope of this policy:

- The planning, planting and management of woodlands on Council land, except in relation to individual trees which pose a risk to public safety
- Privately-owned trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

1.1.8. Planning for the future is key to having resilient towns that are sustainable places to live. Stockton Council works with external partners to ensure that the borough's tree canopy cover is not only maintained but increased to a level that helps us to bring mitigation of the effects of climate change. This tree policy will align with other relevant Council policies and planning documents, such as the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-2032 and the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that sets out developer's responsibilities regarding existing and new trees within planning applications.

1.2. The Importance and Benefits of Trees

1.2.1. Trees are essential in making our towns better places to live, work or visit and they provide environmental benefit in a multitude of ways:

1.2.2. Trees Improve Health

1.2.2.1. International studies and research have identified that trees provide 'breathing spaces' in urban areas, decrease respiratory problems, encourage walking and cycling, reduce traffic speeds and generally help to reduce stress. The Nature Conservancy report 'Funding Trees for Health' demonstrates these benefits, showing

trees also have an economic value by decreasing health budget spend.

1.2.3. Landscape Value

1.2.3.1. Trees help to create a natural, high quality, green environment, improving its visual composition and structure, which forms a major part of our 'green infrastructure'.

1.2.3.2. Trees have an architectural and place-making role. On a local level, they can improve the quality of the environment by screening, enhancing the sense of scale, reducing glare from buildings and hard surfaces, directing pedestrians and slowing vehicular traffic. They bring colour and character to both urban and rural areas.

1.2.3.3. Landscape value and features are important to towns and residential areas. Trees and hedges add to this value by providing living and organic, physical features, such as specimen trees, historical boundaries, and woodlands.

1.2.4. Economic Benefits of Trees

1.2.4.1. Trees bring affluence and character to an area, and these effects can increase levels of inward investment in these areas.

1.2.4.2. Research and good practice guidance shows people prefer to live, work, and play in green leafy environments, these environments then also lead to economic benefits including property value increases (ranging from 5-18%), with more mature trees giving higher gains. Industrial areas and employment sites with natural green space can have more productive employees and there is research evidence of increased footfall in shopping areas and tourist attractions with trees.

1.2.5. Mitigating Climate Change

1.2.5.1. Trees mitigate climate change in many ways, including the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In the UK, it is estimated that trees remove four million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year. For this to happen, it is important that trees are allowed to grow to maturity so that they can provide these functional processes. Trees contribute to the cooling and shading of urban areas and to linkages in the Green Infrastructure Network. Trees encourage walking and cycling when there is a creation of more attractive tree-lined routes and thereby encourage green low emission travel.

1.2.6. Reduction of Airborne Pollution

1.2.6.1. Within the right context (right tree species, right planting layout) trees and hedges can decrease air pollution by trapping dust and absorbing air pollutants such as ozone and providing filtration of harmful airborne pollutants and emissions.

1.2.7. Trees Help Against Flooding

1.2.7.1. As well as protecting and enhancing the urban environment, trees and green infrastructure provide benefits toward surface water management and the reduction of damaging effects of flooding, through processes such as:

- Transpiration: this is when water is evaporated by trees (through their roots) into the air, which also provides a cooling benefit in periods of intense heat.
- Interception: dispersing and reducing the amount of water that then reaches the ground.
- Increased infiltration and attenuation of water: roots and soil in planting pits can increase the capacity of the ground to hold water, by keeping the soil structure open, retained water can be used by the tree or will infiltrate into the surrounding ground.

- Phytoremediation: turning harmful chemicals into less harmful substances.
- A variety of engineering techniques are available to manage surface water such as utilisation of a range of tree pits and planters, which can collect and slow down the flow of water in heavy storm events. Trees can also assist in managing erosion along slopes adjacent to rivers or roads.

1.2.8. Biodiversity

1.2.8.1. Trees also play a vital role in our urban ecosystem, providing many benefits for wildlife.

1.2.8.2. Birds, mammals and invertebrates use trees, scrub and hedgerows as roosts, breeding sites and feeding areas, while deadwood associated with these habitats is valuable for a variety of organisms such as bacteria, lichens and fungi, which help decompose the deadwood. Where appropriate, deadwood will be left to provide this valuable habitat.

1.3. Tree Planting

1.3.1. Tree Planting Initiatives

1.3.1.1. The Council will identify sites where new tree planting is both possible and most beneficial to improve canopy cover, air quality, flood prevention and habitat quality. These include, although are not limited to:

- Using opportunities within the design of Council schemes to increase tree planting.
- Working with agencies such as the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission including Trees for Cities, an organisation that has supported our tree planting programme and applications for funding. Trees on Tees Community Forest, will provide new funding opportunities and support for tree planting from 2025 onwards.

- Use of planning conditions and obligations in Development Management
- Working with strategic partners on funding bids
- Giving opportunities for the public to engage with tree planting in the borough.

1.3.1.2. Planning for the future is key to having resilient towns that are sustainable places to live in. Increasing and enhancing the quality of tree cover in the Borough is essential to developing a sustainable green infrastructure that will provide long term benefits to communities and the environment.

1.3.1.3. Our cultivation of public and private trees helps delivery of Stockton Council's Green Infrastructure aims. The Council has identified potential sites across the borough where tree planting is likely to provide the greatest benefits or is most needed. This includes major routes and gateways within the borough such as green spaces, parks, and areas where tree cover is notably deficient. These areas are prioritised for new (and replacement) tree planting.

1.3.1.4. Stockton Council will work with partners to ensure that the borough's tree canopy cover is not only maintained but increased to a level that allows us to provide mitigation towards the effects of modern living and the increasing effects of climate change. The Council will seek funding for new trees and aim to increase tree cover within the borough through the delivery of its tree planting programme. We have received successive years of grant funding for new trees and this has allowed us to implement tree planting within key areas where trees can provide great amenity benefit, enhance the quality of open spaces, parks and highway routes, thereby creating continuity of 'Green corridors' and contributing towards the Council's aims of mitigating against predicted climate change. New trees also provide

succession to mature trees that may be lost due to disease or senescence.

1.3.2. Tree Planting Schemes

1.3.2.1. Tree planting schemes will be designed in accord with the principles of good landscape design: for example, careful consideration will be given to the selection of species and their growth characteristics; positioning and layout of trees in the landscape; the potential amenity and environmental benefits that will develop and ensuring long term sustainability through species choice. We aim to plant the correct species in the right location to minimise any future maintenance requirements when designing tree planting schemes.

1.3.3. Species Selection

1.3.3.1. Many factors need to be considered when planting urban trees involving species selection and the actual growing and living conditions for the trees in the future. We aim for trees to become ecosystem assets, to provide environmental benefits. Ornamental factors of trees play a part in the design and selection process. As we face challenges of climate change a wider variety of non native/ornamental cultivars in our choices of species selection can bring resilience to our landscape and future-proof against climate effects. A wider composition of tree species will bring resilience and diversity, including non-native genera from different latitudes in the world, to prepare and account for future climate changes and resilience to pests and disease. Community orchards are also a focus where fruit and nut trees are used to provide nutritious, local food sources.

1.3.4. Planting Methodologies

1.3.4.1. Unless a tree reaches maturity and is healthy, it cannot deliver its full benefits. To ensure the trees Stockton Council plant reach their potential they need to be correctly sourced, planted, and then maintained to become established.

1.3.4.2. Stockton Council has a rigorous planting methodology for successful tree establishment. This begins with sourcing the best possible trees for our planting schemes with bio secure nursery growing methods and good nursery production practices. Poor planting such as trees planted too deep, in tree pits with inappropriate surfacing or small soil volumes either kills or stunts trees. Poor aftercare maintenance (particularly insufficient watering) also reduces the value of the tree stock.

1.3.4.3. Trees will be planted using the best available techniques and products where possible, using good quality standard trees to encourage the successful establishment in the landscape (e.g. adopting the British Standard 8545: From Nursery to Independence in the Landscape)

1.3.4.4. Trees will normally be watered and mulched (recycled chipped tree arisings from our operational work) at the base, and all stakes, cages and other fixings tended within the first 4 - 5 years to aid establishment. Trees that fail for any reason will normally be replanted within the next available tree planting season if resources permit.

1.3.4.5. Trees will normally be planted during the autumn and winter months, when most trees are dormant, allowing their roots to become integrated into the soil. Correct species choice for the final setting of the mature tree is essential at the initial design stage.

1.3.5. Replacement Trees

1.3.5.1. Replacement planting is essential to ensure continuity (succession) of the tree stock.

1.3.5.2. Replacement trees do not have to be in the same spot as a felled tree: a nearby location may be more practical and appropriate.

Stockton Council aim to plant at least one tree in the vicinity of a felled specimen tree. Except in the case of woodland or plantation thinning for reasons of good management, which aims for the retained trees to become mature and grow into the thinned areas.

1.3.6. Commemorative / Dedicated trees

1.3.6.1. Stockton Council oblige requests for dedicated trees to be planted on memorial sites, and in some cases in its parks or open spaces. We provide the tree and offer this to be planted in one of the available locations. There is a charge and conditions that apply. Applications for dedicated trees can be made online via the Council's web site <https://stockton.gov.uk/dedicated-benches>.

1.4. Threats to Trees

1.4.1. Urban areas can be a challenging and hostile environment for trees. Increased susceptibility is created through stress from any of the following situations. Although trees appear very robust, they face challenges from their early establishment through to maturity in urban situations. Roots are particularly vulnerable to damage and significant root damage can change a healthy tree into a potential hazard.

1.4.2. Many of the following factors threaten not only a tree's survival but its ability to reach its mature potential and therefore its capacity to deliver its important ecological benefits. Also, the following factors can often be prevented or minimised through better professional care, protection, education and sustainable work practices.

1.4.3. Extreme Weather

1.4.3.1. Extreme weather conditions can cause some tree species to become stressed and decrease their tolerance to pests and diseases. Whilst increasing tree cover is important for mitigating

climate change, extreme weather such as high winds, heavy rainfall, and drought are factors that could impact trees and woodlands.

1.4.4. Planning for Trees and Development Sites

1.4.4.1. Trees on streets, open spaces and private land can be at risk from the pressures of development. Where development is proposed, it is essential that both existing and proposed trees are considered from the very early stages of the design process. The effect of proposed development on trees is a material consideration when determining planning applications. Protection of existing trees is achieved through planning conditions which ensure trees are not damaged and that there is space for them to grow and mature alongside the development. There will be a presumption in favour of the retention, protection and enhancement of woodlands, trees and hedgerows and, where appropriate, additional provisions for new trees and landscapes in new developments.

1.4.4.2. Retention of trees and hedges can make some developments more acceptable due to their screening effect, factors developers should consider before proposing tree and hedge removal. This is covered within Stockton Council's *Supplementary Planning Design Document (Design SPD) Part 5 Landscaping and Trees; Technical Guidance and Standard*; a guidance for developers regarding tree retention, and planting.

1.4.4.3. Construction and demolition of buildings can damage trees in a variety of ways. This may be through direct loss to make way for development, a reduction in space by the development to accommodate retained trees' future growth and spread, or damage within the construction process such as direct damage from compaction of soil, severing roots or branches, or spill of chemicals near trees amongst many other careless factors during building works. Infrastructure and service installation (routing of underground

services) with open trenching techniques that impact on tree rooting areas can also be damaging.

1.4.4.4. In the event of a tree needing to be removed, a replacement tree which enhances the amenity will be required as set out in Stockton Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Within the Local Plan: "Policy ENV5: 7. Existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows which are important to the character and appearance of the local area or are of nature conservation value will be protected wherever possible. Where loss is unavoidable, replacement of appropriate scale and species will be sought on site, where practicable."

1.4.5. Permitted Development Rights

1.4.5.1. Where planning permission is sought, there is the opportunity for trees and hedges to be considered and protected, if needed. If development does not require planning permission, it is 'permitted development'.

1.4.5.2. The most relevant permitted development rights are works of maintenance and improvement of the highway by the highway's authorities, repairs to services by utility companies, extensions or alteration to dwellings or commercial buildings. Local authorities also have permitted development rights for work on their own land. Unfortunately, these can be a threat to existing trees, through installation of permitted development works where unavoidable development is required.

1.4.6. Street Environments

1.4.6.1. Trees growing in street environments ('street trees') are often vulnerable to damage, particularly of their roots, within the

management of utilities and highways, which could cause loss in vigour, branch dieback or even death of a tree.

1.4.6.2. Highway use and maintenance can cause compaction of rooting areas and sometimes branches can be torn by high vehicles. The installation of driveways (cutting across verges) or contamination from salt in winter grit are other means of which are not particularly considered but can have harmful effects on tree health.

1.4.6.3. Negligence of roots during excavation works is usually the cause. Symptoms of careless root damage may take several years to become evident within a tree.

1.4.6.4. For new trees, the presence of pre-existing or new utility provision must be carefully considered if future conflict is to be avoided.

1.4.6.5. Stockton Council have a Trees and Utilities guidance document which sets out the procedures around working around trees.

1.4.7. Damage / Vandalism

1.4.7.1. Damage to trees, either deliberate or through ignorance, can be commonplace. Criminal damage includes cutting down or lopping/topping, snapping young plantings, amongst other attempts of sabotaging trees in public areas. Enforcement action is taken against those who damage Council trees.

1.4.8. Pests and Diseases

1.4.8.1. Tree pest and diseases not only present ecological problems but also management challenges. Climate change is extending the range of pests and diseases that affect trees and vegetation in the United Kingdom. Historical importation of trees along with their

associated soil and packaging materials from across Europe, Asia and elsewhere means that new pests and diseases have become imported and are more likely to be transported across UK borders. In the 1970's, Dutch Elm Disease was introduced into the UK, a new pathogen that dramatically changed the appearance and composition of the urban treescape, resulting in the native elm tree becoming infected and then mostly then eradicated.

1.4.8.2. Unfortunately, history has repeated as we are now currently faced with significant pests and diseases posing a threat to our native trees. The most threatening and devastating of which is having a large impact on our native populations of Ash trees, is Ash Dieback Disease *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*.

1.4.8.3. This is a fungal pathogen that was likely, inadvertently, imported on Ash saplings, which then spread from areas of new planting, via wind, to mature trees in the environment. Ash Dieback is a fungus thought to have originated in Asia, possibly Japan. As our native Ash trees did not evolve with the fungus, it has no natural defence against it.

1.4.8.4. The Ash Dieback epidemic is a conservation challenge that has implications not only for Ash as a species but also due to the risk that devastated populations can have, for example, many Ash are growing in roadside locations. The hazards that infected trees present are the immediate issues. Further reaching effects include the loss of climate change benefits, (improving air quality and other ecosystem services) the landscape impact, and extinctions among species dependent on Ash as their habitat, but also the safety of workers that are tasked with removing dangerous trees. The trees become delignified, their internal timber is compromised and structurally weakened, therefore making the trees unsound and not safe for dismantling through regular tree dismantling (climbing)

methods. Expensive, alternative methodologies are then required to dismantle prominent dangerous Ash trees.

1.4.8.5. The infection of Ash species in Stockton Borough is an immediate problem, because Ash is a prolific self seeding tree that naturalises freely, we have many semi mature and mature Ash trees throughout our urban, residential, parks, woodland, roadside and rural areas.

1.4.8.6. Horse Chestnut Bleeding Canker is another prevalent disease in Stockton Borough, along with Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner, although less immediately concerning than Ash Dieback (horse chestnut bleeding canker progresses at a relatively slower rate than Ash Dieback so allows for monitoring of affected trees). Dutch Elm Disease remains present. Acute Oak Decline and Sweet Chestnut Blight are diseases that are having outbreaks in the south of the UK. Asian Longhorn Beetle (in southern England), Gypsy Moth (in southern England), Plane Wilt, Emerald Ash Borer are other further diseases with the possibility of infecting UK tree populations.

1.4.8.7. At Stockton Council, we will only purchase new trees for planting from nurseries that follow rigorous biosecurity policies, wherever possible, we will plant trees that are raised entirely in the UK.

1.5. The Local Authority Approach to the Regulation of Private Trees

1.5.1. Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)

1.5.1.1. Trees and hedgerows are important for the attractiveness of our areas and are a key component of ecosystems.

1.5.1.2. Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area designations can protect many of the important tree assets within private ownership.

1.5.1.3. This means that trees can be protected through legislation: The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation, England) Regulations 2012 are planning laws that allow the Local Authority to protect trees on private land through a 'Tree Preservation Order' (TPO) the criteria for trees that may be worthy are if they have 'good visual amenity value' (they can be seen by the public in general and/or add to the quality of the local area). TPOs can be used to protect trees if the authority believes there is a risk of trees being felled, pruned, or damaged, in ways that would then have a significant impact on the amenity of the area. Once a TPO is in place, permission is then required before any work takes place to the tree, including work to a tree's roots.

1.5.1.4. The wording in the legislation is "Local planning authorities can make a Tree Preservation Order if it appears to them to be 'expedient in the interests of amenity to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in their area'".

1.5.1.5. It is not necessary for there to be immediate risk toward a tree for there to be a need to protect it. Examples from Government guidance of when a TPO may be "expedient" are:

- '...the authority may believe that certain trees are at risk as a result of development pressures.'
- '...consider other sources of risks to trees for example, changes in property ownership'.
- 'Intentions to fell trees are not always known in advance, so it may sometimes be appropriate to proactively make Orders as a precaution.'

- 1.5.1.6. The legislation recognises the important contribution trees make to the character and appearance of an area. Where the diameter of the tree exceeds 75 millimetres (subject to certain exceptions), if tree work is planned in a designated Conservation Area, six weeks' notice must be given to the LA. The purpose of this notification is to give the LA time to decide whether to make a TPO on the tree(s). In which case TPO procedures will apply to proposed tree works.
- 1.5.1.7. The owner of a protected tree can apply to do work at any time. In some cases, exemptions apply from the formal requirement to obtain written consent, for example, removal of 'dead dying or dangerous' trees. The landowner is responsible for the tree's ongoing management and the Local Authority's role is to regulate permissions to undertake works.
- 1.5.1.8. The owner of the tree must apply to the Local Authority to obtain consent before undertaking work. Failure to do so is an offence under the Act and the owner or persons undertaking the work may be liable to conviction in a Magistrates Court, leading to imposed fines. Applications forms and relevant guidance notes are available online at www.stockton.gov.uk
- 1.5.1.9. The tree owner will, however, require written authorisation from the Council before proceeding with exempt works or retaining evidence (e.g. photographs) of tree condition and works undertaken if they need to be carried out immediately (such as storm damaged or unstable trees).
- 1.5.1.10. The Council will normally grant consent subject to conditions where the work is deemed to be in line with good arboricultural or forestry practice, there is a sound purpose or benefit and where the proposed work is unlikely to detract from the long-term health and amenity value of the tree/s in question.

1.5.1.11. Applicants may also be required to provide independent technical reports to substantiate proposals to fell or prune trees that are claimed to be hazardous or to be causing subsidence damage to properties.

1.5.1.12. The Council can also provide a list of arboricultural contractors and consultants and general guidance on employing a contractor to do tree work.

1.5.1.13. If a resident believes that significant trees within the landscape are worthy of protection, TPO or possibly under threat of being felled, they may contact our planning team to ask for consideration for it to be covered by TPO.

1.6. Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment

1.6.1. Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity (National Planning Policy Framework, 2021).

1.6.2. The benefits of Green Infrastructure include:

- cooling urban areas during periods of hot weather
- reducing surface water run-off and reducing flood risk
- providing sustainable drainage
- sequestering and storing carbon
- attracting inward investment
- supporting people's mental and physical health
- encouraging active travel

1.6.3. Green infrastructure must be planned and managed as a network of integrated spaces and features, and not just as a series of individual elements. Trees, tree avenues, hedgerows and woodlands are vital

components of green infrastructure and collectively (and in combination with other forms of green infrastructure) they can deliver multiple benefits. For example, a tree avenue or hedgerow alongside a cycleway can provide shade and shelter for users, making that route more attractive for users, while at the same time increasing connectivity between areas of semi-natural habitat.

1.6.4. Woodlands and Hedgerows

1.6.4.1. Although woodland planting and management is not within the scope of this policy, it is worth noting that there is approximately 528 hectares of woodland in Council ownership, ranging from small copses less than 1 hectare up to large woodland blocks covering up to 75 hectares. Some of the largest areas of Council-owned woodland are located within Wynyard Woodlad Park, Cowpen Bewley Woodand Park, Billingham Beck Valley Country Park, Stillington Forest Park, Preston Park and Honey Pot Wood, with other substantial areas of woodland around the fringes of Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby. These sites include areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

1.6.4.2. All Council owned woodlands over 1 ha in size are registered on a woodland inventory and mapped on the Council's computer based GIS mapping system. The Council has a generic management plan for all woodlands which is supported and grant aided by the Forestry Commission. Additional management prescriptions are in place at some woodland sites, but it should be noted that the Council does not currently have resources to proactively manage the vast majority of the woodland in its ownership. Essential maintenance work is carried out as required, and some targeted thinning work undertaken where resources allow and in locations where this will achieve the greatest biodiversity and/or amenity benefit. However, if the Council is to realise the full environmental and social value of its woodlands it will need to adopt a more active approach to their management,

which would include measures to tackle some of the threats they face today and which may pose greater risks in the future, such as the spread of invasive species, pathogens, changes in climate and habitat fragmentation.

1.6.4.3. The Council has secured external grants to plant thousands of tree 'whips' in recent years, creating several new copses and small woodlands (around 31,000 tree whips planted since 2021). This is in addition to the planting of individual standard trees covered under other sections of this policy, and the planting of a large number of fruit trees.

1.6.4.4. Hedgerows are another important element of the borough's green infrastructure and function as vital habitats and wildlife corridors, and the Council maintains many of those which are located on public open space and 'Adopted Highways'. Where hedgerows are on an adopted highway, the Council will normally maintain the land or verges, which may include for example, maintaining clearance for vehicle and pedestrian access, sight lines, signage, lighting, etc. but will not include height reductions or removals of sections of hedgerows unless there is a statutory requirement to do so.

1.6.4.5. In some instances where hedgerows adjoin private residential properties, the Council may consider formal cyclical maintenance of hedgerows; this will be dependent on the species and growth characteristics of the individual hedgerows and undertaken only where it is deemed appropriate in the interests of the wider community and environment. However, guidance is provided that residents should maintain a hedge boundary for one metre of their boundary line, to ensure regular clearances are kept for their fence or wall boundary.

1.6.4.6. Hedgerow and woodland management is only carried out during the autumn and winter months. At this time some cyclical hedgerow maintenance is programmed and undertaken, and some woodland management work implemented as resources allow.

2. STOCKTON COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY PART TWO

2.1. Tree Management Services

2.1.1. Qualified Staff

2.1.1.1. All operational staff dealing with trees whether in a planning, landscape, design, highway, safety, or operational context hold the relevant skills, experience, and qualifications to undertake their particular roles.

2.1.1.2. Our qualified staff specify and carry out tree maintenance work. We receive a high volume of requests from the public and other sources relating to trees each year, which range from requests to remove trees completely, to minor pruning.

2.1.1.3. Stockton Council has an in-house tree team to provide a specialist arboricultural service across the council to ensure that work on its trees and hedges carried out in accordance with this policy and that our work is in line with best arboricultural practice.

2.1.1.4. The main tree and woodland management services provided by the council's tree team can be summarised as follows:

2.1.2. Tree Inspections

2.1.2.1. which include:

- Risk management of trees, health and condition surveys.

- Investigations (Detailed inspections such as decay testing and disease monitoring).
- Examining and checking a tree's health and structure, to specify and then schedule appropriate maintenance operations.

2.1.3. Tree Consultation Services

2.1.3.1. These include:

- Providing advice and guidance on trees to inform arboricultural best practices and correct methodologies when working near trees.
- Assessment of planning applications that involve building near trees - ensuring adequate tree retention, protection, or replacement.
- Consultation on Tree Preservation Order (TPO) applications.
- Designing tree planting schemes.
- Promoting the importance and benefits of trees.
- Assessing insurance claims e.g. claims for tree-related building subsidence, other structural damage or tree-related incidents.

2.1.4. Tree Work Operations

2.1.4.1. Operational work includes:

- Tree pruning.
- Tree felling and dismantling.
- Stump grinding / chemical treatment of stumps.
- Tree planting and aftercare, e.g. watering, mulching, tending trees, new woodland planting.
- Thinning of tree plantations

2.1.4.2. Trees will be maintained in such a way as to ensure they do not pose an unacceptable risk to persons or property; our maintenance is in line with relevant British Standards and would ensure that trees do not cause unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of land or property. We prioritise undertaking maintenance where it is

considered that there is a potentially hazardous issue, or if a tree's growth is causing an actionable (legal) nuisance.

2.1.5. Timing of Operations

2.1.5.1. Tree maintenance work will be undertaken all year round, except where specific restrictions apply such as in respect of bird nesting or other habitat regulations. Tree work can be done during the summertime, as we are able to inspect for nests prior to undertaking work within trees. Hedges are excluded for summer work, in accord with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 regulations.

2.1.5.2. Therefore, certain operations will be undertaken in autumn or winter months only, for example:

- Tree thinning/felling operations within a plantation area.
- Tree Planting.
- Hedgerow maintenance.

2.1.6. Tree Inspection (Survey) Schedule

2.1.6.1. The basis of tree risk management will be inspection of all trees on council land by competent arboriculturists at defined intervals according to a consistent methodology incorporating a systematic and reliable risk assessment. Trees that do not meet a defined standard of safety will be identified and remedial measures will be specified to mitigate unacceptable risks within a defined timeframe. In broad terms the management of tree related risk on council land will be:

- To Identify reasonably foreseeable risks
- To take reasonable care to keep people safe.
- Proportionate to any requests received in line with appropriate policy and procedures.

2.1.6.2. Trees are surveyed to ascertain their health and condition using the standard Visual Tree Assessment method (VTA). Findings of tree inspections are recorded digitally. All attributes of a tree, its species,

age, and health along with any significant signs or symptoms of ill health and structural defects are recorded. Where necessary such issues will be recommended for essential maintenance or further investigation.

2.1.6.3. The frequency of tree inspections varies in proportion to the prevailing risk, as a minimum, all trees within the council's responsibility will be inspected on a minimum three-year cycle, including individual trees and groups of trees on council-owned or adopted land (adopted highway verges and adopted spaces).

2.1.6.4. Survey zones are therefore surveyed on a three-yearly cycle and are pre-defined areas (for example, a residential estate may form one survey zone).

2.1.6.5. Some areas receive surveys on an annual basis. Annual surveys take place in areas of higher public frequency.

- Areas that are itemised to be within an annual survey zone include:
 - Parks, education centres and schools.
 - Main thoroughfares (main roads /highways).
 - Cemeteries.

2.1.6.6. Aside from the above, areas are also more frequently inspected, for example, following storm events (to ensure that there are no issues of damage or storm damaged, hanging branches) or prior to a public event taking place (such as Stockton International Riverside Festival). We also inspect in response to general customer enquiries, in interim periods between survey cycles. During a survey, the council also take note of any potentially hazardous trees located on privately owned land that are adjacent to or within 'falling distance' of public land (however we do not enter private land as a matter of course, to inspect private trees). Where appropriate, landowners will be notified of any such trees that in the council's opinion, may incur a significant

risk to public safety. At the time of each survey, the council subsequently identify 'essential' tree maintenance work, which will be prepared into an operational maintenance schedule, undertaken within a 3 – 5 year tree work programme.

2.1.6.7. 'Essential tree maintenance' includes undertaking maintenance to trees where it is considered there is a potentially hazardous issue or if a tree's growth is causing an actionable (legal) nuisance. Our inspection would also review a trees form and development, and using pruning work to pre-empt future issues, arranging operational tasks that are deemed to be in line with the Council's statutory duties and arboricultural best practices.

2.1.6.8. The tree team also provides a reactive service when dealing with incoming issues of urgent priority, such as storm damage or hazardous tree issues, potentially affecting public safety. These issues are often informed by public reporting.

2.1.7. Reports from Members of the Public

2.1.7.1. We have a responsibility to manage trees within our ownership / management to ensure they are in a safe condition and not causing an unreasonable danger or actionable nuisance.

2.1.7.2. All enquiries regarding trees on Stockton Council land be directed to our Customer Services team on 01642 523959 or careforyourarea@stockton.gov.uk

2.1.7.3. A tree could warrant immediate attention if, for example:

- it has snapped or blown over.
- it is rocking (roots are damaged).
- it is uprooted but held up by another tree or building.
- a large branch has broken off or is hanging off the tree.

- it or its branch is blocking the road or footway / public right of way.
- it or its branch is blocking access to property.
- it has fallen on to a structure, such as a building or car.

2.1.7.4. When we have a report of a hazardous tree, the significance of existing risks and the potential development of new risks would be evaluated by competent inspectors, and measures put in place to prevent unacceptable risks from materialising as harm.

2.2. Requests for Work

2.2.1. A significant proportion of Council land is accessible to the public, and most, if not all, council trees provide public benefits. It is therefore important to have a clear policy on what action can be taken in various circumstances, and to demonstrate the need to balance problems against benefits. Although trees have many benefits, they do in some cases, conflict with our way of life. Issues such as branches, sap, and leaf drop, pollen, and shade can range from being perceived problems and minor inconveniences to issues that could have more serious consequences and require pruning mitigation such as damage to structures.

2.2.2. In addition to the works identified or planned by our qualified staff, the Council receives tree and hedge service requests, normally from adjacent landowners, members of the public, developers, and other bodies. Many issues can be resolved or mitigated through appropriate management and maintenance or by providing advice on an issue. Stockton Council has resources, including expertise, beyond what would be expected of a private individual. Therefore, it should be expected that the overall standard of care, and the custodianship of trees by the council would be robust and that all the enquiries (or service requests) received are considered within a professional context and framework of when or if, work is appropriate.

2.2.3. Reporting a Tree Concern

2.2.3.1. Service requests are a valuable resource in terms of receiving local observation from people that have local knowledge and they form an important component in tree management. Insights of the public with familiarity of an area or location can be a useful 'early warning system' for hazards or recent tree damage and can inform future maintenance requirements.

2.2.3.2. The service requests will be recorded and prioritised. An enquiry that relates to urgent health and safety will be treated with urgency and will be investigated on the same day of receipt.

2.2.3.3. Other requests for works can relate to risk or nuisance but are also sometimes concerned with a personal preference or a perceived problem that does not constitute an actionable nuisance or a genuine risk. The most common subjects of such requests are:

- Shade casting/reduced light to properties
- Effects on TV or satellite reception
- Obstruction of views
- Obstruction of or contact with telephone lines
- Interference with other vegetation
- Minor or seasonal nuisances
- Perceived risk and 'worry'
- Aphid excretion (honeydew or sap)
- Bird droppings
- Algae, lichen or moss growth (typically associated with shade)
- Leaf, fruit, twig or flower shedding
- Germinating seedlings in gardens
- Aesthetic preference or opinion ('untidiness')

2.2.3.4. Whilst Stockton Council appreciates that these issues may cause real concern to some individuals, they are not generally considered to be unacceptable, or legally actionable.

2.2.3.5. The Council cannot manage its trees and hedges according to the sensitivities or preferences of individuals where these are beyond the scope of normal attitudes or opinions, particularly where this would incur disproportionate cost.

2.2.3.6. The above issues are relatively minor when judged against the many wider benefits of having trees and hedges within an urban environment and public space, which are fundamental to the aims and purposes of the Council and the delivery of its strategic objectives, including those relating to the climate emergency, and its legal obligations. Stockton Council is unlikely to prune trees or hedges in response to the above issues.

2.2.3.7. The Council receives several hundred service requests from members of the public and outside agencies each year, requesting advice or for work to be undertaken to trees, hedgerows and woodlands. To ensure that requests for works to trees are dealt with efficiently, consistently, and fairly, the council adopt a priority system for dealing with enquiries.

2.2.4. Emergency Work

2.2.4.1. Emergency issues (recently damaged trees) will be reviewed and actioned on the same day as receipt. These are considered as 'emergency call outs'.

2.2.4.2. We respond to incident reports within the same working day, and this would include reports of

- Fallen trees or branches i.e. storm damage.
- Vandalism/ anti-social behaviour and associated damage.

- Urgent tree related damage

2.2.4.3. An emergency call out includes responding to incidents that affect the safe use of the public highway. Once a public highway is made safe, all other incidents including remaining clearance works will be dealt with shortly afterwards, as other priorities and resources allow.

2.2.5. Routine Maintenance

2.2.5.1. As part of its regular inspection of the maintenance of trees and hedges that it owns, the council undertake routine works such as maintenance for highway visibility and footpath clearances. These typically include clearances above paths, parking and vehicular routes, clearance around signs and lights, and clearances from built structures and important lines of sight.

2.2.6. Priority 1 Service Requests

2.2.6.1. These requests are reviewed within 28 working days following the issue being reported. Priority 1 requests include dealing with dead, dying or dangerous trees, storm damage, trees causing actual damage or direct interference with private property/structures, highway obstructions, street lighting obstruction, reports of vandalism or other incidents.

2.2.6.2. The council will log an enquiry as a Priority 1 service request, where it considers there to be a significant health and safety issue, legal obligation or actionable nuisance to persons or property or an incident relating to trees. Categorized as follows:

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Incident reporting / Emergency Call Outs	Vandalism to trees, snapped trees, ring barked, fire damage

	Storm damaged or fallen trees/ branches
	Dead, dying or dangerous trees
	Actual Damage to property caused by falling trees or branches
Tree work & tree inspection Requests	Tree Causing direct obstructions in public Highway
	Blocking public path or road access / driveway
	Obstructing road sign or signals
	Obstructing street lighting
	Tree causing <u>actual</u> visible damage to property, e.g. wall, driveway, subsidence to house
	Trees touching house, buildings other structures that need cut back
Tree Advice	Advice to external companies / utility providers
	Tree Preservation Orders / Trees in Conservation Areas
Tree Planting	Memorial or dedicated trees (online application form)

2.2.7. Actionable Nuisance

2.2.7.1. Trees that fit into the category of created a legally defined ‘nuisance’ (i.e. one that is in contact with a property or structure therefore causing an actionable nuisance) may be pruned, where this is the most reasonable, effective and proportionate means of abating the issue. Therefore, such enquiries would be within the category of being a Priority 1 service request.

2.2.8. Priority 2 Service Requests

2.2.8.1. These would be any other request not included within Priority 1 essential maintenance and would normally be assessed during the next scheduled survey for the area in question.

2.2.9. Defining Nuisance & Negligence

2.2.9.1. To be liable under 'nuisance' there would normally have to be some form of damage or injury to a third party, an act or an omission (due to negligence) on the part of the duty holder (i.e. tree owner) and a reasonable degree of foreseeability including the ability to have taken preventive action.

2.2.9.2. Conversely, a landowner (tree owner) will not be liable for damage or injury caused by trees if it was not considered to be foreseeable and could not have reasonably been able to take preventive action (Acts of God). An example could be the failure of an otherwise sound tree branch in stormy weather conditions.

2.2.10. Example of Actionable (Legal) Nuisance

2.2.10.1. A legal nuisance may be where a tree causes direct property damage or where it is deemed to cause unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of an adjoining property and this is usually defined whereby the nature and extent of the 'interference' may give rise to an action for damages against the tree owner (actionable nuisance), e.g. blocking a public highway.

2.2.10.2. It generally excludes 'nuisance' in the everyday sense, e.g. from shading, leaf litter, and debris. etc which would normally be regarded in legal terms as 'inconvenience' and that would not normally require preventive or remedial action by the tree owner.

2.2.10.3. Failure to inspect and maintain a tree appropriately may result in 'negligence' which can, in turn, give rise to an action for damages against the owner: for example, if the long-standing dead or unstable

tree that the owner ought to have been aware of through inspection and survey procedures, falls on a highway causing injury or damage. Records of Common Law cases relating to trees can be found in case law index (UK).

2.2.11. Insurance Services

2.2.11.1. Stockton Council's Insurance department manages all claims relating to Council owned trees. Where a council tree is implicated as having caused property damage, the onus is on the claimant to provide evidence that the tree is the cause. Occupiers of adjacent land will be expected to provide evidence that a particular tree is causing any alleged damage and action will not be taken solely based on an allegation. Any course of action will be informed by the quality and state of repair of the structure in question and its ability to withstand reasonable and normal influences by the presence or activity of trees or hedges. If there is proof and implication of further damage towards a structure or property, the Council will review the implications and evidence and act accordingly. Typically, this would include works to remove obstructions by overhanging branches, or to remove a proven cause of subsidence or other structural damage.

2.2.11.2. Example: Garden Wall Damage

2.2.11.2.1. Damage to light structures, for example walls and patio flags is remediable and would not usually warrant the removal of a tree or hedge.

2.2.11.2.2. It is common, when a path or wall is speculatively damaged by tree roots, to suggest that the tree is removed, however this is not always required. It can be less expensive to repair the structure using slightly different methods which allow the tree to be retained and so save felling and reinstatement costs.

2.2.12. Our broader statements on tree and woodland management are as follows:

2.2.12.1. Healthy trees and woodlands will be protected, retained and managed to ensure healthy growth, development and species diversity. Trees will be managed in line with our Tree Management Policy.

2.2.12.2. Stockton Council's tree stock and canopy cover will be increased to give greater species and age diversity to ensure a healthy, balanced tree population.

2.2.12.3. Stockton Council will use its powers to prevent unnecessary damage to trees within all construction/development in accordance with the current version of BS5837 and pursue enforcement action where appropriate if trees are damaged or destroyed.

2.2.12.4. Using powers available under the Town and Country Planning Act, related legislation and or/lease clauses Stockton Council will, in the interests of amenity, protect trees and woodlands that are of acknowledged value where they are visible to the public, are in reasonable health and condition and where there is a threat.

2.2.12.5. Where council land containing trees is to be sold the trees will be assessed to determine whether protection via a TPO or restrictive clause in a lease is appropriate to ensure retention for the benefit of the wider population.

2.2.12.6. Stockton Council will engage with partners, the public and other landowners to raise awareness of tree protection, maintenance, planting and establishment best practice.

2.2.12.7. Stockton Council will seek compensation from any external organisation responsible for significant damage to or removal of any council owned trees to the value as calculated by CAVAT.

2.3. Summary of Policy for Public Service Requests

2.3.1. The following are our principles of management according to the variety of service requests that we receive.

2.3.2. Felling Trees

2.3.2.1. Stockton Council will generally avoid felling trees unless it is necessary.

2.3.2.2. Trees will only be removed on council land in one of the following circumstances:

- The removal of the tree will benefit the development of nearby better quality neighbouring trees and will maintain or improve a sustainable tree population e.g. woodland thinning.
- The tree is, in the view of an arboriculturist, of a size and/or species that is unsuitable for its location.
- The tree is proven to have caused significant structural damage, such as by subsidence, and that removal will mitigate further damage as the only way the problem can be solved.
- Where tree removal is unavoidable, to deliver other council services and objectives, where the benefits clearly outweigh the loss of the tree.
- Tree removal where it is the only practical means of complying with a statutory duty.
- The tree is in a dead, dying or dangerous condition, and felling, or regular heavy pruning, is the only way to satisfactorily remedy the situation.

- The tree is growing in an unsuitable location, and it is foreseeable that the tree will require regular heavy pruning or removal in the future to mitigate the above effects.
- If the tree is protected by a TPO and the proposed works are exempt under existing TPO legislation.

2.3.3. Tree Pruning

2.3.3.1. Permission for pruning will normally only be granted where the work is in line with good arboricultural practice and:

- It is required to prevent direct or indirect physical damage to buildings.
- Accords with the current version of British Standard 3998 'Recommendations for Tree Work' (see Appendix: *Pruning Techniques*)
- Would not adversely affect the tree's long-term health and amenity value.
- Where it is necessary to improve the growth of adjacent better quality trees.
- to abate a statutory nuisance.

2.3.3.2. The Council will not support heavy pruning or removal of trees that do not accord with the above, or for the following reasons:

- Blockage of light
- Loss of Views
- Interference with television or satellite dish reception
- Excessive leaf fall, fruit fall or other deposits
- Branches interfering with telephone lines
- Mess caused by insects or birds
- Damage to drains and water pipes
- Problems associated with pollen
- Root invasion in gardens
- Where the tree is perceived to be too large

- Because someone is willing to pay for the removal and replacement of the tree

2.3.3.3. To explain reasons for work further, we can investigate each issue in more detail:

2.3.4. Overhanging or Obstructing Branches

2.3.4.1. Under English Common Law a landowner is entitled to cut branches back to their property boundary, but not beyond. The Council will only consider cutting back branches from trees that overhang adjoining private property if it considers the trees or vegetation in question are causing a severe encroachment.

2.3.4.2. We will not cut back trees if they are partially overhanging properties and in the council's opinion, not considered to be causing an unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of property.

2.3.5. Shading and Loss of Light

2.3.5.1. The Council will not normally prune or remove trees to alleviate light loss unless the trees are causing substantial encroachment into a property or in the council's opinion, are causing unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of property. There is currently no legal right to direct sunlight or to a view and often pruning trees will only marginally improve the amount of natural light reaching a house or garden.

2.3.6. Television and Satellite Reception

2.3.6.1. Although a television license allows the operation of equipment to receive a transmission, it is not a guarantee of television reception, and a television owner does not have a legal right to a viewable image.

2.3.6.2. Removal or pruning of trees to enable a clear television reception will not normally be considered. Most televisions allow for a degree of variation in reception, which usually enables a viewable image, whereas satellite dishes need a clear line of view to the satellite.

2.3.6.3. Where there is a persistent problem and tree pruning cannot provide a reasonable solution, it will normally be necessary to seek further specialist advice to assist in either repositioning or improving the quality of the aerial device.

2.3.7. Bird Droppings, Falling Leaves, Fruit/Flowers, Seeds or other Deposits, Insects, Pollen Allergies

2.3.7.1. These types of nuisances associated with trees are mostly natural and short spanning seasonal occurrences.

2.3.7.2. However, they are not regarded in Law as a 'legal nuisance' that puts an obligation on the tree owner to take remedial action. Instead, the Law regards these types of nuisances as 'inconveniences' or 'everyday nuisances' which should normally be dealt with by individual landowners as part of 'property maintenance'. The Council will not therefore undertake tree pruning or removals to try and alleviate the effects of these types of nuisances.

2.3.7.3. If a member of the public however has concerns over the cleanliness or safety of local public footpaths, they are advised to contact Care for Your Area on (01642 391959), who may consider additional cleansing within this area.

2.3.8. Overhead Cables and Other Utilities

2.3.8.1. Utility companies have certain legal rights to carry out works on public or privately owned trees to address health and safety

problems and to maintain a clearance between trees and their apparatus. This may sometimes involve minor pruning or even the loss of trees. Where works to trees are necessary as a result of proximity or conflict, the Council will encourage utility operators to adopt the most appropriate long term solution, considering future tree health, plus the impact on local tree cover and visual amenities.

2.3.8.2. Problems caused by branches interfering with privately owned telephone wires should be taken to the service provider as they would have the expert opinion to determine when an issue is actionable. They may be able to reroute a cable to avoid a tree canopy. Trees and telephone wires are normally a compatible scenario unless excessive strain is on a wire. The Council would work with the service provider where required however we rarely receive requests from providers to attend to pruning to clear telephone cables. Tree removal will not usually be considered.

2.3.9. Tree Roots

2.3.9.1. Many tree conflicts arise on account of the presence of tree roots and the perception that they are causing damage. Tree root issues are normally very speculative when viewed from above ground and where damage is alleged, each complaint will be investigated on an individual basis. The following guidance will be used in assessing levels of nuisance and identifying appropriate action:

2.3.10. Root Invasion in Gardens

2.3.10.1. Tree roots in gardens are a natural and common occurrence and root presence is unlikely to be affected by tree pruning or removal. Landowners have a common law right to prune back tree roots to their boundary, providing that this would not lead to tree death or instability and providing that the tree in question is not protected by a Tree preservation order (TPO) or situated within a Conservation Area.

2.3.10.2. Most species of deciduous trees will re-sprout from the stump when cut down. Many species will also produce a new growth shoot from a root if it becomes exposed to sunlight through ground erosion. Some species readily produce shoots from their buried roots to regenerate and this is often stimulated by stresses, such as heavy pruning or felling, or localised ground disturbance. Several tree species (including cherry and poplar) are likely to produce root suckers as a response to being felled. These can be physically removed and chemically treated using a weedkiller until they cease to persist.

2.3.10.3. The encroachment of roots into adjoining land is not considered to amount to actionable legal nuisance unless the roots proceed to cause direct property damage. In most cases, roots can be pruned or accommodated.

2.3.11. Damage to Walls, Fences and Paths

2.3.11.1. It is normally possible to build or repair garden walls, fences, and paths to take account of adjacent trees. This can be achieved in several ways (for example installing a section of railing or bridging foundations around the base of a tree). Where trees are causing damage to walls or fences, Stockton Council will normally consider tree removal only where the wall or fence is irreplaceable and of exceptional importance e.g. a retaining wall or of historical interest. If a damaged wall or fence was constructed after planting the tree, it may mean that the design or construction has failed to take the presence of nearby trees into account. The structure should normally be repaired or rebuilt to accommodate the tree. If a tree was planted or self-sown after the wall was constructed and is subsequently deemed to be unsuitable for long-term retention/ or has already caused damage it will normally be removed – this will be determined by the anticipated cost and ability to implement a lasting repair.

2.3.11.2. In the event this type of direct damage has been caused the third party owner may be entitled to claim repair costs against Stockton Council.

2.3.12. Tree Influence on Ornamental Landscaping Features

2.3.12.1. The Council will not normally remove trees because they are disrupting pavements, kerbs, garden paths and walls.

2.3.13. Damage To Property

2.3.13.1. Tree removal will not normally be considered as a response to complaints about damage where insufficient evidence of the tree's contribution to damage is submitted, or where building or foundation design has failed to consider the presence, at the time of construction, of established or newly planted trees.

2.3.14. Damage to Drains or Water Pipes

2.3.14.1. There is no evidence to suggest that tree roots can actively penetrate an intact pipe or drain, however, fibrous roots will commonly exploit defects in pipe work that result in water leakages. In these situations, the owner of the drain should seek to get the drain repaired or replaced at their own expense and prune roots directly interfering with the pipe work. Tree removal or other pruning work will not normally be considered unless the tree is clearly shown to have caused direct damage from root plate movement or is otherwise unsuitable for longer-term retention.

2.3.15. Subsidence

2.3.15.1. Tree-related building subsidence is generally only a problem in those areas that are underlain with shrinkable clays (or sometimes peat). Although trees are commonly implicated as being a cause of damage, a variety of other factors can also be a significant cause of structural failure: this includes, for example, inadequate foundation design, structural works to adjacent properties, internal alterations, different foundation depths or construction methods between

buildings and extensions, change of surface materials close to trees, or seepage from broken or poorly maintained water pipes.

2.3.16. Removal Of A TPO Or Conservation Area Tree

2.3.16.1. When a TPO tree is alleged to be causing damage to a building and the only remedy is tree removal, the tree owner would apply to the Council in this regard, and the Council will permit the removal of the tree provided that:

- There is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the tree is an influencing cause.
- The removal of the tree, or regular heavy pruning that might affect the public amenity value of the tree, is necessary to deal with the problem, and;
- The removal can be carried out without contravening wildlife legislation.

2.3.17. Evidencing Damage Caused by Trees with a TPO

2.3.17.1. Applications for works to protected trees (i.e. those within a Conservation Area or under a Tree Preservation Order) on private land, about alleged damage, are expected to be accompanied by evidence to show that the tree in question is a significant contributory factor or effective cause of the reported damage.

2.3.17.2. For example, permission to remove trees, or carry out works to trees, may not be considered on the grounds of subsidence alone without evidence of the following:

- Structural report providing a detailed appraisal of actual damage including crack or level monitoring records over a sufficient period; Category of Damage rating as per Building Research Establishment classifications.
- Formal identification of live roots of the same family or species found below the level of the foundation depth;
- Soil moisture tests at varying depths to below foundation level;

- Geo-technical survey indicating trial pits, and soil profiles; Evidence of desiccated soil;
- Details of other vegetation within the theoretical 'zone of influence';
- Confirmation of foundation depths and whether the building was constructed before or after the tree was planted;
- Other evidence may be required in some circumstances, such as a survey of the drainage system.

2.3.17.3. The Council may obtain expert specialist advice to verify submitted evidence as necessary.

2.3.17.4. Removal of trees will **not** normally be considered where insufficient evidence is submitted or where building or foundation design has failed to take into account the presence, at the time of construction, of established or newly planted trees.

2.3.18. Insurance Claims Relating to Trees Owned by Stockton Council

2.3.18.1. As above 'evidencing damage caused by trees': claims are to be directed, in the first instance, to Stockton Council's Risk Management & Insurance Services. They may then be dealt with by the Council's Independent Claims Handlers or Insurers, who may request appropriate supplementary information.

APPENDICES

i. Summary of Legal Background

The Local Authority must ensure tree and woodland management services are undertaken according to its statutory requirements and best practices. The main elements are summarised below:

Legislation and Statutory Duties for Local Authorities Pertaining to Trees

Statute Law (Acts of Parliament & Regulations)

Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984 /

Health & Safety Executive: Risk from Falling Trees

The Local Authority is required to have an appropriate defensible system in place for the inspection and maintenance of trees and woodlands within its ownership.

This normally requires:

- Undertaking regular inspections of all trees and woodlands within its ownership.
- Maintaining adequate records of surveys and inspections.
- Implementing an ongoing programme of essential tree maintenance.

Highways Act 1980 (S. 96, 154)

The Local Authority must manage trees on or adjacent to the highway to ensure they do not interfere with the safe use of the highway such as maintaining adequate branch clearances over footpaths and carriageways and preventing trees from interfering with highway signage, lighting, sight lines, surfacing, structures or cause obstructions.

The Local Authority must also identify dead, dying or dangerous trees/branches that may foreseeably fall onto the highway and make sure these are removed.

The Local Authority has powers within the Act to notify and serve legal notices on private landowners, e.g. if dead, dying or dangerous trees are identified on private

land that interfere with the safe use of the highway. Notice can be served requiring essential remedial works to be undertaken within a specified timescale.

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (S.23 & 24)

Local Authorities have powers within the Act to notify and serve legal notice on private landowners, e.g. if dead, dying, or dangerous trees are identified on private land that may affect public safety. Similar to the Highways Act, notice can be served requiring essential remedial works to be undertaken within a specified timescale.

Unsafe Trees on Private Land

Owners and occupiers have a duty of care to others with regard to the safety of the trees on their land under the Occupiers Liability Act. If trees are dangerous, the Council have powers granted under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976 to require an owner to make safe a tree which is deemed to be an immediate threat to people or property. In the absence of the landowner, the Council can also act directly in the interests of public safety and recover any reasonable costs associated with the works. Any other dispute between neighbours is a private matter which should be resolved between the affected parties. Where private trees are considered a threat to users of the highway or public footpaths, the Council have powers under Section 154 of the Highways Act 1980 and can require the owner to make the trees safe. If trees and hedges are causing an obstruction to the highway the Council will issue a letter requesting works to be carried out to remove the obstruction within 28 days. If the works are not carried out in this time a formal notice will be issued giving a further 14 days to have the works carried out. If the works are still not carried out after this time legal proceedings may be instigated. Even if the trees are protected emergency work can be carried out if specified by an arborist. Owners are advised to contact Planning to discuss the extent of the works and any additional balancing of the crown which may be required.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (Tree Preservation Orders)

Under section 198, the LA has powers to make and serve Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on private land. This will normally include the protection of prominent trees where it is deemed 'expedient in the interests of amenity'.

The order makes it an offence to cut down, uproot, prune, damage or destroy the tree/s without written consent from the LPA (exemptions apply in certain circumstances).

Tree owners must therefore apply to the LA planning department before undertaking work on protected trees.

Anyone found guilty of cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping or wilfully damaging a tree in a way that is likely to destroy it (including destruction of a tree's amenity value) is liable to a fine of up to £20,000 if convicted in the Magistrates' Court, or an unlimited fine if convicted in the Crown Court. The maximum penalty for contravention of the regulations in a way that does not lead to the destruction of the tree (or its value as an amenity) is £2,500 in the Magistrates' Court.

Trees and Their Protection During Development

Under section 197 of the Act, the Local Authority must make provision for the preservation of trees and must regard them as a 'material consideration' when granting planning permission.

The Council will be guided by 'British Standard 5837: Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction 2012 - Recommendations' and impose conditions where necessary to ensure trees are adequately protected during the process of new development, including all associated demolition and construction works.

The Council will also make provision for the planting of replacement trees that are lost during the course of new development and ensure that adequate new planting is included where possible.

Trees in Conservation Areas

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes special provisions for trees located within Conservation Areas.

In summary, before carrying out works to any tree with a stem diameter greater than 75mm, 6 weeks written notice must be made to the LPA, describing the trees, their location and the works to be carried out. The LPA will consider whether or not to

place a TPO on to the tree(s) in question. Not giving the requisite notice before carrying out tree works is an offence under the Act,

The exemptions and penalties for trees in Conservation Areas are the same as those applicable to trees under Tree preservation orders.

Planning Enforcement

The LPA has enforcement powers under the Act for dealing with unauthorised works or damage to protected trees, or to require the replacement of trees.

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 Part 8.

High Hedges: The Local Authority has enforcement powers under the Act for dealing with neighbour disputes about High Hedges. This includes procedures for enforcing the management of 'evergreen' hedges that cause a nuisance to a third party (neighbour). This does not include non-evergreen hedges or trees. Following a complaint being registered to the Planning Dept of the Local Authority, the Local Authority can then review, and enforce reduction of hedges that are deemed to cause a nuisance, where appropriate.

Forestry Act 1967

Forestry Commission (FC) Felling Licences: The Forestry Act contains legislation that gives the Forestry Commission powers to control the number of trees being felled at any one time. A felling licence is usually required where 5 or more cubic metres of wood are to be felled within any calendar quarter.

Certain requirements and exemptions apply, and these can be confirmed by the Forestry Commission, which deals with Felling Licences.

The Forestry Commission can be contacted at northeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Hedgerow Regulations 1997

Hedgerow Protection: Where applicable landowners must submit a Hedgerow Removal Notice to the LPA if they intend to remove hedgerows. The LPA has powers to serve Hedge Retention Notice to protect important hedges under the terms of the Regulations.

Section 40 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (Nerc) Act 2006

Conserving Biodiversity 'Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'.

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Countryside Right of Way (Crow) Act 2000 / Conservation Of Species And Habitats Regulations 2010

Certain listed species of plants and animals and their habitats are protected by legislation (inc. under European Habitats Directive 1992). The Council therefore must comply with applicable regulations to protect wildlife including species and their habitats.

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

All operational tree work must comply with the provisions under the Act, including relevant regulations and associated best practice guidance:

For example, organisations must ensure they have appropriate arrangements for health and safety including a written health and safety policy, risk management systems, suitably trained personnel.

Examples of relevant regulations and best practice include following:

- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Working at Height Regulations 2005
- New Roads & Street works Act 1991 / Chapter 8 Regulations
- Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998
- PPE at Work Regulations,
- Noise Regulations
- Control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH)
- First Aid / Accident Reporting
- Codes of Practice / Arboriculture Forestry Advisory Guides (AFAG) / HSE Guidance
- Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 / Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010

English Common Law (Case Law) - Nuisance & Negligence

In exercising its functions, the Local Authority must pay due regard to English Common Law regarding the management of trees to limit potential liability for claims of nuisance or negligence. Where no specific Statutory Law exists, past legal judgements and precedents under English Common Law form the basis of resolving disputes between landowners; outlining their responsibilities and establishing liability in the event of injury or damage caused to third parties. Many Common Law judgements and precedents exist in respect of trees and carry significant weighting in the resolution of civil disputes, insurance claims, etc. In most cases, judgements are made on the grounds of what is deemed reasonable and what would be considered the appropriate actions of a prudent or reasonable person.

The Council's tree management policy and procedures are therefore based on its interpretation of resultant best practice: For example, the Local Authority aims to take reasonable care within its means to manage trees and woodlands in such a way as they do not cause a legal or 'actionable' nuisance to a third party and it is not negligent in its legal duty of care: this normally requires it has a defensible and pro-active system of inspection and maintenance in place.

ii Tree Management Service – FAQ's

Please can you arrange overgrown trees to be cut back?

The Council will only cut back trees if they are severely overhanging into a property and considered to be causing unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of property, not simply if they are considered 'too big' in a general sense.

Can I cut back trees to my boundary?

A landowner is entitled to cut branches or roots back to their boundary but not beyond. You must also check first if the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or if you are within a Conservation Area as you will need to apply for permission first.

Trees are blocking light/shading my garden.

There is no absolute right to light or a view. The Council will only consider cutting back trees if they are severely overhanging into a property or if it considers them to be causing unreasonable interference with the use and enjoyment of property.

Trees are blocking a streetlamp/obscuring a road sign/blocking a road or path?

The Council will arrange to inspect the tree/s and have the necessary work carried out – if the trees are privately owned we will write to the landowner first and request they carry out the work.

The tree is damaging my fence/wall/driveway etc.

The Council will contact you to arrange an inspection and advise what action can be taken. In some cases you may be entitled to claim repair costs for any damage caused.

Tree/s are damaging my drains.

The Council will not normally accept any liability for reported damage to drains and is therefore unlikely to prune or remove trees. Tree roots will often exploit defects in pipe work/seals etc but will not 'break and enter' an otherwise intact drainage system.

How tall is a tree allowed to grow?

There is no law on how tall a tree can grow although in some cases there are restrictions on Evergreen Hedges (Leylandii) – contact Planning Enforcement for further advice.

Does the Council do work on privately owned trees, or can the Council recommend a suitable tree work contractor?

The Council does not undertake tree work on private land but can provide a suggested list of contractors and consultants if required.

Is my tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order?

The Council's Planning Department has records of all protected trees – please contact Care for Your Area for this information.

The tree is interfering with my TV reception/satellite dish.

There is no legal right to receiving a TV or satellite reception therefore the Council will not normally prune trees back to alleviate interference, and not if it is likely to damage or disfigure a tree.

Tree is dropping sap/honeydew on my car.

This is not classed as a legal nuisance and the Council will not therefore undertake pruning to alleviate this -the owner of the car would be expected to either wash or cover the car, or park elsewhere.

Does the Council clear fallen leaves?

Usually no, except in some instances where some Council depts have special arrangements for this, e.g. Clearing roadside gullies, Care Homes, etc It is and landowners' responsibility to undertake maintenance of their properties regardless of where leaves originate from.

I think a tree is dangerous.

Please contact Care for Your Area and state where the tree is and why you think it is dangerous and it will be inspected by one of the Council's Tree & Woodland Officers.

I live in a thirteen house and would like a tree pruned or cut down?

Please contact thirteen direct with all tree work or inspection requests.

How often does the Council inspect trees?

All trees and woodlands are on a cyclical survey programme and are inspected by a qualified arborist a minimum of every 3 years. Some trees are inspected more often, for example trees in town centres and schools are inspected once a year.

I would like a tree/tree's to be planted near where I live.

Please contact the Council's Customer Services team with details of where you would like tree/s planted and your request will be reviewed before the next planting season (December-March).

I would like a dedicated tree to be planted.

Please go to Stockton Council's website and complete the online application.

A member of staff will contact you to discuss your request at the time of receipt of the application and in more detail a few weeks before the start of the planting season.

Does the Council have a programme for planting new trees?

Yes, the Council has a tree planting programme and, subject to funding, undertakes schemes on green spaces, parks, highways and other public open spaces where new trees are likely to provide the greatest benefit to the environment and public amenity. This can include planting of individual trees, the creation of small woodlands as well as under-planting in areas of existing woodland

When will my tree be inspected? – I phoned up a few weeks ago?

All service requests are logged and given a priority rating:

Priority 1 Service requests will be inspected within 28 working days and will include dead, dying dangerous trees, anything health & and safety related or that implies a legal obligation on the Council. This will also include general advice requested over the phone.

All other service requests will be logged as Priority 2 service requests and dealt with depending on the current volume of service requests with no pre-determined response timescale.

Please note that requests for works that are not deemed essential or considered appropriate management of trees may be declined.

iii Explanation of Pruning Techniques

In carrying out any tree works, the overall amenity value, form, condition, health and shape of the tree must be retained.

All tree works shall be carried out by BS 3998: Recommendations for Tree Work 2010.

Description of Tree Pruning:

Crown Lifting

The removal of the lowest branches of a tree so that the remaining lowest branches are at a specified height, usually 2.5m over a footpath and 5m over a road unless otherwise stated. This operation is undertaken for several reasons, such as: to allow access under a tree; to clear branches from low structures; or to allow light under the canopy.

Crown Thinning

The removal of a specified proportion of branch material from the interior of the crown without affecting the crown shape of the tree. This operation is usually undertaken to: reduce crown density and wind resistance; form a healthy branch structure by removing dead; diseased, damaged, crossing and rubbing branches, and allow more light through the canopy.

Pollarding

This severe operation entails the removal of the entire tree's branch structure back to the trunk or main branch forks. An ancient way of maintaining trees that is sometimes necessary, particularly on trees that have been pollarded before. Only certain species will tolerate this degree of pruning, and new growth may be weak and prone to tearing off. This method of management is not therefore normally acceptable unless required as a last resort for retaining a tree or removing hazardous branches.

Crown Reduction

Reducing the overall size and spread of the crown area by a specified percentage by pruning back the leaders and branch terminals (outermost branches) to lateral branches that are large enough to assume the terminal roles (at least one-third the diameter of the cut stem).

Topping

This entails cutting at a certain height to reduce the height of the tree. Topping is not acceptable as it severely affects the public amenity and health of the tree,

sometimes leading to death. Topping can also lead to future problems due to a flush of weak re-growth that can represent a danger and also exacerbate existing problems. If height reduction is considered essential and unavoidable, crown reduction (see above) is preferred.

Dead Wooding or Crown Clean

This operation is similar to a crown thin except that only dead, diseased, crossing and rubbing branches are removed to tidy up the appearance of the tree. No healthy, sound wood is removed. This operation is recommended to help maintain a healthy, safe tree.

Formative Pruning

The removal of problematic or potentially problematic branches, ensures good tree development.

iv Tree Planting Selection in The Urban Environment

Many tree species and cultivated varieties may be suitable for use provided they are carefully selected following the principles of good landscape design and are compatible with and sustainable in their intended environment.

The trees selected will include those of favoured ornamental form and character that will potentially provide high amenity value however the suitability of individual species will be highly dependent on the conditions and local environment where they are to be planted.

Trees selected for planting in the borough will include both native and non-native/exotic species: Native species will primarily be used in natural green spaces, wildlife corridors and rural countryside areas to help support local biodiversity but will also be included in formal urban settings where possible; Non-native or exotic trees will generally only be used within more urban landscapes such as formal parks, green spaces or built environments where they function primarily as specimen ornamental features.

Individual tree species have different ideal growing conditions therefore consideration will be given to physical and environmental factors such as soil type, exposure, site drainage and water requirements, pollution tolerance, light conditions etc.

Tree selection will also give careful consideration to the ultimate size and spread of tree/s about the available growing space, the growth habit and form of the trees, and any associated characteristics of the species (including, for example, any negative characteristics, e.g. shedding of honeydew in parking areas).

Some trees will be suited for use as individual specimen trees of high ornamental value and some may be suitable for use in large numbers for avenues, groups or simply creating 'green mass' in open spaces where tree cover/landscaping is otherwise absent or minimal.

New trees introduced to the landscape need to be compatible with existing trees as well as each other and new schemes will seek to adhere to principles of good landscape design: tree planting layouts should complement existing buildings, highways, other structures, landscape features etc and be in scale and context with surroundings, present and future.

Number of tree species used should be proportionate to the total numbers of trees planted and not overcomplicated by the use of too many species.

New tree planting schemes as well as the placement of single trees in the landscape will aim to be 'sustainable' and represent a long term investment in the urban landscape – new trees would have a good prospect for long term retention/ensure selected trees are planted where they can grow to full size and maturity and add value to the landscape.

Tree planting specifications are equally important to ensure trees have adequate growing medium to ensure they can mature in their location, receive adequate aftercare and are protected during their establishment phase through to future independence in the landscape.

v. Definitions of Statutory or Essential Inspection & Maintenance

Tree Work Inspection & Maintenance Programme

All Council owned trees will be inspected on a regular cycle as part of an ongoing programme of 1-3 years depending on location. The Council will seek to address common management issues and arrange statutory, legal or essential tree maintenance as part of an ongoing work programme. ‘Essential work’ will include pruning trees to maintain clearances near structures, houses, road and footpaths, street lighting, signage and to maintain general health and safety.

Request for Services: Priority 1

The Council will log an enquiry as a Priority 1 service request, where it considers there to be a significant health and safety issue, legal obligation or actionable nuisance to persons or property or an incident relating to trees. Categorized as follows:

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Incident reporting / Emergency Call Outs	Vandalism to trees, snapped trees, ring barked, fire damage
	Storm damaged or fallen trees/ branches
	Dead, dying or dangerous trees
	Actual Damage to property caused by falling trees or branches
Tree work & tree inspection Requests	Tree Causing direct obstructions in public Highway
	Blocking public path or road access / driveway
	Obstructing road sign or signals
	Obstructing street lighting
	Tree causing <u>actual</u> visible damage to property, e.g. wall, driveway, subsidence to house
	Trees touching house, buildings other structures that need cut back

Tree Advice	Advice to external companies / utility providers
	Tree Preservation Orders / Trees in Conservation Areas
Tree Planting	Memorial trees (online application form)

Following inspection, the Council will undertake work where it is deemed to require statutory or essential maintenance.

The Council is not obliged however, to take undertake work in response to requests that are considered non statutory, non essential, or contrary to good arboricultural practices, therefore in most cases the Council will decline any such requests.

Emergency Incident Reporting/Emergency Call Outs

The Council will respond to general incident reports within 28 days and all Emergency Call Outs within 1 working day.

During normal working hours between 7.30am to 3.30pm, the Grounds Maintenance team will respond to incident reports and emergency calls outs via the customer service team on 01642 391959. Outside these normal working hours the Council will respond to incidents reported via the CCTV security centre on 01642 528989.

If an emergency call out is received outside normal working hours we will only respond to incidents that directly affect the safe use of the public Highway or cause significant direct damage to property. This will only include undertaking the minimum work necessary to make the site safe e.g. cordoning off affected areas and / or removing obstructions, debris, fallen trees or branches from the public Highway or affected properties. Once minimum works have been undertaken, any remaining clearance works or other non-urgent remedial works will be dealt with during normal working hours.

Requests for Tree Planting

Requests for Memorial or Commemorative trees can be made via an application form obtainable on the Council website.

Non-Statutory or Non-Essential Services

This will include all other enquiries where the Council is not legally obliged to respond or take action or that are not considered to require essential tree works in line with good practice. For example, where there is no immediate danger or health and safety issue, or no direct damage or legal nuisance.

The Council will therefore not give priority to pruning trees that are reported to be blocking sunlight or a view, complaints about leaf fall, debris, overhanging branches, trees obstructing satellite dishes, overgrown trees etc.

These types of enquiries will not be logged for an officer response or further action, however the customer service team will provide general advice in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures: All policies relating to tree management are closely guided by Statute Law (Acts of Parliament), English Common Law (Case Law) and modern Arboricultural best practices.

Further Guidance:

www.legislation.gov.uk (UK Statute Law)

www.trees.org.uk (UK Arboricultural Association)

www.stockton.gov.uk/trees (SBC web site)

Relevant Strategies, Policies, Publications & Best Practice:

Stockton Borough Council Summary Council Plan 2009-2012,

Stockton Renaissance, Sustainable Community Strategy 2008.

Tees Valley Green infrastructure Strategy/ Stockton Council green infrastructure strategy

Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (2008), Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy 2008: Enhancing the environment and achieving the economic and sustainable vision.

Defra (2007) A Strategy for England's Trees Woods & Forests.
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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

13th March 2025REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Health, Leisure and Culture Portfolio - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Steve Nelson

DRUG STRATEGY GRANTS 2025/26

SUMMARY

This report provides 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. This is the fourth year of funding, which complements the core contract for substance misuse services, and provides an additional £2.5million for 2025/26. The terms and conditions for these grants includes 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'.

The core contract for community-based substance misuse services is funded from the Public Health Grant. This paper refers to *additional* year-on-year grants provided via a memorandum of understanding with OHID:

Grant component	Indicative 2025/26
SSMTRG	£2,234,503
IPD	£61,891
<i>DATRIG (total of above)</i>	<i>£2,296,394</i>
<i>IPS</i>	<i>£256,133</i>

Drug and alcohol treatment and recovery improvement grant (DATRIG) is a single payment to SBC which covers both the SSMTRG and the IPD. Funding for these streams is at the same allocation as 2024/25. IPS is a stand-alone grant and has increased by £22k for North of Tees (SBC and HBC). £1.8m of the above funding is captured in the annual procurement plan (Cabinet, 13/03/25). This briefing sets out broader context to Cabinet, on the package of proposals against the drugs strategy grant, submitted to OHID on 28/02/25.

The planned expenditure will build on activity that has led to improved outcomes and delivery of national targets in 2024/25.

Recommended that the report be noted.

Detail

1. The drug strategy grants support the local delivery of national targets which stem from the national 10-year drug strategy '*From harm, to hope*' (Home Office, 2021). These include:
 - Increase people in treatment by 20% and reduce caseloads
 - Continuity of care for 75% of prison leavers
 - Improve quality of service – trauma informed care, integrated care, improved capacity, workforce development
 - Increase professional staff mix – mental health/psychology, social workers, nursing etc.
 - Reduce drug and alcohol related deaths
 - 2% of adult case load access rehab
2. In Stockton-on-Tees there have been significant improvements against these targets following focused spend of previous years' drugs strategy grant funding. This has led to recognition as a regional lead for continuity of care for prison leavers (increased from 51% in 2023 to 74% in 2024) and national lead for reducing waiting times for assessments (same day assessments now in place). Increased staffing capacity has reduced caseloads and increased opportunities to engage in treatment, through for example, mental health support, outreach, hospital-based treatment and support, hostel-based treatment and support.
3. Public health has worked stakeholders from across the system to ensure their input has helped develop approaches to improving access to and engagement in services. A stakeholder event in January 2024 saw multiple agencies and people with lived experience participate in shaping future plans for expenditure of the grants. The plan is therefore to continue services and interventions in 2025/26 and build on progress that has been made in previous years. The work links directly to the EIP transformation workstream on complex lives and therefore flexibility of approach is integral to the commissioned activities.
4. The planned expenditure increases the workforce and variety of approaches to engaging and motivating people in substance misuse treatment and recovery by:
 - Enhancing existing services e.g. Change Grow Live Stockton Recovery services
 - Building on effective local innovations e.g. Hartlepool and Stockton Health's award-winning outreach nursing service
 - Creating new avenues of support e.g. support into employment for people in treatment for substance misuse (known as Individual Placement Support).
 - Responding to needs identified locally e.g. bereavement support, bereavement is a risk factor in drug and alcohol related deaths (DARDs).

5. The table below provides an overview of the planned provision through the grants.

Year 4 (2025-26) Planned Expenditure

No.	Provider	Contract/Grant Name
SSMTRG 2025-26 (£2,234,503)		
1	Change Grow Live + Recovery Connections (Sub-contract)	Integrated Substance Misuse (ISM) Service
2	Bridges	Specialist Family & Carers Service
3	Cruse	DARD Bereavement Support Service
4	Hartlepool & Stockton Health (HaSH)	Substance Use Outreach Nurse Team
5		Primary Care Alcohol Pathway Development
6	North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)	Secondary Care Substance Use Practitioners
7	Alliance Psychology	In-Reach Talking Therapies and Counselling
8	Multiple providers & Commissioning support	Various e.g. A Way Out; Stockton BID
IPD 2025-26 (£61,891+£39,390)		
9	North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)	Alcohol In-Patient Detox (IPD)
IPS 2025-26 (£256,133)		
10	Recovery Connections	Individual Placement and Support (IPS)

£1.8m of the £2,234,503 in the table above (as proposed funding for Change Grow Live) is included on the annual procurement plan presented to Cabinet on 13/03/25.

Each of the above activities contributes to engaging people with substance misuse in treatment and recovery to improve health and life chances.

Consultation and Engagement

6. The expenditure of drug strategy grants directly targets communities at risk of or experiencing substance misuse. The involvement of that community in the development of proposals has shaped the priority areas for expenditure to address gaps in service, this includes for example addressing physical health needs, such as wound care, via an outreach nursing service.

Next Steps

7. Response is awaited from OHID on the planned expenditure outlined in this brief. Work will commence to implement activity against the grant with corresponding monitoring in place to measure impact.

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 13th MARCH 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Health, Leisure & Culture - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Steve Nelson

Sexual Health Service Procurement Update

Summary

This report provides an update on the procurement of a Tees Sexual Health Service (SHS).

Public Health have 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. There is a statutory duty for Local Authorities, NHS England (NHSE) and Integrated Care Board (ICB) to commission or provide sexual and reproductive health services, which are commissioned collaboratively across Teesside (*Appendix 1*).

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 has 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 Health and ELM Alliance Limited).

The model aims to enable more locally focused and community-based provision, balanced with efficiency of scale across Tees where appropriate. The providers operate as an existing integral part to the local health system. The Lead Member has been briefed throughout the process.

Recommended that the report be noted.

Detail

1. Teesside and Stockton-On-Tees experience a high level of sexual health risk and ill health and significant health inequalities (Tees Sexual Health Needs Assessment, 2023). The current sexual health service contract, held by [HCRG Care Group](#), ends on 31/07/2025 and has had some areas of under performance and reporting. Continuity of service delivery is a statutory requirement.
2. In July 2023 an independent sexual health review recommended no further contract extension; and going to market with a revised model for delivery of a new service from August 2025 as the most efficient and appropriate approach to meet local and Teesside needs (through a structured project - *Appendix 2*).

3. Three models were explored (*Appendix 3*). Following detailed review and consultation, the Collaborative agreed to Model 2: Tees Integrated Sexual Health Service (TISHS Lot 1) and a separate Community Contraceptive Service (CCS) in the North of Tees (CCS Lot 2a) and a Community Contraceptive Service in the South of Tees (CCS Lot 2b).
4. The rationale is that these balance economies of scale and service viability / resilience at Tees level, with the need for more locally sensitive delivery of contraception services.
5. All decisions have been taken by Sponsor Group representatives through their own organisational governance structures, with each partner confirming their agreement in writing regarding the process followed.
6. Procurement and outcome
 - 6.1. The provider awarded the contract is North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust as the lead member of a newly formed consortium, Tees Alliance Partnership
 - 6.2. The contract term is 1st August 2025 until 31st March 2029 (3 years & 8 months)
 - 6.3. There is the option to extend the contract (2 x 12 months)
 - 6.4. The total Teeswide annual contract value is £3,856,954; of which
 - 6.5. The total SBC annual contract value is £1,094,261 – this contract value is covered by the MTFP. This includes:
 - the Integrated Sexual Health Service at £841,414 per annum; and
 - the Community Contraception Service at £252,847 per annum (which is capped and activity based).
 - 6.6. The total Teeswide contract value consists of contributions from the four Local Authorities split by the established (population-based) risk share, plus ICB and NHSE commissioned activity.
 - 6.7. As agreed with SBC procurement, legal and finance colleagues, any potential contract uplift will only be applied from the second anniversary of the contract and will be capped at 2% of any potential Public Health Grant and always at the discretion of the Authorities.
 - 6.8. The services will work closely together to deliver the contracts across the region. The GP federations will lead on the Community Contraception Service in their area and ensure there is an offer within each Primary Care Network (PCN) footprint. Written into the service specifications is the need for equitable access in terms of location and availability. The Service will contribute to key population health outcomes (*Appendix 4*).
7. Organisational Impact
 - 7.1. Following the successful procurement a local consortium of provision has been secured within budget, providing an improved evidence-based model of delivery with a greater chance of improving sexual health outcomes for local people. In service design, equality impact was considered and addressed throughout all stages of the project, and engagement of individuals and system partners was included.
 - 7.2. The design of the service and the implementation of the project fully aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Council Plan and transformation work on more community-based support and early intervention and prevention.
 - 7.3. The provision of sexual health services is built into the ongoing discussions on future models of support in the community, re: the operating model for SBC (including early help for Children and Young People and families, Powering our Futures Early intervention & prevention) and discussions with the NHS and partners (e.g. models of delivery for community services, primary care, women's hubs). The providers are

expected to work with us as commissioners to adapt as the health and wellbeing system evolves.

- 7.4. An Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) process has been completed. It concluded that the model improved access and engagement for residents of Stockton compared to the existing model. A focus on addressing inequality is built into the contract. Strong existing relationships with the incumbent providers as local system partners will also facilitate this.

Consultation and Engagement

An independent consultation of stakeholders was commissioned (*Appendix 5*). Further market testing and engagement suggested an appetite from a range of providers. Design workshops and additional feedback sessions, including the views and voices of residents (surveys, focus groups etc.), informed the model with a Market Brief held in August 2024 (*Appendix 5*). The market and stakeholders were represented at all sessions. Wider conversations were also held with other local authorities locally and nationally, exploring their approach, opportunities and challenges.

Next Steps

7. Not applicable. Report for information.

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APPENDICES

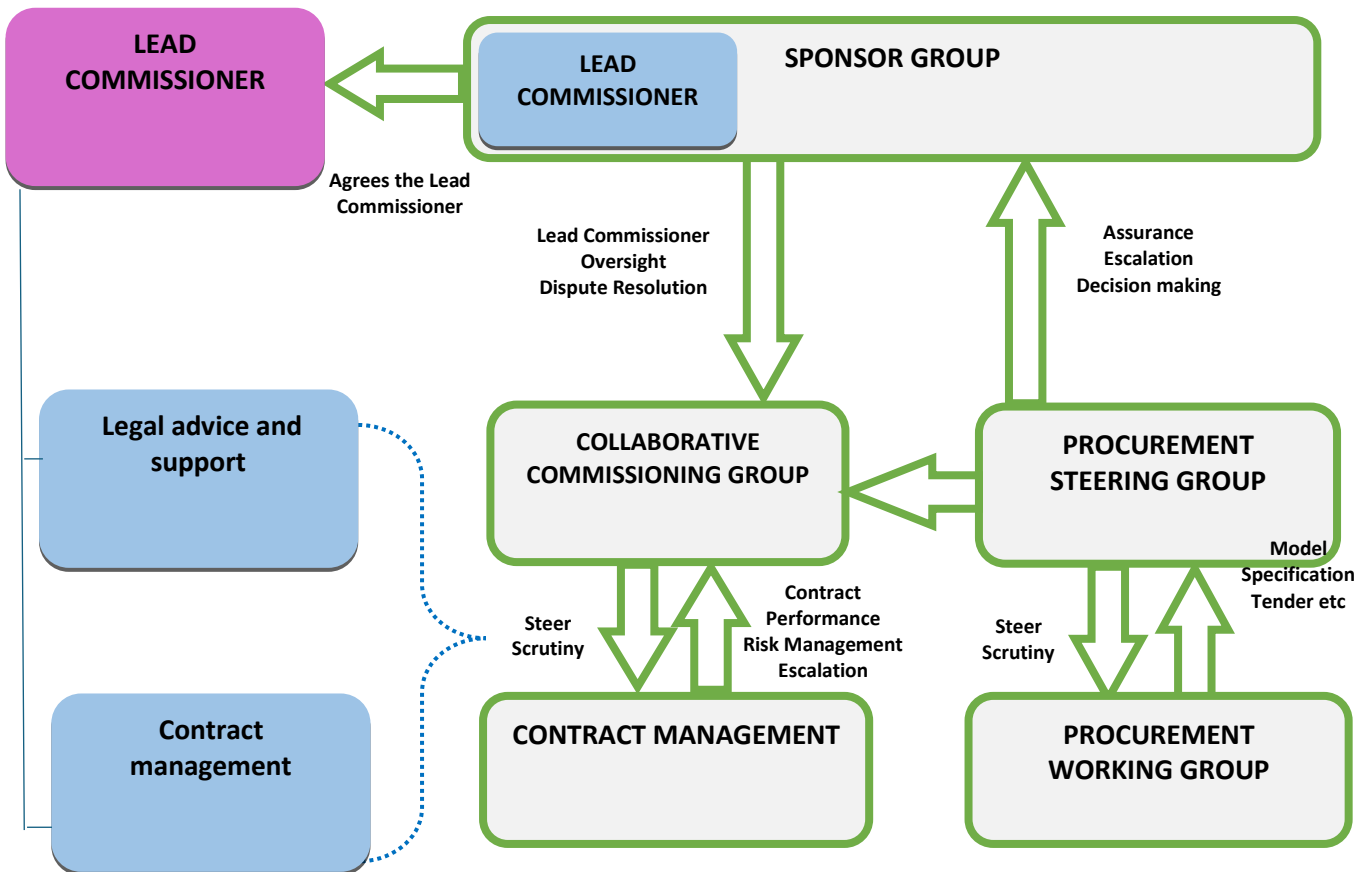
Appendix 1 The Collaborative

The Tees Sexual Health Collaborative Commissioning Partnership consists of six partners:

- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Middlesbrough Borough Council
- Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (Formerly NHS Tees Valley CCG)
- NHS England and Improvement (North East and Yorkshire)

The Collaborative is seen as a national exemplar and has been strengthened throughout this process. The Collaborative seeks to improve the sexual and reproductive health of all our residents through a system which supports people to make informed choices and when necessary, enables access to appropriate, timely, effective and high-quality services that meet their needs.

Appendix 2 Project Governance



Sponsor Group membership:

Director of Public Health SBC (Chair); DsPH / reps for HBC, RCBC, MBC; project lead (SBC); Deputy Director of Delivery (TV) ICB; Senior Commissioning Manager (NHSE). Procurement, legal, finance colleagues co-opted into discussions as needed.

Appendix 3 Models – Options Considered

	Model	What	Who	How	Where
Model 1	Fully Integrated Sexual Health Service	Integrated service for GUM, CASH, NHS SH services*	Single provider	Face to face Virtual/tel ephone Digital/postal	Hub and outreach in each local authority incl community pharmacy, primary care and digital
Model 2	Integrated Sexual Health Service	Integrated service for GUM, specialist CASH and NHS SH Services	Single provider for integrated service	Face to face Virtual/tel ephone Digital/postal	Hub and outreach in each local authority incl subcontracted (e.g. pharmacy and digital)
	Community contraceptive service	Comprehensive CASH	One or more providers for community contraception service	Face to face	In community or primary care in each local authority
Model 3	Integrated Sexual Health Service	Integrated service for GUM, specialist CASH and NHS SH Services	Single provider for integrated service	Face to face Virtual/tel ephone Digital/postal	Hub and outreach in each local authority incl subcontracted (e.g., pharmacy and digital)
	Women's Health hub(s)	Women's Health Hub(s) for comprehensive CASH, menopause and community gynaecology	One or more providers for women's health hub	Face to face	In community or primary care in each local authority

Appendix 4 Population outcomes

The Service will contribute to key indicators from the Public Health Outcomes Framework

- Reduction in under 18 conception rates
- Increase in prescribing of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) excluding injections (females aged 15 to 44)
- Increase in chlamydia detection rate
- Reduction in new STIs diagnosis (excluding chlamydia in the under 25s)
- Reduction in people presenting with HIV at a late stage of infection
- Increase in cervical screening uptake

Appendix 5 Stakeholder Engagement and Market Testing

An independent consultation of stakeholders was commissioned between July – September 2023:

- 80 various consultations
- 138 responses to the professional's survey
- 440 responses to the public survey.

Market testing and further engagement between June-November 2023 suggested that there was an appetite from a range of providers including the current provider and NHS providers to deliver the service. 2 workshops were held in October/November 23 with key partners and the current service provider attending. The workshops aimed to address the following questions:

- What is important to you – local priorities and key challenges
- System interdependencies– opportunities and challenges
- Service models – to address local needs
- Footprint of services

Further information on the outcomes from the sessions is available on request. In summary, stakeholders were positive about the opportunity to provide feedback and generally in favour of models 2 and 3. 2 additional feedback sessions were delivered in Jan/Feb 24, with a further Market Brief event delivered in August 24, presenting the model, the rational and the financial envelope.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

13 March 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET / KEY DECISION

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

PROCUREMENT PLAN / HIGHER VALUE CONTRACTS AND SOCIAL VALUE UPDATE

SUMMARY

This report seeks approval from Cabinet for the award of planned higher value contracts where the value exceeds the limit on officer delegated authority and which are either funded within the approved MTFP/ Capital Programme or are subject to a bid for external funding.

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

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS

To enable Cabinet to exercise its strategic oversight of higher value planned procurement projects, in accordance with the constitution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet

1. approves the contracts listed in Annex 1;
2. gives authority 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;
3. notes progress on social value.

DETAIL

1. The constitution defines a range of decisions that require a specific Cabinet approval, the financial threshold for which is set at a level of £500k or more. Annex 1 lists contracts that exceeds the financial threshold and have not otherwise been delegated to officers.
2. Cabinet approved a Social Value Policy in March 2023 and Annex 2 provides an update of the financial proxy value of social value delivered during 2024. Annex 3 provides 2 case studies of social value achieved during 2024. The first is by Change Grow Live (Integrated Substance Misuse contract). A good example of what a small contractor can achieve. The

second case study is provided by Esh Construction and covers various schemes across the borough. Annex 4 provides the list of Social Value measures (TOMs) for reference.

3. Cabinet should note the inevitable variation in social value delivered which is caused by some large-scale construction contracts which can be affected by the contracting cycle, where there is often a front loading of social value at the start of a contract or due to the very nature of the contract. This variation is normal and does 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.

4. The approach to Social Value has developed further during 2024/25 and includes:

a. Embedded the TOMs measures relating to donating to the VCSE sector which now means suppliers, providers and contractors can donate time, equipment or money to the sector through the Catalyst website. These are linked to the 'asks' from individual Catalyst member organisations. £38,301 has been committed to the following TOMs measures:

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.

Contract management processes will continue during 2025/26 to ensure the commitments are delivered.

b. Introduced a Social Value calculator for use in direct awards under a framework agreement.

c. Converting an existing Contract Management Officer role to a Social Value Officer to increase capacity to deliver more social value.

d. [Introduced a new TOMs measure for care leavers:

NT4a - No of full time equivalent local 16 – 25 year old care leavers (FTE) hired on the contract]

e. Working regionally to improve the delivery of social value through our NEPO contracts. NEPO have developed a new approach to measuring social value which will be used for those NEPO contracts that do not require a further competition at local authority level. A review will be undertaken during 25/26 to determine the effectiveness of the new methodology and whether to migrate the use of TOMs to this methodology

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. The report includes higher value contracts expected to be awarded in the 2025/26 financial year. The expenditure committed as a result of these tenders/ quotes is planned and remains within the Council's approved budget/MTFP or is subject to a bid for external funding which will ensure that at the point of contract award funds are available within the MTFP.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6. Notwithstanding Cabinet approval it remains the responsibility of officers to ensure that the correct processes within Contract Procedure Rules have been followed and that where applicable the Procurement Act 2023 is complied with.
7. Where the value of goods, services or works exceeds the threshold at which the procurement process must comply with the Procurement Act 2023, either a tender exercise or the use of a suitable framework agreement will comply with the Regulations.

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. There are several risks relating to procurement. Firstly, the Council spends a considerable amount of public money on goods, services and works. Having effective Contract Procedure Rules and ensuring compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 can help mitigate the risk of accusations of corruption and help demonstrate value for money and transparency. Secondly, effective tender/ quote processes and contract management also reduce the risk of poor supplier selection and subsequent performance which can impact service delivery.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

None specifically.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Cabinet March 2023 – Social Value Policy.

Name of Contact Officer: Martin Skipsey

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Contract Title: CCTV Maintenance	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint a suitable provider to supply CCTV Maintenance Services for all current and future CCTV assets and installations. 2. The new contract will commence from 01.11.2025 for a period of 3 years with 2 x 24 months possible extensions 3. The current annual spend is circa £200k. 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: TVSBC – Food Waste Caddies	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will call off from a suitable framework agreement to allow the purchase of Internal and External Food Waste Caddies required with the introduction of the requirement for Local Authorities to collect food waste from April 2026. 2. SBC will lead on a Tees Valley combined further competition from a framework agreement for the caddies with Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, all authorities having agreed a standard specification. 3. Spend is anticipated to be in the region of £600k for SBC and up to £3m for the combined Tees Valley 4. The items are required for 1st April 2026 however as the demand for these items will be replicated across the whole country a long lead time may be necessary to meet supplier manufacturing timescales. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Framework Agreement for SBC Minor Works	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Minor Works and Services. 2. The new framework will be in place from 01/04/2026 for a period of 3years with 2 x 12month extensions. 3. This framework will be split into circa 15 lots including for example: building services, Highways and Civil Engineering and DFG. 4. Current annual spend is variable and dependent upon individual project requirements. Spend in 23/24 was £1.045m 	

Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Highways Surfacing Framework including Footway & Carriageway Repairs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint a suitable framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Services and Works for Highways Surfacing. The contract will cover Potholes and Programme Planing sections of highway. 2. The new contract will commence from November 2025 for a period of 2 years with 2 x 12-month optional extensions. 3. The current annual spend is circa £450k 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Further Competition from NEPO201 for Managed Stores	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a further competition from NEPO201- Vehicles, Tyres and Workshop Equipment to appoint a supplier with whom the Council can purchase vehicle parts and associated products. 2. The new contract will commence from November 2025 for a period of 3 years with 2 x 12-month optional extension periods 3. The current annual spend is circa £450k 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Supply and Fit of Tyres & Associated Services	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out an SBC tender process or run a further competition from NEPO201- Vehicles, Tyres and Workshop Equipment to appoint a supplier with whom the Council can purchase tyres and fitting services. 2. The new contract will commence from June 2025 for a period of 1 year with 3 x 12 month optional extension periods. 3. The current annual spend is circa £150k 	

Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Further Competition for Supply and Delivery of Recycling Bags	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a further competition from NEPO224 or an appropriate framework to appoint a suitable provider for both Blue and White Recycling Bags to residential properties which are used for residents to store their paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles for recycling. 2. There will be a one-off tender for 130,000 blue bags initially, with a further 20,000 blue bags per year, and an additional 30,000 white bags to top up existing stock. 3. The contract will commence from Sept 2025 for a period of 4 years. 4. The expected spend is circa £551,000 in year one with £68,000 per year in the following years. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Yarm Road Transfer Station - Operator	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out an appropriate procurement process to contract with an operator for a Waste Transfer Station to be operational by April 2026 in order to accept recycling waste collected via the waste collection service. 2. The Council and the contract will commence once timescales are agreed. 3. The expected spend is to be in the region of £250k per year. 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: NEPO210 Highways Surfacing Framework	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Highways Surfacing Requirements. 2. The new framework will be in place from 17/06/2025 for a period of 8 years. 3. Current annual spend is variable and dependent upon individual project requirements. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: NEPO307 Liquid Fuels

1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Liquid Fuels.
2. The new framework will be in place from November 2025 for a period of 2 years with 2 x 12-month optional extension periods.
3. Current annual spend is variable and is projected to decrease with the expansion of electric vehicles. Spend in 23/24 was £1.3m.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: NEPO234 Asbestos Removal Works

1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Asbestos Removal Works
2. The new framework will be in place from 01/09/2025.
3. Current annual spend is variable and dependent upon individual project requirements however spend in 22/23 was approximately £1.1 million.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: NEPO222 Aggregates, Concrete & Mortar

1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Aggregates, Concrete & Mortar.
2. The new framework will be in place from 01/06/2025.
3. Current annual spend is variable and dependent upon individual project requirements however spend in 22/23 was approximately £1.1 million.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: NEPO/ TPPL EXT118 – Vehicle Rental TPPLCSKL02

1. NEPO/ TPPL will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can Hire Vehicles up to 44ton. These are short term rental rather than contract hire.
2. The new framework will be in place from 15/06/2025 and will be for a period of 3 years with 2 x 12month optional extension periods.
3. Current annual spend is variable and dependent upon quantity and types of vehicles hired. Spend in 24/25 is expected to be £213k

Key Decision: No

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: TVSBC – Extension to Residual Waste Treatment Contract

1. The current contract for Residual Waste Treatment on behalf of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton on Tees Borough Councils runs to 31.3.2026. Due to issues relating to the procurement of the new Tees Valley Energy Recover Facility there is a requirement to extend the existing contract for a period of two years with a potential optional extension period to 31.3.2031.
2. This will allow the Tees Valley authorities to continue to dispose of their residual waste whilst the new facility is being built.
3. The anticipated cost of the extended period is circa £8m per year.
4. There is no alternative option for the disposal of the residual waste.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Microsoft 365 Licensing (ESA)

1. The council will call off from a suitable framework agreement(s) to allow the Council to purchase the Microsoft Office 365 productivity suite, underpinning home working, remote working, collaboration software, telephony services, endpoint protection, enhanced identity protection, business intelligence software and classic ICT functions such as word processing, email and spreadsheets etc.
2. The call off contract will be on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Darlington Borough Council.
3. The new contract will commence 01.06.2026 with a 3-year term.
4. The current annual spend is circa £1,595k. Costs are fixed by a UK government agreed pricing model, SPA24.
5. Total contract spend will be £5,250k. (SBC £3,150k, DBC £2,100k)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year 1 (26/27) £1,750k (SBC £1,050k) - Year 2 (27/28) £1,750k (SBC £1,050k) - Year 3 (28/29) £1,750k (SBC £1,050k) 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Gary Cummings, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: End User Device Replacement Program	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The council will call off from a suitable framework agreement to allow the Council to purchase ICT Hardware (laptops etc) and related support services such as warranty support. 2. The call off contract will be on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Darlington Borough Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority and Tees Active Ltd. 3. The new contract will commence 01.04.2025 with a 3-year term. 4. Total contract spend will be £2,820k. (SBC £1,820k) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Year 1 (25/26) £900k (SBC £525k) - Year 2 (26/27) £850k (SBC £525k) - Year 3 (27/28) £1,070k (SBC £770k) 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Gary Cummings, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: NEPO407 Food & General Provisions & NEPO416 Milk and Dairy Products	
Two frameworks to be amalgamated, contract title TBC.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Milk and Dairy Products, Food & General Provisions, used predominantly by Catering Services for school meals and for establishments requiring food for their catering provision. 2. The framework will commence on 01/07/2026 and is anticipated to be for a period of five years and three optional one-year extension periods. 3. The current annual spend for the academic year 23/254 was circa £2,002,795 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP:
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with colleagues at Stockton Borough Council.	

Contract Title: NEPO302 Gas Supply Framework Agreement	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a sole supplier of gas with whom the Council can purchase its Gas requirements across the estate., 2. The new framework will commence on 31/03/2026 for a period of 6 years with no option to extend. 3. The value of the contract will be variable depending on the gas consumed. Spend in 23/24 was £1,687,218.29. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP:
Delegated Officer: Gary Cummings, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with colleagues at Stockton Borough Council.	

Contract Title: NEPO515 – Children’s and Adult’s Barristers	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEPO will carry out a procurement process to appoint a framework of suppliers the council can call upon for Children and Adult’s Social Care Barrister Services. 2. The framework will commence on 04/04/2026 for a period of 4years with no optional extensions 3. The value of the contracts will be variable depending on the support required, spend from April 2023 to March 2024 was £187,464.18 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP:
Delegated Officer: Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with colleagues at Stockton Borough Council.	

Contract Title: Integrated Substance Misuse Service	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change Grow Live (CGL) currently deliver the contract to support individuals with substance misuse issues and their recovery. This is their second term delivering the contract following the re-procurement exercise in April 2020. Since then, CGL has consistently met the contract requirements and performance outcomes. 2. Under the Provider Selection Regime, we can use the Direct Award process C to directly award the next contract to CGL, ensuring continuity of service delivery. 3. The new contract will commence on 1 April 2026 and is proposed to span five years. The current total contract value is approximately £11,335,000 plus further funding from DH&SC of £4,635,180 that has been varied into the current contract since 2021. If the funding from DH&SC is continued, the total contract value from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031 would be £11,335,000 (recurrent funding) + £9,060,995 (DH&SC funding, which is not guaranteed) = £20,396,995. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Integrated Substance Misuse Service (additional funding)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional funding of £1,812,199 has been received for the Integrated Substance Misuse Service from the DH&SC for the 25/26 financial year. 2. It is not possible to vary the existing contract any further under the PCR2015 contract modification rules. 3. As such we need to establish an additional contract for the Integrated Substance Misuse Service to this additional funding 4. A new contract with CGL, effective from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, will be awarded under the Provider Selection Regime to cover this year's additional funding. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP:
Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with colleagues at Stockton Borough Council.	

Contract Title: Apprenticeship Training	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council is obliged to pay 0.5% if its annual pay bill into an account to fund Apprenticeship Training. This is known as the Apprenticeship Levy. 2. Apprenticeship training is sourced from approved providers who are registered on the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and includes Social Work apprenticeships, Business Analyst apprenticeship, Civil Engineering apprenticeship 3. Current annual spend (funded from the apprenticeship levy) is variable per year: 4. The spend is difficult to determine as the figures are for the full cost of the course and may not fall within the specific year period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23/24 - £677,116 22/23 - £606,785 21/22 -£372,348 20/21 - £374,387 19/20 -£340,514 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Ged Morton – Director Corporate Services	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Annual Supply of Grounds Maintenance Equipment	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint a suitable provider to supply Grounds Maintenance Equipment for grass cutting in the summer, hedge maintenance in the winter as well as the hire of 4 quad bikes. 2. The new contract will commence from 01/03/2026 for a period of 2 years with 2 x 12 month optional extension periods. 3. The current annual spend is circa £340k for equipment over the past 2 years, the hire of 4 quad bikes was incorporated into the contract for 24/25 financial year thereby annual estimated spend for 24/25 is £364K. 	

Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Events Framework	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suitable providers to deliver Services to Facilitate Events throughout the year, this includes SIRF. 2. It is proposed to have different lots including but not limited to Audio; Visual; Lighting; Staging, Structures & Power Distribution; Security & Stewarding; Fencing; and Toilets. This will commence on 01/01/ 2026 for an initial term of 2 years with 2 x 12 months optional extension. 3. The estimated spend is circa £220k per annum, however this is dependent on the number of events that will be held and the spend can fluctuate from year to year. The estimated annual figure is based on the average spend across the past 3 years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fencing – £9,300 • Security – £73,000 • Audio Visual & Lighting - £61,000 • Staging, Structures & Power Distribution – £67,000 • Toilets - £7,300 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: NEPO418- Library Books and Digital content	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEPO will carry out a tender process to appoint a framework of suppliers with whom the Council can purchase Library Books and e-books. 2. The new framework will be in place from 05/09/2026 for a period of 4 years. 3. Current SBC annual spend is approximately £110,000 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and Director Regeneration & Inclusive Growth.	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Further Competition - Short Term Community Rehabilitation and Reablement Beds	

1. The Council will carry out a further competition from the Older People's Care Home Framework Agreement to appoint a suitable provider/ providers to deliver Short Term Community Rehabilitation Beds
2. The new contract will commence from a date during 25/26.
3. The current annual spend is estimated to be £442k pa (This will be existing spend but contracted in a more structured way to have people admitted to particular care homes as opposed to being randomly allocated)

Key Decision: No

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Further Competition - Single Gender Care Home Unit

1. The Council will carry out a further competition from the Older People's Care Home Framework to appoint a suitable provider to deliver a Single Gender Care Home Unit
2. The new contract will commence from during 25/26.
3. The current annual spend is circa estimated to be between £170-£260k pa (This will be existing spend and is likely to incrementally build up as suitable residents are identified, until at full agreed capacity)

Key Decision: No

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Framework Agreement for delivery of VCSE Infrastructure Support

1. The Council will carry out a Tender process to appoint a suitable sole provider to a Framework Agreement Providing and/or Co-ordinating a Range of VCSE Projects.
2. The new contract will commence from October 2025.
3. The current annual spend is circa £200k. (Which is currently issued as Grant Funding)
4. Formalising a Framework Agreement for these services will provide opportunities to test the market and establish whether there are other organisations who have the expertise and networks to effectively co-ordinate a range of activities to support the VCSE sector. This will also include flexibility to quickly respond to changes to funding and emerging needs in the sector.

Key Decision: No

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Residential Care Accommodation for People with a Learning Disability and/or Autism

1. The Council will vary and extend the existing Framework Agreement for Residential Care Accommodation for People with a Learning Disability and/or Autism.
2. The extension to the contract will commence from 01/04/2025 for a period of 6 months.
3. The current annual spend is circa £5.2m. (extension value £2.6m)
4. This extension will allow for a consultation to be commenced with Care Home Providers on a sustainable Fee structure.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Residential Care Accommodation for people with a Learning Disability and/or Autism

1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint suitable providers to a Framework Agreement for Residential Care Accommodation for people with a Learning Disability and/or Autism
2. The new contract will commence from 1 October 2025 for a period of 3.5 years & 2 x 12 months possible extension periods.
3. The current annual spend is circa £5.2m.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Framework Agreement for Supported Living Services for Adults

1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint suitable providers to a Framework Agreement providing a range of Supported Living Services in a range of identified schemes.
2. The new contract will commence from 1 October 2025 for a period of 3.5 years & 2 x 12 m possible extension periods.
3. The current annual spend is circa £6.2m (This will be existing spend currently made as spot provision)

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Public Health Contract for services delivered by Community Pharmacies (Stop Smoking, Needle Exchange, Supervised Consumption, Healthy Start Vitamins & C Card)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a selection process to appoint suitable pharmacies providing a range of Community Pharmacy Services based on identified need. 2. The new contract will commence from 1 April 2026 or a period of 4 years 3. The current annual spend is £335k 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Public Health Contract for services delivered by GP Surgeries (NHS Healthcheck)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a selection process to appoint suitable GP Surgeries to deliver NHS Healthchecks. 2. The new contract will commence from 1 April 2026 or a period of 4 years 3. The current annual spend is £300k 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Framework Agreement for Advice and Information Services	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a Tender process to appoint a suitable provider to a contract providing a range of Advice and Information Services. 2. The new contract will commence from a date to be confirmed (potentially October 2025 or April 2026) 3. The current annual spend is circa £244k. 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Garry Cummings, Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: NEPO504 – Election & Electoral Print Services	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NEPO will carry out a Tender process to appoint a suitable provider to a contract providing Election & Electoral Print Services on behalf of Northeast local authorities. 	

2. The new contract will commence from November 2025.
3. The current annual spend for Stockton has ranged from £123k in 2023 (Local elections only) to £1,426,000 in 2024, when 3 elections were held. (Parliamentary, Mayoral and PCC). The anticipated spend was £120k pa when the contract commenced in 2021. Stockton’s call off contract commenced 1/2/2022 and lasts until 31/1/2026.

Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Disposal Of Food Waste – Operator

1. To Council will undertake a tender process for a contract at a treatment facility to dispose of food waste collected as part of the new food waste collection service.
2. The period of the new contract will be determined as part of the procurement process.
3. The annual spend is estimated to be circa £141k.

Key Decision: No / Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Warm Homes Local Grant

1. Stockton Council along with Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils are bidding for funding to deliver energy performance upgrades in homes.
2. Darlington Council will conduct a further competition from the NEPO233 Retrofit and Decarbonisation Framework on behalf of the five Tees Authorities to determine a suitable supplier to deliver the works.
3. The new contract period will be determined as part of the procurement process.
4. The decision regarding funding is expected to be known circa Q1 of 25/26.

Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Tail Spend Management

1. The Council has a requirement to manage it’s “Tail Spend” which comprises multiple low value orders for goods and services to companies such as Amazon generally via the internet. Over time the aggregated spend of these low value orders exceeds the procurement threshold.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The council will call off from a suitable framework to manage this spend and achieve framework pricing and additional benefits which are not available when purchasing directly, for example, reduced delivery costs, data analysis, the ability to restrict categories of spend, the ability to show only local suppliers. 3. The call off contract could last for a maximum period of eight years depending on the framework used and would be determined as part of the procurement process. 4. It is anticipated that the potential spend could be up to £250k per year. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services / Garry Cummings???	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Specialist Stop Smoking Service	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will undertake an award process, under the Provider Selection Regime for Health Services, to appoint a suitable provider to deliver a Specialist Stop Smoking Service 2. The new contract will commence from 01/04/2025 for a period of 12 months, with 2 x optional 6-month extension periods. 3. The current annual spend is circa £587k. 4. This award will be made, pending the outcome of the Early Interventions Review, which will the inform future procurement route. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Carolyn Nice, Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Home to School Transport (Taxis)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The council will undertake an appropriate procurement process to determine multiple providers able to transport children to and from home to school 2. The duration of the agreement will be determined as part of the procurement process and is likely to be for a minimum of four years up to a maximum of eight years. 3. The new solution will not commence until June 2026 however it will be awarded in the 25/26 financial year. 4. The current annual spend on home to school transport is circa £1.8m. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Provision of Welfare Support Services
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1. The council will undertake an appropriate procurement process to appoint suitable provider/s to deliver welfare support services
2. The duration of the agreement will be determined as part of the procurement process and is likely to commence in the latter part of the 25/26 financial year.
3. The potential annual spend is expected to be £250k

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Garry Cummings, Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

PROPOSED CAPITAL CONTRACTS 2526 TO BE ADDED (WHERE SCHEME DETAIL IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME)

Contract Title: Durham Lane Cycleway

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the construction of a cycleway in the Eaglescliffe location.
2. The estimated value of the contract is £3,300,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the first quarter of the 25/26 financial year.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture / Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Yarm Public Realm

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the various public realm works within Yarm High Street
2. The estimated value of the contract is £2,000,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the first quarter of the 25/26 financial year.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Thornaby Cycleway

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the construction of a cycleway in the Thornaby location.
2. The estimated value of the contract is £4,700,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the first quarter of the 25/26 financial year.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture / Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Thornaby Pool

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the construction of a swimming pool & leisure centre in Thornaby.
2. The estimated value of the contract is £12,400,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the third quarter of the 25/26 financial year.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Golden Eagle - Demolition

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the demolition of the Golden Eagle site in Thornaby which will then allow the council to sell Thornaby Town Centre as part of the agreement.
2. The estimated value of the contract is £500,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the first quarter of the 25/26 financial year.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: A19 / A689 Road Widening

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the construction of a road widening scheme at the A19 / A689 junction.
2. The estimated value of the contract is £ £6,600,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the 3rd quarter of the 25/26 financial year.
4. There is some uncertainty around the project due to a funding shortfall from TVCA which will be addressed prior to the project commencing.

Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: STC Link Cycleway	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is currently some uncertainty regarding if this contract will be let by TVCA or SBC. If the contract is to be let by SBC the council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the construction of a link cycleway in Stockton Town Centre. 2. The estimated value of the contract is £4,000,000 3. The contract will be scheduled to be awarded within the 25/26 financial year. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Norton Road Cycleway	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is currently some uncertainty regarding if this contract will be let by TVCA or SBC. If the contract is to be let by SBC the council will follow an appropriate procurement process for the construction of a cycleway on Norton Road. 2. The estimated value of the contract is £6,000,000 3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded within the 25/26 financial year. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	

Contract Title: Wellington Square Car Park - Tarmac	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process to tarmac the car park at Wellington Square 2. The estimated value of the contract is £1,000,000 3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded in the 2nd quarter of the 25/26 financial year. 	
Key Decision: Yes	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officer: Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Annual Carriageway Schemes - Tarmac

1. The council will follow an appropriate procurement process to determine a contractor who is able to tarmac various carriageway schemes across the borough
2. The estimated value of the packages of work is £1,000,000
3. The contract is scheduled to be awarded within the 25/26 financial year.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.

Contract Title: Installation of Solar PV Panels at Billingham Forum

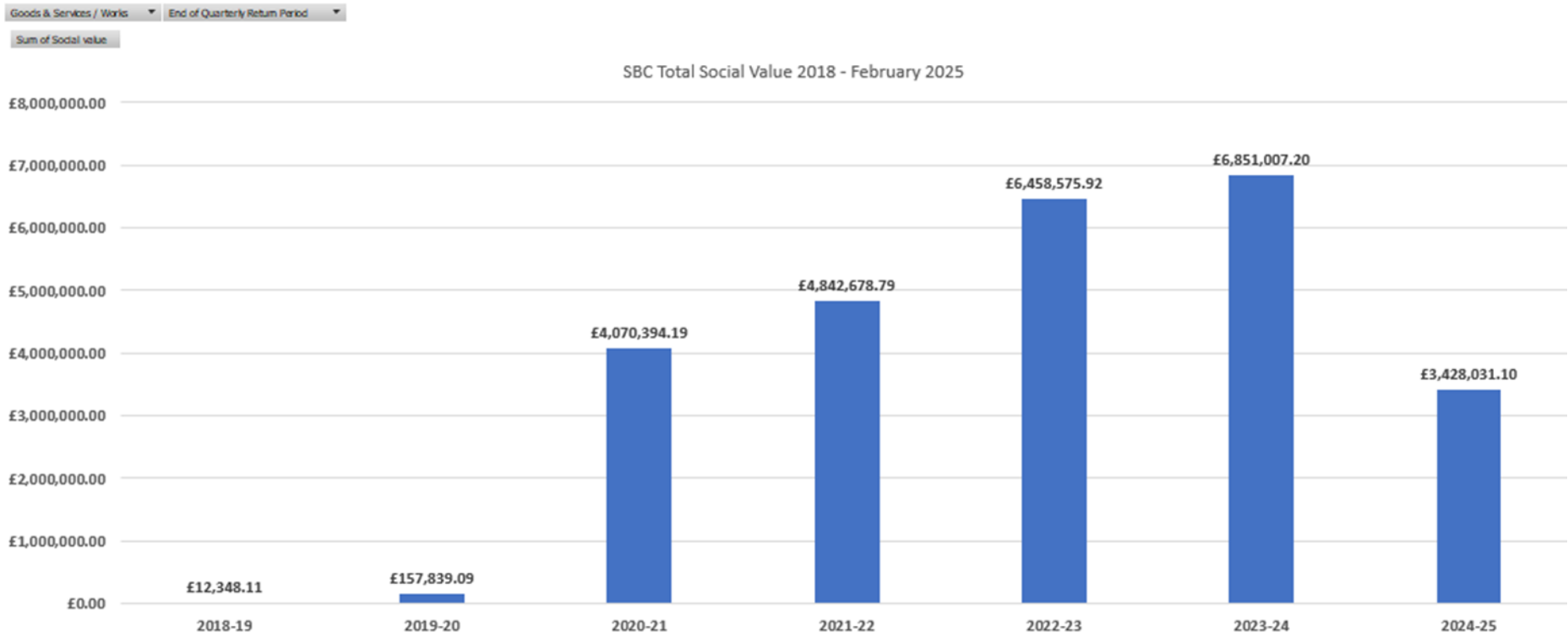
1. The council has been offered £700k of Salix grant funding due to them underspending their budget.
2. The Council will call off from the NEPO233 Retrofit & Decarbonisation Works Framework to supply & install solar panels at Billingham Forum.
3. The funding conditions are that the grant is spent by the end of May 2025.

Key Decision: Yes

Funding within MTFP: Yes

Delegated Officer: Reuben Kench, Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture

Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.



Themes	Outcomes	Ref	Measures - Minimum Requirements	Stockton Council Plan Equivalent	Prioritisation	Units	Social Value Proxy
					Weighting based Stockton on Tees Borough Councils Key Strategic Priorities 3 = Standard Measure 2 = Important Priority 1 = Strategically Important Priority	How it should be measured	Social Value proxy
Jobs: Promote Local Skills and Employment	More Stockton people in employment	NT1	No. of Stockton people (FTE) employed on contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, whichever is shorter.	Job Creation and Increased Employment	1	no. people FTE	£27,834.00
	More opportunities for disadvantaged people from Stockton	NT3	No. of employees (FTE) taken on who are long term unemployed (unemployed for a year or longer)	A growing Economy, Improved Education and Skills Development and Job Creation and Increased Employment	1	no. people FTE	£20,429.00
		NT4	No. of employees (FTE) taken on who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs)	Job Creation and Increased Employment	1	no. people FTE	£15,382.90

	NT4a	No of full time equivalent local 16-25 y.o. care leavers (FTE) hired on the contract		1	no. people FTE	£15,382.90
	NT5	No. of employees (FTE) taken on who are rehabilitating young offenders (18-24 y.o.)	Improved Education and Skills Development and Job Creation and Increased Employment	1	no. people FTE	£23,056.23
	NT6	No. of jobs (FTE) created for people with disabilities	Improved Education and Skills Development and Job Creation and Increased Employment	1	no. people FTE	£16,605.00
	NT7	No. of hours dedicated to supporting unemployed people into work by providing career mentoring, including mock interviews, CV advice, and careers guidance -(over 24 y.o.)		2	no hrs * no of employees	£105.58
	NT9	No. of training opportunities on contract (BTEC, City & Guilds, NVQ, HNC) that have either been completed during the year, or that will be supported by the organisation to completion in the following years - Level 2,3, or 4+ (For new employees taken on as a result of this contract)	Improved Education and Skills Development	2	no. weeks	£317.82
	NT10	No. of weeks of apprenticeships or T-Levels (Level 2,3, or 4) provided on the contract (completed or supported by the organisation) (For new employees taken on as a result of this contract)	Improved Education and Skills Development and Job Creation and Increased Employment	1	no. of weeks	£251.79
	Improved skills for Stockton people					

		NT81	No. of weeks of employee upskilling (FTE) delivered on contract as part of apprenticeships, T-Levels and comprehensive upskilling programmes - Only applies to apprenticeships or T-Levels on the contract that have either been completed during the year, or that will be supported by the organisation until completion in the following years - Level 2,3, or 4+ (For current employees employed by the organisation)		2	no. of weeks	£13.81
	Improved employability of young people from Stockton	NT11	No. of hours dedicated to support young people into work (e.g. CV advice, mock interviews, careers guidance) - (24 y.o. and under)	Improved Education and Skills Development	2	no. hrs*no. attendees	£105.58
		NT12	No. of weeks spent on meaningful work placements or pre-employment course; 1-6 weeks student placements (unpaid)		2	no. weeks	£194.50
		NT13	Meaningful work placements that pay Minimum or National Living wage according to eligibility - 6 weeks or more (internships)	Improved Education and Skills Development and Job Creation and Increased Employment	2	no. weeks	£194.50
		SBC-NT13	Meaningful supported internships that pay Minimum or National Living wage according to eligibility - 6 weeks or more (supported internships through SBC only) (see Definitions and Guidance Tab)		1	no. weeks	£194.50

Growth: Supporting Growth of Responsible Regional Business	More opportunities for Stockton SMEs and VCSEs	NT14	Total amount (£) spent with VCSEs within your supply chain	A Growing Economy	2	£	£0.12
		C-NT15	Provision of expert business advice to VCSEs and SMEs (e.g. financial advice / legal advice / HR advice/HSE) when linked to a Catalyst specific VCSE requirement. This link takes you to the Catalyst Give Services Page.		1	no. staff expert hours	£101.00
		C-NT16	Equipment or resources donated to VCSEs (£ equivalent value). This link takes to the Catalyst Support VCSE page.	Cross cutting strategic themes	1	£	£1.00
		C-NT17	Number of voluntary hours donated to support VCSEs (excludes expert business advice). This link takes you to the Catalyst Stockton Volunteers Opportunities page.		1	No. staff volunteering hours	£16.93
		NT18	Total amount (£) spent in LOCAL supply chain through the contract.	A Growing Economy	2	£	£0.66
		NT19	Total amount (£) spent through contract with LOCAL micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)		2	£	£0.66
Social: Healthier, Safer and more Resilient	More working with the Community in Stockton	NT28	Donations or in-kind contributions to local community projects (£ & materials)	Cross cutting strategic themes	2	£ value	£1.00
		C-NT28	Donations or in-kind contributions to local community projects (£ & materials). This link takes you to the Catalyst Give Money page.		1	£ value	£1.00

<p>Environment: Protecting and Improving our Environment</p>	<p>Climate Impacts are reduced</p>	<p>NT31</p>	<p>Savings in CO2e emissions on contract achieved through de-carbonisation (i.e. a reduction of the carbon intensity of processes and operations, specify how these are to be achieved) against a specific benchmark.</p>	<p>People Live Healthy Lives, Great Places to Live and Visit and Clean and Green Spaces</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>tonnes CO2e</p>	<p>£244.63</p>
		<p>NT82</p>	<p>Carbon emissions reductions through reduced energy use and energy efficiency measures - on site</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>tonnes CO2e</p>	<p>£244.63</p>
	<p>Air pollution is reduced</p>	<p>NT32</p>	<p>Car miles saved on the project (e.g. cycle to work programmes, public transport or car pooling programmes, etc.)</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>Miles Saved</p>	<p>£0.06</p>
		<p>NT33</p>	<p>Car miles driven using low or no emission staff vehicles included on project as a result of a green transport programme</p>		<p>2</p>	<p>Miles Driven</p>	<p>£0.03</p>
		<p>NT84</p>	<p>Freight miles saved as a result of a green logistics plan (e.g. reduced trips to site)</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>Miles Saved</p>	<p>£0.06</p>
	<p>Better places to live in Stockton</p>	<p>NT34</p>	<p>Voluntary time dedicated to the creation or management of green infrastructure, to increase biodiversity, or to keep green spaces clean</p>		<p>2</p>	<p>no. staff volunteering hours</p>	<p>£16.93</p>
	<p>Resource efficiency and circular economy solutions are promoted</p>	<p>NT88</p>	<p>Reduce waste through reuse of products and materials</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>Tonnes</p>	<p>£96.70</p>

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