

Date: Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 2.00 pm

Venue: Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library, Church Road,
Stockton on Tees, TS18 1TU

Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair)
Cllr Kevin Faulks (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Marc Besford
Cllr Richard Eglington
Cllr Shakeel Hussain
Cllr Sufi Mubeen
Cllr Paul Rowling
Cllr Laura Tunney

Cllr Carol Clark
Cllr Lynn Hall
Cllr Niall Innes
Cllr Tony Riordan
Cllr Marilyn Surtees

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 17 December 2024. | (Pages 9 - 14) |
| 5 | Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/26 - Selection of In Depth Scrutiny Reviews | (Pages 15 - 58) |
| 6 | People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants (Executive Summary - for information) | (Pages 59 - 64) |
| 7 | Forward Plan | (Pages 65 - 66) |
| 8 | Chairs' Updates | (Pages 67 - 80) |
| 9 | Executive Scrutiny Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme | (Pages 81 - 82) |

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 Manager, Judy Trainer on email Judy.Trainer@stockton.gov.uk

KEY - Declarable interests are:-

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

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

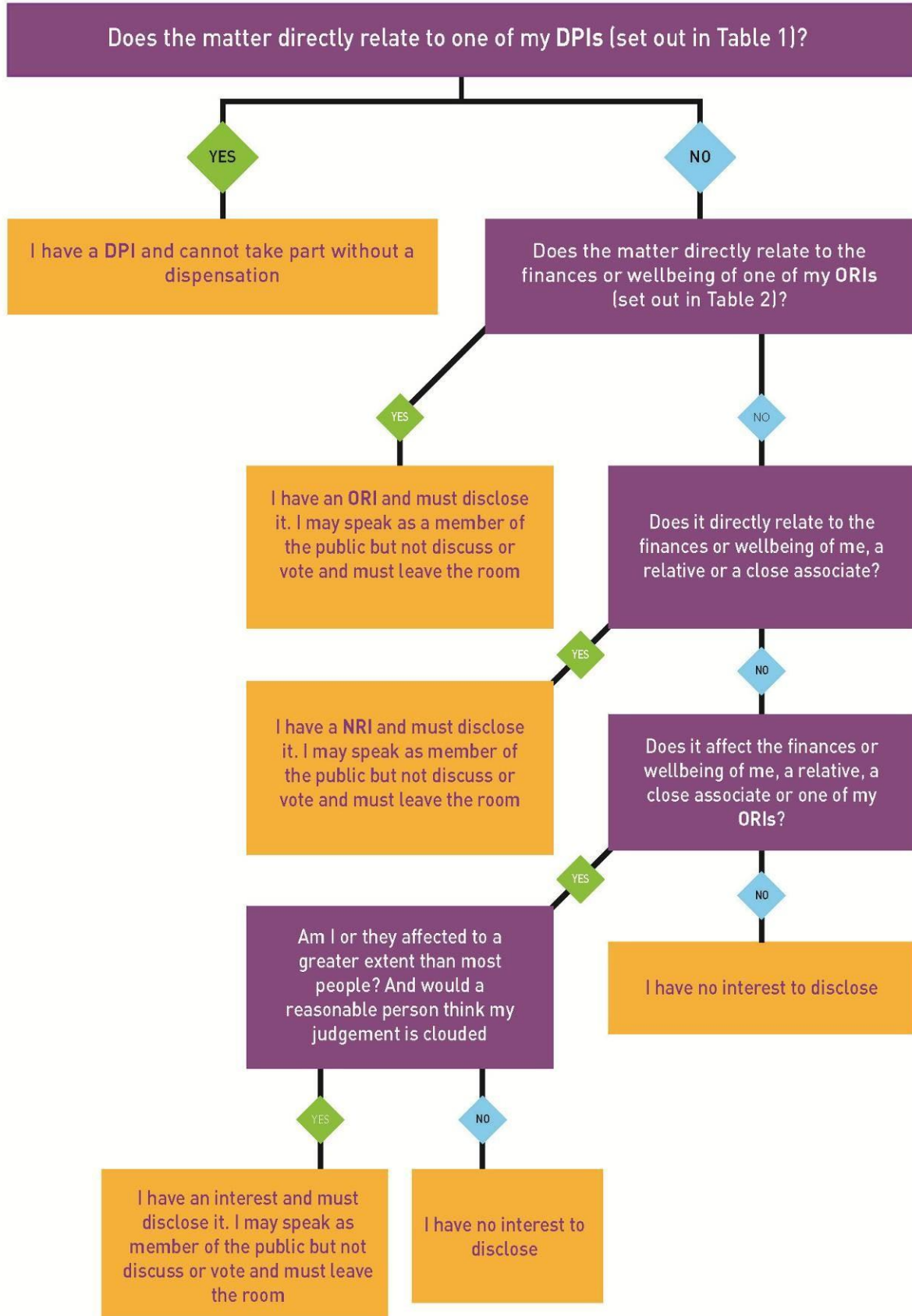


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

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

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

Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Toilets are located at the front of the Library where a security code will be required to access them. Please ask a Member of Library staff for the security code.

Microphones

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

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EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday 17 December 2024.

Present: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair), Cllr Kevin Faulks (Vice-Chair), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Nathan Gale (sub for Cllr Marc Besford), Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Ann McCoy (sub for Cllr Paul Rowling), Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Tony Riordan and Cllr Marilyn Surtees.

Officers: Ged Morton, Jonathan Nertney, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods (CS), Garry Cummings and Clare Harper (DCE&F).

Also in attendance: None.

Apologies: Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Paul Rowling and Cllr Laura Tunney.

ESC/36/24 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation procedure.

ESC/37/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

ESC/38/24 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meetings held on 12 November 2024 and 19 November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ESC/39/24 Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan

The Select Committee were provided with an update on the financial position at 30 September for the current year (2024/25) and outline plans for the 2025/26 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

There were financial challenges facing Councils across the country, and particular challenges faced locally within Stockton-on-Tees. Significant work was underway to address the financial pressures faced by the Council through the Powering our Futures Programme alongside additional mitigating actions. Progress from the transformation reviews and the first phase of savings had been presented to Cabinet in November.

The cost pressures and demand for Council services continued to grow resulting in an updated projected overspend of £6.6m for the financial year 2024/25. If this materialised, it would need to be funded from earmarked reserves or any one-off funding.

The report also included an update on the projected Medium Term Financial Plan. This incorporated some of the expenditure pressures as well as early announcements

from the Budget on 30 October 2024. There was still significant uncertainty around funding with more detail on the funding announcements expected to follow in the Local Government Provisional Settlement expected week commencing 16 December. This would, however, be a one-year settlement and therefore the information in respect of future years was indicative and subject to a fundamental review by the Government of Local Government Funding.

The report identified a potential further pressure across the MTFP and highlighted potential options for addressing this. This would be considered in the budget report in February.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:-

- Savings had been approved through the Powering our Futures programme to address the estimated budget gap across the MTFP. Further savings were expected; however, the implementation dates might mean there was a shortfall in 2025/26. If this materialised, this would have to be funded
- With regard to the £90 million funding available to support capital investment in children's homes, it was anticipated that that this would be allocated to individual Councils following a bidding process, however, confirmation of the approach was yet to be announced
- The Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme would allocate funding directly to Local Authorities as they had responsibility for dealing with waste plastic and cardboard. The Council's estimated allocation was £3.5m however this had not been confirmed. The scheme was guaranteed for one year with more information expected about how the scheme would operate in the future
- Ongoing costs of funding Community Safety Officers were £250,000 per year
- Clarification was sought as to whether the £3.25m for Thornaby Cycleways was additional funding or part of the pot of money already secured through City Region Sustainable Transport
- Clarification was sought as to whether there was continued allocation of funding in the Capital Programme for the Norton to Stockton Cycle Scheme
- Whilst every effort was made to predict demand for services, demand for Adult Social Care Services had continued to increase with a higher number of young people having transitioned from Children's Services in Adult Services over recent months. This was due to some children coming into the care system just before transition and changes to care packages. More work in this area would be carried out as part of the Transformation Programme
- The Council was expecting to be fully compensated for the increase in National Insurance contributions and was awaiting confirmation of this in the budget announcement. The impact of the National Insurance increase on commissioned services was a greater concern as it was unclear whether any funding would be available for this. This included services such as Tees Active Leisure
- Local Authorities would continue to receive grant funding to fully compensate for the loss of income from the relief on business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure
- It would be impossible to predict the impact of businesses folding on business rates
- Increases in grounds maintenance costs were due to fixed contract prices coming to an end and higher inflation causing increases in prices
- Further details were requested on the movements in the projected position for Corporate Services

AGREED

- (1) that the financial position for 2024/25, the revised Capital Programme and the emerging issues for the MTFP be noted.
- (2) That the information requested above be circulated to the Committee.
- (3) That details of the Local Government Provisional Settlement and its impact on Council finances be shared with the Committee as soon as possible.

ESC/40/24 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Complaints Report 2023/24

The Select Committee were provided with details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter for the Council for 2023/24. There had been 48 enquiries submitted to the Ombudsman during the year and 13 met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman. Of the 13 complaint investigations, 8 were upheld. All recommendations made by the Ombudsman, following their investigations, had been accepted and implemented by the Council. There was one formal public interest report that was published in 2023/24 relating to school transport.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- The Director of Corporate Services commented that, based on learning from investigations, the Council was looking to make improvements in remedies offered to complainants to reduce the number of Ombudsman referrals, in particular where complaints had been upheld
- The Ombudsman expected complainants to first seek remedy through Councils' complaints systems and would only consider a complaint once this route had been exhausted

AGREED that the report be noted and that regular information be presented to the Committee providing more detail on the breakdown of complaints, trends and themes and resolution at the different stages of the Council's complaints procedure.

ESC/41/24 Forward Plan

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

ESC/42/24 Chairs' Updates

Members were provided with verbal updates on the work of each Select Committee as follows:

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

The Vice Chair advised that the next meeting of the Select Committee would be held later that day and Members would be continuing with their review of Reablement Services. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust would also be providing an update on maternity services.

Children and Young People Select Committee

The Chair advised that at the last meeting the Select Committee had received an update on recommendation 1 "Improve Attendance" from their previous review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment. The review had culminated in 17 shared objectives and further updates on the other recommendations were scheduled into the Select Committee Work Programme.

The Select Committee's current review was Holiday Activities and Food Programme known locally as Holidays Are Fun (HAF). The December meeting had received information from Children's Services and Public Health and also from Catalyst who managed the provider contract on behalf of the Council. The January meeting would be an informal session and would provide an opportunity, amongst other things, to hear from organisations who had delivered activity as part of the HAF programme, including examples of best practice, successes, challenges and lessons learnt and also hear from young people who had benefited from the programme.

Members requested data regarding take up of HAF places and the Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate the presentation which the Select Committee had received at their last meeting.

Members discussed the recent Sara Shariff case and the dangers of the automatic right to home schooling. Members suggested that the Select Committee receive an update on the numbers of home-schooled children in the Borough and safeguarding in place and felt that this topic would benefit from in depth review.

Community Safety Select Committee

The Vice Chair reported that the November meeting of the Select Committee had received further evidence in respect of their current review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres. The Select Committee had received evidence from Cleveland Fire Brigade and the Borough's four Town Councils. An SBC Ward Councillor survey had also been issued in early-December. The next evidence session in early-January 2025 would hear from local business groups / forums.

The December 2024 meeting had been cancelled and re-arranged for early-January 2025. Later that month there would also be a one-off item on Domestic Abuse attended by the Chair of the Domestic Abuse Steering Group which would outline the duties and powers for Councils to help victims.

Progress on outstanding actions from the previously completed Scrutiny Review of Tree Asset Management would be presented to the Committee meeting in February 2025.

Members advised that there were technical issues with the ward councillor survey. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to investigate and extend the deadline for completing the survey in view of the problems.

People Select Committee

The Committee's next meeting would review the summary of evidence and consider draft recommendations in respect of their current review of Disabled Facilities Grants.

The Committee had received evidence from Housing Regeneration and Investment, Occupational Therapy, and Building Services teams, Foundations who were the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and Disabled Facilities Grant, and Stockton & District Information & Advice Service. They had also considered customer satisfaction survey results and consultation had taken place with residents via Stockton Parent Carer Forum.

Place Select Committee

The Scrutiny Officer advised that there had not been a meeting of the Select Committee since the last Executive Scrutiny meeting. The December meeting had been stood down to allow the option appraisal to be reported to the Select Committee before it concluded its review. The next meeting would take place in January and would receive evidence as follows:

- Update on the option appraisal
- Empty Homes
- Feedback on the Common Allocation Policy
- Implications of the National Planning Policy Framework for Affordable Housing

AGREED that the updates be noted.

ESC/43/24 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 MARCH 2025

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26 – SELECTION OF IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY REVIEWS

SUMMARY

The report presents proposals for the scrutiny work programme for 2025/26 for consideration and approval by Executive Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Scrutiny Committee is asked to approve the Work Programme for 2025/26.

WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

1. The current year's work programme is summarised below. Reviews which have been completed or are underway are in **bold**.

Select Committee	In-Depth Review Topics
Adult Social Care and Health	Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care Reablement Service
Children and Young People	Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment Holidays are Fun Corporate Parenting*
Community Safety	Outdoor Play Provision Welcoming and Safe Town Centres
People	Cost of Living Response Disabled Facilities Grants
Place	Unauthorised Roadside Advertising Affordable Housing Muslim and Faith Burial Provision**

* Given the amount of work that has taken place and is continuing in other forums, it is no longer considered appropriate to include this topic on the work programme for 2025/26.

** A commitment to examine Muslim and Faith Burial Provision as the next Place Select Committee review has already been given.

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

2. Each year the Chair of Executive Scrutiny Committee writes to all Members inviting them to put forward suggestions for in-depth scrutiny review topics. The suggestions received are prioritised by the Scrutiny Team using the PICK scoring system. Executive Scrutiny Committee is the decision-making body that sets the priorities and programme for the year ahead, allocating in-depth reviews to individual Select Committees. The setting of an annual work programme does not preclude topics being added to the programme mid-year where the need arises.
3. Over the years, we have sought to ensure that topics selected align with the priorities of the Council and this has been reflected in the prioritisation of the topics by Members. Currently the work programme of in-depth reviews is focusing on supporting the Council's priorities as part of the Powering Our Future (POF) programme. In view of the continued importance of aligning the Scrutiny Programme with the POF transformation work, it is proposed that this should remain the focus for 2025/26.
4. The Chair of the Committee has communicated this proposal to all Members at the same time inviting Members to advise of any additional urgent matter that they feel should be reviewed in 2025/26. The usual pro forma templates have been completed in respect of all the proposed topics.
5. A "PICK" priority scoring system is used to allocate a score to each topic suggestion. It should be stressed that the score is a tool to aid prioritisation and is not binding in any way. All topic suggestions received, and their scores are attached at **Appendix 1**.
6. The topics scored "above the line" are listed by Select Committee (**Appendix 2**) on the basis that Select Committees tend to complete two in depth policy reviews each year. Members are reminded that Select Committees have flexible remits and there is the option to move reviews between Committees.
7. The PICK scoring system is attached at **Appendix 3**. Individual topic pro formas are attached at **Appendix 4**.

CONSULTATION

8. Councillors have been asked to advise of any urgent matter, or any issue already listed on the programme, that they feel should still be reviewed in 2025/26.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The work programme is resourced within existing budgets. No legal implications are identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. There is a need to meet legislative requirements and for the Council to put in place internal mechanisms to ensure the safety and quality of key services in addition to deploying resources in the most effective way. The selection of appropriate topics for review can help to support service improvement; the selection of inappropriate topics will lead to the waste of officer and Member time and resources.

Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney
Telephone No: 01642 526312
Email Address: jonathan.nertney@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers: None
Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific
Property Implications: None

Appendix 1 - Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/26

Ref No.	Suggested Topic	Public Interest	Impact	Council Efficiency & Performance	Keep in Context	Council Plan Priority	Outcome	Total	Comments
1	Muslim and Faith Burial Provision	Carried forward from previous year for Place Select Committee.							
2	Partnership Working in Early Help	3	3	2	3	2	3	16	
3	Animal Welfare	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	
4	Post 16 Provision	3	3	2	2	2	3	15	
5	Carers Support Service	3	3	2	2	2	3	15	
6	Children affected by Domestic Abuse	3	3	2	3	2	2	15	
7	Treatment Support for Alcohol	2	3	2	3	2	2	14	
8	Additionally Resourced SEND Provision	2	3	1	3	2	3	14	
9	Adult Education and Skills	3	2	1	3	2	3	14	
10	Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budgets	2	3	1	3	2	3	14	
11	Discharge to Assess	3	2	2	1	2	2	12	Update to Committee on implementation of transformation work
12	Governance of Capital Projects	2	2	1	2	0	2	9	
13	Best Value in Procurement	2	2	1	1	1	2	9	
14	Fly Tipping	3	2	2	0	1	1	9	Monitor through implementation of Waste Select Committee Review and review next year if appropriate
15	Children Not in School	3	1	1	0	1	1	7	Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill includes provisions to provide additional protections. CYP Select and Executive Scrutiny Committee to receive briefings.

Appendix 2

Topic Suggestions by Committee

Select Committee	Potential Topics (In order of start date)
Adult Services and Health	Post 16 Provision Adult Education and Skills
Children and Young People	Children affected by Domestic Abuse Additionally Resourced SEND Provision
Community Safety	Animal Welfare Treatment Support for Alcohol
People	Partnership Working in Early Help Carers Support
Place	Muslim and Faith Burial Provision Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budgets

Appendix 3

PICK Priority Setting

P for Public Interest

Members' representative roles are an essential feature of Scrutiny. They are the eyes and ears of the public, ensuring that the policies, practice and services delivered to the people of the Borough, by both the Council and external organisations, are meeting local needs and to an acceptable standard. The concerns of local people should therefore influence the issues chosen for scrutiny. This could include current issues. For example, dignity is consistently cited as a high priority for service users (e.g. Mid Staffordshire Enquiry, care in Winterbourne hospital) and scrutiny committees are well placed to influence the agenda locally and drive forward better-quality services). Members themselves will have a good knowledge of local issues and concerns. Surgeries, Parish Councils, Residents Associations and Community Groups are all sources of resident's views. Consultation and Surveys undertaken by the Council and others can also provide a wealth of information.

I for Impact

Scrutiny is about making a difference to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area. Not all issues of concern will have equal impact on the well-being of the community and there may be issues which are important to residents but where the Council can exert little or no influence. This should be considered when deciding the programme of work, giving priority to the big issues that have most impact and where scrutiny can tangibly influence the outcome. To maximise impact, particularly when scrutinising external activity, attention should also be given to how the committee could influence policy and practice.

C for Council Performance

Scrutiny is about improving performance and ensuring the Council's customers are served well. With the abolition of external inspection regimes, scrutiny has an even more important role to play in self-regulation. Members will need good quality information to identify areas where the Council, and other external organisations, are performing poorly. Areas where performance has dropped should be our priority. As well as driving up Council performance, scrutiny also has an important role in scrutinising the efficiency and value for money of Council services and organisational development. In the current financial climate, the challenge for scrutiny is investigating whether improvements can be made within existing resources or with less resource and identify ways that demand for services can be reduced.

K for Keep in Context

To avoid duplication or wasted effort priorities should take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered. Is there another review happening or planned? Is the service about to be inspected by an external body? Are there major legislative or policy initiatives already resulting in change? If these circumstances exist Members may decide to link up with other approaches or defer a decision until the outcomes are known or conclude that the other approaches will address the issues. Reference should also be made to proposed programmes of work in the Council's plans and strategies and whether topic suggestion is in line with the Council's four policy principles.

Council Plan

All topic suggestions should be in line with the Council Plan.

Outcome

Greater weighing will be given to those suggestions where it is clear that scrutiny will make a tangible difference, can exert influence, achieve savings and reduce pressure on demand for services.

Scoring System

- **Public Interest:** the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen

Score	Measure
0	no public interest
1	low public interest
2	medium public interest
3	high public interest

- **Impact:** priority should be given to the issues which make the biggest difference to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area

Score	Measure
0	no direct impact
1	low impact
2	medium impact
3	high impact

- **Council Performance and efficiency:** priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other agencies, are not performing well or proposals will identify efficiencies/ savings and reduce pressure on demand for services. NB a higher score is given to low performance.

Score	Measure
0	'Green' on or above target performance
1	'Amber',
2	low performance 'Red'

- **Keep in Context:** work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

Score	Measure
0	Already dealt with/ not a Council/ public sector priority
1	Longer term aspiration or plan
2	Need for review acknowledged and worked planned elsewhere
3	Need for review acknowledged

In addition, extra weighting will be given to suggestions which are in line with the Council's priorities and where it is clear that scrutiny can achieve a positive outcome:

- **Council Plan Priority**

Score	Measure
0	Not a Council Plan priority
1	Council Plan priority but worked planned elsewhere
2	Council Plan priority and need for review acknowledged

- **Outcome**

Score	Measure
1	Low value added
2	Medium value added
3	High value added

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

2

<p>Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?</p> <p>Partnership Working in Early Help</p> <p>Key lines of inquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How effective are early help interventions in preventing escalation of needs in children and families?• What evidence-based interventions have a significant impact on children and families.• Are families getting the right support at the right time to prevent escalation of needs?• What is the local authority's and partnership offer across EH.• What is the demand on external partnerships to deliver EH interventions.• How do outcomes for children and families receiving EH compare to those who do not?• How accessible are services?• How effective are information sharing protocols across the partnership? <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What evidence exists to show EH interventions lead to sustainable outcomes for families?• How effective and strong is the partnership offer?• What happens to families after they leave EH Services? Are they successfully moving on independently or do they require further support and interventions?
<p>NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS. PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.</p>
<p>Public interest justification:</p> <p>This review will contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• protecting our children from harm• supporting sustainable and safe communities• prevention of escalating risks in families that may cause mental health issues, substance misuse, exploitation, and domestic abuse
<p>Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:</p> <p>The effectiveness of early help services to support children and families will positively impact on their wellbeing, community integration, employability.</p>
<p>Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:</p> <p>This review will contribute to greater understanding of interventions and approaches which are effective at supporting children and families at the earliest opportunity. The review will also identify where partnership working can be improved.</p>

<p>Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):</p> <p>The Early Help Strategy is being refreshed.</p>
<p>How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?</p> <p>This review will contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best start in life• A safe community for all children and young people• Healthy and resilient communities• Happy and healthy lives for all
<p>What would you want the outcome of the review to be?</p> <p>Greater understanding of the effectiveness of early help services in Stockton Improved partnership working with all partners taking responsibility for supporting children and families at the earliest opportunity More accessibility through a menu of support services for children and families.</p>
<p>Signed: Cllr Lisa Evans Date: 13.02.25</p>
<p>Please return to:</p> <p>Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD</p> <p>Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158</p>

Select Committee Work Programme Suggested Review – Pro Forma

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Animal Welfare, Kennelling and the Protection of Pets

As part of the Council's Environmental Health Service, our Animal Welfare division performs several critical functions to protect the public and ensure the welfare of animals, including statutory control over stray dogs.

The Council's Animal Welfare Service has a distinguished history of serving the residents of Stockton-on-Tees, consistently providing exemplary care for animals. This dedication has earned us the RSPCA Gold Standard award annually since its inception.

In addition to our Council responsibilities, the short-term kennelling facility at the Security Centre is an asset, which is also utilised by the Police for housing dogs involved in daily operations, such as the arrest of suspects with dogs or the detention of dangerous dogs.

Despite the commendable efforts of our officers, the demand for our services continues to rise, both in terms of the number of animals we handle and the complexity of cases. This trend is mirrored in our Adult Social Care Services, where rehoming animals, particularly dogs, presents significant challenges for our staff.

Further challenges are evident in the private sector's provision of long-term kennelling for dogs in our care. Costs are escalating, and the availability of space is diminishing, reflecting similar issues faced by local authorities nationwide. The increasing costs are driven by factors such as rising operational expenses, stricter regulations, and higher demand for kennelling services. Additionally, the limited availability of space is exacerbated by the growing number of animals requiring care and the competition for kennelling facilities.

Our current contract with the existing provider is set to expire in the next couple of years, which adds urgency to our need to address these challenges. This review presents an ideal opportunity to assess long-term challenges and formulate recommendations for the future provision of animal welfare services, kennelling, and property protection. Key areas for consideration include:

1. **Financial Sustainability:** Exploring funding options and cost-saving measures to ensure the continued provision of high-quality animal welfare services.
2. **Capacity and Infrastructure:** Assessing the need for additional kennelling facilities or partnerships to accommodate the growing number of animals.
3. **Staffing and Training:** Ensuring our officers are adequately trained and supported to handle the increasing complexity of cases.
4. **Collaboration with External Agencies:** Strengthening partnerships with the Police, private kennelling providers, and other local authorities to share resources and best practices.
5. **Community Engagement:** Raising awareness and encouraging responsible pet ownership to reduce the number of stray and abandoned animals.

By addressing these challenges, we aim to continue providing excellent care for animals and ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

The protection of pets and in particular dogs is a very emotive topics which captures the attention of the public generally. We know that there is a significant interest around the welfare of animals following several high profile cases of animal abuse nationally. Furthermore the level of demand on these services clearly demonstrates that it's a well used and well received service which is further evidenced by the awards it has won.

Reviewing the Council's Animal Welfare Services is of significant public interest for several reasons:

1. **Public Safety:** Ensuring effective control over stray and dangerous dogs is crucial for public safety. By reviewing these services, we can identify areas for improvement to better protect residents from potential harm.
2. **Animal Welfare:** The community expects high standards of care for animals. A review can help maintain and enhance these standards, ensuring that animals receive the best possible care and treatment.
3. **Resource Allocation:** With increasing demand and rising costs, it's essential to ensure that resources are used efficiently. A review can help identify cost-saving measures and funding opportunities to sustain high-quality services.
4. **Transparency and Accountability:** Regular reviews demonstrate the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability. They provide an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of current practices and make informed decisions for future improvements.
5. **Community Engagement:** Engaging the community in discussions about animal welfare can raise awareness and promote responsible pet ownership. This can lead to a reduction in the number of stray and abandoned animals, benefiting both the community and the animals.
6. **Interagency Collaboration:** Strengthening partnerships with the Police, private kennelling providers, and other local authorities can enhance service delivery. A review can identify opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing.
7. **Long-term Planning:** With the current contract for kennelling services set to expire, it's crucial to plan for the future. A review can help anticipate long-term challenges and develop strategies to address them, ensuring the sustainability of animal welfare services.

By addressing these public interest justifications, the review can lead to improved services, better outcomes for animals, and enhanced safety and well-being for the community we represent.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Reviewing the Council's Animal Welfare Services is essential for our community's well-being. By controlling stray and dangerous dogs, we can keep our streets safer. High standards of animal care build trust within the community, given the emotive nature of the topic suggested.

In terms of economic considerations, managing rising costs and resources efficiently is crucial, especially with the significant increase in future costs. A more informed approach will allow for cost avoidance and may also lead to further income by considering different models of delivery. A focus on working with other agencies, making smart policy decisions, and involving the community in animal welfare discussions will ensure a healthier, safer, and more financially stable future for animal welfare services and the for the protection of pets generally.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

The Councils Animal Welfare Team provides award winning services to our community. The team itself deal with a wide range of interventions that promote animal wellbeing and public health, including dealing with stray dogs. In terms of demand on services due to stray dogs, in the financial year 2022/2023 the Animal Welfare Service dealt with 802 requests for service concerning dogs and dog related complaints. In this period 337 dogs were required to be kennelled. In the financial year 2023/2024 this number increased to 353. Furthermore, the length of time that dogs are required to stay in long term kennelling provision is increasing.

The cost of long term kennelling has also increased along with demand for spaces. Soft market testing has evidenced a significant gap in local providers and a huge increase in costs to use national providers of kennel spaces for example.

This review will therefore look to consider the options potentially available to the Council to ensure long term sustainability of key statutory services whilst also looking to offset or reduce significantly the potential future costs of maintaining services at the current level.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

There are no linked reviews taking place in this area currently. No similar review has taken place previously.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

Reviewing the Council's Animal Welfare Services is closely linked to building healthy and resilient communities. Effective animal welfare services ensure public safety by controlling stray and dangerous dogs, which reduces the risk of attacks and injuries. This fosters a sense of security and well-being among residents. Furthermore, this topic has direct links into both the Partnership and Regeneration Missions of the 'Powering our Future' program whilst also ensuring financial stability of the organisation in the future.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

- **Financial Sustainability:** Exploring funding options and cost-saving measures to ensure the continued provision of high-quality animal welfare services.
- **Capacity and Infrastructure:** Assessing the need for additional kennelling facilities or partnerships to accommodate the growing number of animals.
- **Staffing and Training:** Ensuring our officers are adequately trained and supported to handle the increasing complexity of cases.
- **Collaboration with External Agencies:** Strengthening partnerships with the Police, private kennelling providers, and other local authorities to share resources and best practices.
- **Community Engagement:** Raising awareness and encouraging responsible pet ownership to reduce the number of stray and abandoned animals.

Signed: Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE

Date: 14/02/2025

Please return to: Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Post 16 Provision

We have a strong Post 16 offer in Stockton. There are five Post 16 providers in the Borough offering a range of courses and qualifications to fulfil a variety of different passions and career aspirations. Achievement for Young People at the end of their Post 16 Education is growing rapidly with a 97.7% A Level pass rate across the Borough- this is higher than the national average. The number of students completing Post 16 Education is growing with an increase of over 300 students over 5 years.

However, enrolment figures for in Borough providers have been impacted in recent years with more Stockton students choosing to attend out of Borough providers in Middlesborough and Darlington. There are a range of possible reasons to explain this trend, one being the allure of new surroundings and an opportunity to meet new people. In Borough Providers offer similar courses with only one out of Borough provider beating In Borough A Level A*-B outcomes.

Since 2023, our Careers team have surveyed Young People approaching the end of Year 11, asking about their readiness for leaving school. The survey found that 13.1% of students hadn't had a careers discussion at all in advance of sitting their GCSEs. A further 18.1% of students surveyed said they hadn't made a clear decision about their next steps after school. These findings suggest that Stockton students are largely unaware of the current offer available to them. In order to attract more students to in Borough Post 16 providers, we must improve our existing communications strategy to effectively reach our target audience.

Post 16 Education is a suggested area for scrutiny. It is easy to recognise and celebrate the positives of our current offer- high achievement, high satisfaction amongst Young People and parents as well as large proportions of students continuing onto Higher Education, however, we are not complacent and recognise that there are areas that would benefit from development. These include:

- Attraction & Retention rates
- Current NEET statistics
- Internal awareness of strategic funding opportunities
- Communication & Marketing of our offer

In presenting some key areas of improvement to the Select Committee, we hope to gain a fresh perspective on possible solutions to these issues. Recommended solutions will provide a positive sense of direction to inform the Post 16 enhancement strategy that is already in development.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

For many residents, Education is an area of high priority and interest as it affects them or someone they know on a daily basis, whether they are a student themselves, a teacher or a parent or relative of a student attending school within the Borough. During the most formative

years of a Young Persons life, the quality of Education received is crucial to their intellectual growth as well as their social and emotional development and economic independence. Children are our future and it is therefore of paramount importance that we look after their best interests- we must ensure that Post 16 Education providers in our Borough are as effective as possible in meeting all student's needs.

This scrutiny provides a significant opportunity in which the experiences of local residents can be channelled through the voice of Elected Members, informing our Post 16 enhancement strategy and improving the overall provision of Post 16 Education in our Borough.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

As previously mentioned, our Post 16 offer is strong, however, statistics show that a small minority of 16-17 year olds in our Borough are at risk of or have become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) since beginning KS5. Economic inactivity significantly impacts upon an individual's economic growth potential and is often associated with an increased likelihood of involvement in antisocial behaviour and crime. During the 2022/23 academic year, 1.6% more students who attended a Post 16 provider IN BOROUGH (5.3%) dropped out in Year 12 than those OUT OF BOROUGH (3.7%) Overall, 7% of our Year 13 students, whether they attended a Post 16 provider in or out of Borough were NEET by the end of November 2024. These numbers are much too high.

A minority of students choose to dropout within the first three months of starting a Post 16 qualification, a core focus of the Post 16 enrichment strategy is to improve transitional support. Post 16 education involves an increase in independence, greater difficulty of work and a new structure to the day. These factors are often responsible for dropouts, but it is also important to consider other external factors such as health and wellbeing, financial situation and access to transport. We aim to make the transition from secondary school to Post 16 education as seamless as possible, helping Young People to overcome some of these factors and avoid becoming NEET.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Over 40% of Stockton students leave the Borough for Post 16 Education. This equates to approximately £7 million lost in funding for our Post 16 providers. As Post 16 Ofsted outcomes are largely stronger than our main out of Borough competitors, we are keen for more Stockton students to benefit from this high-quality provision.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

An Appreciative Inquiry report was published in 2024 which outlined 17 recommendations in order to narrow the attainment gap within Stockton Borough, some of which include:

- Improved Communications with Young People & Parents
- Strengthening understandings of career pathways
- Strengthening our existing transitions arrangements
- Strengthening the enrichment offer

Our Post 16 enrichment strategy encompasses many of the key recommendations and aims to establish a refreshed approach to strengthening our current offer and tackling the challenges. Work in this topic area is reviewed on a monthly basis by a Post 16 strategic board, consisting of Headteachers from our five Post 16 providers as well as the Director for Children's Services.

Aside from this, there are no current and ongoing reviews into this topic area.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

The most relevant excerpt from the Council Plan is: 'by working closely with our partners- it will support children to achieve outstanding educational attainment. It will also support more of our school leavers to remain in education, help them gain employment and/or training to provide opportunities for a better future'.

This perfectly aligns with our ambitions for our Post 16 offer. We aim to work collaboratively with our Post 16 providers to encourage aspiration amongst our Young People, ensuring that every Young Person in our Borough is equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to fulfil their true potential. Key actions to enable this include:

- Adapting the curriculum towards local labour markets
- Launching a 'Stockton Born and Bred' initiative, showcasing successful people from the local area to inspire aspiration and a 'can do' attitude
- Stockton Talent Employer Presentations by local business leaders to spotlight local businesses
- Development of an AI tool that matches skill sets to careers for students

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

The scrutiny committee shall consider the challenges and proposed solutions to our current Post 16 offer, offering further enhancements informed by the experiences and opinions of local children, parents and carers. Feedback will be used to strengthen the Post 16 enrichment strategy that is currently in development, therefore yielding a greater impact.

Signed: Cllr Lisa Evans

Date: 14/02/25

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service

The Adult Carers Service was brought in house to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in January 2018 and works with adults who are providing informal care and support for Adults in Stockton on Tees.

Since then, the Carers service has developed significantly with over 5000 referrals during this time. They are currently working with 3200 unpaid carers within Stockton -on-Tees offering ongoing advice, information and support alongside statutory carers assessments, support planning, carers personal budgets and time out support.

Whilst this service is considered to be effective it would be of benefit for the Carers Service to be scrutinised to provide assurance around its current service delivery.

It is also hoped that this level of scrutiny will also help highlight any gaps in the service provided and in turn help shape future developments for the service

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

The 2014 Care Act gave carers the same legal right to assessment and support as the person they care for. There are over 5.7 million carers nationally with an estimate of over 20,000 of those living within Stockton on Tees. Carers are more than twice as likely to suffer from poor physical and mental health and financial hardship than their non caring counterparts.

Unpaid carers play a vital part of the care and support around their loved ones. National estimates of the cost of unpaid care is around £24,000 for each carer providing 35 hours per week care to a loved one. Without continuing to provide significant support to enable carers to maintain their own health and wellbeing both health and social care services would be required to provide further costly interventions to enable these individuals to maintain their independence health and wellbeing.

By providing information, advice and support to carers we are able to ensure they promote their own wellbeing, prevent carer breakdown and establish resilient communities.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Carers play a substantial and vital role in meeting social care needs. The cost of replacement care locally for Stockton-on-Tees would be estimated to be around £480million annually. By sustaining carers within their caring role we are ensuring the stability of local adult health and social care services. Identifying and providing support to these individuals is not just mandated by the 2014 Care Act but a sound economic and socially responsible decision.

Addressing the needs of an increasingly complex and aging population with care and support needs. The People first social care reform policy lists as one of its priorities the need for social care to be joined up and focused on prevention and early intervention. Addressing the needs of carers enables us to prevent and delay the need for complex and costly social care interventions.


As carers are reportedly more than twice as likely to suffer from poor physical and mental health than their non caring counterparts providing robust support mechanisms can also prevent those individuals from developing to needing services in their own right. One third of people in a caring role report feeling often or always lonely which again has a significant impact on the potential for requiring services and support.

1 in 7 people within employment are also in a significant caring role. 2 in 5 of these will leave their employment due to their caring role. This has a cost of around £5.4Billion nationally to the UK economy from both the loss to the labour market, the cost of recruiting and training and the impact on benefits claims.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Currently we are supporting nearly 2000 Carers with a Direct Payment which amounts to a projected spend of £550,000 for this provision in this financial year.

4.2% of our residents are providing up to 19 hours of weekly unpaid care, which is a decrease from 6% in 2011.



9.9%
of population provide unpaid care

However, we have seen an increase in the percentage of carers delivering between 20-49 hours (2.3%) and those delivering at least 50 hours (3.4%) of unpaid care.

We currently support **2436** carers through our own Carers' Service.



We support **1.2%** of our population through carers service

We have 110 cares who currently make use of the Time Out service provided by Adult Carers Service. This service provides a "sitting service" on an ad hoc basis to allow for carers to attend appointments, social activities etc.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

There are no formal reviews however the Carers service did have some initial involvement with the Transitions programme as part of Powering our Futures. Carers service is working with Mobilise to help identify carers from some of the hard to reach parts of the diverse community that exists within the borough

<https://support.mobiliseonline.co.uk/stockton-on-tees>

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

- To provide support to people to prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.
- Maximise opportunities to support carers.
- Ensure that the person who needs care, their families and those most important to them have the full opportunity to identify their own way forward.
- Ensure that we embed the principles of prevention and early intervention through every aspect of work that we do.
- Fully explore the use of technology to support people who need care.

- To ensure people can get the right level and type of support at the right time.

- To work with, and within, communities.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

Primary: To understand the impact of the carers service on promoting the wellbeing and needs of unpaid carers. Identifying where the service is reaching its objective and where future focus needs to be concentrated to improve service delivery and satisfaction for carers

Secondary: To understand and identify where partnership working can be improved to promote the rights and needs of carers, ensuring they are being treated as expert partners and identified for support when required.

Signed: Cllr Pauline Beall

Date: 14/2/25

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Children Affected by Domestic Abuse

The impact of domestic abuse on children cannot be underestimated, with children estimated to witness three-quarters of abusive incidents and many also having themselves experienced physical and emotional abuse. The impact of domestic abuse is felt by children regardless of their age. This impact is now recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021: children exposed to domestic abuse or experiencing domestic abuse in their own relationships are regarded as victim-survivors in their own right.

Domestic abuse can seriously affect families and the physical, mental and emotional health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. Children and young people can develop emotional, behavioural and developmental issues such as anxiety, challenging and aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, delayed speech, language and communication and low self-esteem affecting their ability to form healthy relationships and educational attainment. In 2020/21 the local domestic abuse service found that children were exposed to three quarters of domestic abuse incidents, whilst a third of referrals to Children's Services were related to domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone and disproportionately affects children and young people. Domestic abuse can be one of the factors resulting in child exploitation and can contribute and exacerbate multiple disadvantage. In 2020/21, services in Stockton-on-Tees reported that 17% of homeless presentations were related to domestic abuse and 20% of substance misuse service users had experienced domestic abuse.

The proposed aim of this review is to articulate the local offer for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, which will be multi-agency, and be able to communicate this clearly, appropriately and consistently as an organisation and a system. The outcome of which will be that frontline professionals, families and children and young people will be aware of and able to access support to prevent domestic abuse having an enduring negative impact on the lives of children and young people.

Key lines of inquiry:

- How does the experience of domestic abuse impact on children and young people throughout their lives (immediate and longer term) including representation of children's voices?
- What is evidence-based practice to tackle and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people who have been exposed to or experienced domestic abuse?
- What is the local authority's offer for children affected by domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees?
- What is in place across partners to mitigate the effects of domestic abuse on children in the borough?
- What is in place in the borough to prevent the experience of domestic abuse as a child from having an enduring negative impact on individual behaviour and attitudes?

Outcomes:

- Maximise the opportunities for a collaborative approach to addressing the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people across service areas within the local authority and across the system.

- Consistent and effective and evidence-based approaches in the response to children and young people who have been exposed to or experienced domestic abuse.
- Building skills and knowledge of frontline staff in order to provide a tiered response to domestic abuse in relation to children and young people (i.e. brief intervention, sign posting, intervention and specialist provision).

The existing domestic abuse strategic outcomes framework (logic model) will be used, and expanded as appropriate in light of this review, to monitor performance against the strategic outcomes relating to impact of domestic abuse on children and young people. This will include key performance data, and where appropriate comparator data, which may be identified as part of the review.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS. PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

This review will contribute to:

- protecting our children from harm
- supporting sustainable and safe communities
- reducing enduring trauma

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

This review will recommend activities to positively impact on the lives of children and young people and, as parents of the future, subsequent generations/families

Identifying evidence-based approaches to reducing the enduring impact of domestic abuse will contribute to improved wellbeing of individuals and families. Domestic abuse is one of five domains of multiple disadvantage. Reducing the impact of domestic abuse contributes to reducing overall experience of multiple disadvantage.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Reducing the impact of domestic abuse on individuals may reduce the need (demand) for services.

This review will contribute to greater understanding of interventions and approaches which are effective at protecting children and young people from harm. The review will also identify where services and practice can be improved.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) specifies the definition of domestic abuse and the definition of a victim-survivor of abuse including exposure to (being aware of, hearing or seeing) domestic abuse. This definition will be promoted to system partners as part of providing a consistent and cohesive approach.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees highlights the importance of intervening early to minimise the impact of domestic abuse on children.

The *Tees-wide Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetration Strategy* and the *Violence Prevention Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees* are in development and are complementary to this work.

This review will take account of the [proposed] alcohol scrutiny review.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

This review will contribute to:

- Best start in life
- A safe community for all children and young people
- Healthy and resilient communities
- Happy and healthy lives for all

The outputs (e.g. review of evidence-based practice) from this review will also contribute to the Powering Our Futures transformation reviews: Early Intervention and Prevention of Complex Lives.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

A collaborative, comprehensive, effective approach to supporting children and young people who experience domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees.

Signed: Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Norma Stephenson, Cllr Lisa Evans **Date:** 13.02.25

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Community involvement to understand levels of awareness and barriers to accessing treatment support for alcohol.

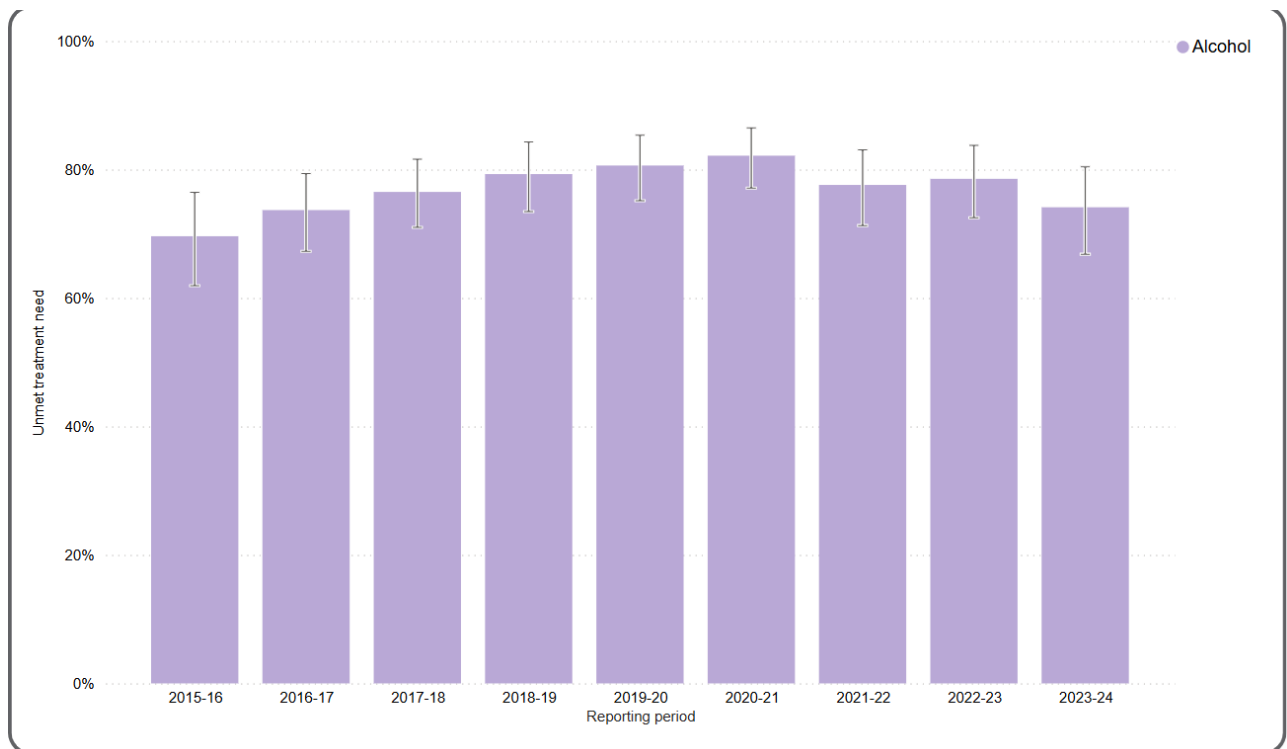
Alcohol is embedded in our culture and our day to day lives. Alcohol is associated with socialising, relaxing, celebrating and commiserating. Alcohol is acceptable, affordable and readily available. Yet alcohol-related harm is not only felt by individuals, it impacts on our families, our communities, our services and workforces as well as our wider economy. The impact of alcohol harms is disproportionately greater for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Harm from alcohol does not only relate to cohorts who are drinking at hazardous levels and have multiple other complexities in their lives (which is being looked at through other routes including the Early Intervention and Prevention review and links to the ongoing Safer Town Centres scrutiny review).

There is also a cohort of adults who are drinking at hazardous levels (are alcohol dependent) and alongside are currently able to ‘function’ for example in having stable accommodation, holding down a job and / or having stable family networks and relationships. Home drinking is a key factor for this cohort.

We know there is a cohort of drinkers that does not identify as alcohol dependent and does not seek support – in fact it is estimated that of adults experiencing alcohol dependency in Stockton-on-Tees during 2023/24, 74% were not in treatment (*National Drug Treatment Monitoring System), see Figure 1. This unmet treatment need has not significantly reduced in recent years.

Figure 1. Unmet treatment need for alcohol in Stockton-on-Tees (NDTMS*)



There are several factors which contribute to this, including lack of awareness of what constitutes hazardous drinking and dependence; ability to function despite dependence; social acceptability of consumption of alcohol; fear of employer finding out/risk to employment and stigma associated with seeking treatment. Nevertheless, this cohort will still experience significant health and wellbeing harms from alcohol, are likely to have shorter lives in poorer health and there may still be some impacts on e.g. their family relationships.

The focus of this review is to understand how to improve awareness and access to support, to address this unmet treatment need in our communities. The outcomes of which will be improved awareness of the harms caused by hazardous drinking for this cohort in our community; and improved opportunity to access treatment support.

Key lines of inquiry

- Why are an estimated 74% of people in the borough with alcohol dependence not in treatment and support services?
- What support is available for people drinking alcohol across the spectrum of levels harmful to their health through to dependence?
- What can we do differently to increase the proportion of people with alcohol dependence accessing support?
- How can we best engage and work with people drinking at hazardous levels who do not access treatment services, to improve these outcomes?

The existing alcohol strategic framework will be adapted to produce an outcomes framework (logic model) which will be used, and expanded as appropriate in light of this review, to monitor performance against the strategic outcomes relating to alcohol treatment unmet need. This will include key performance data, and where appropriate comparator data, which may be identified as part of the review.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

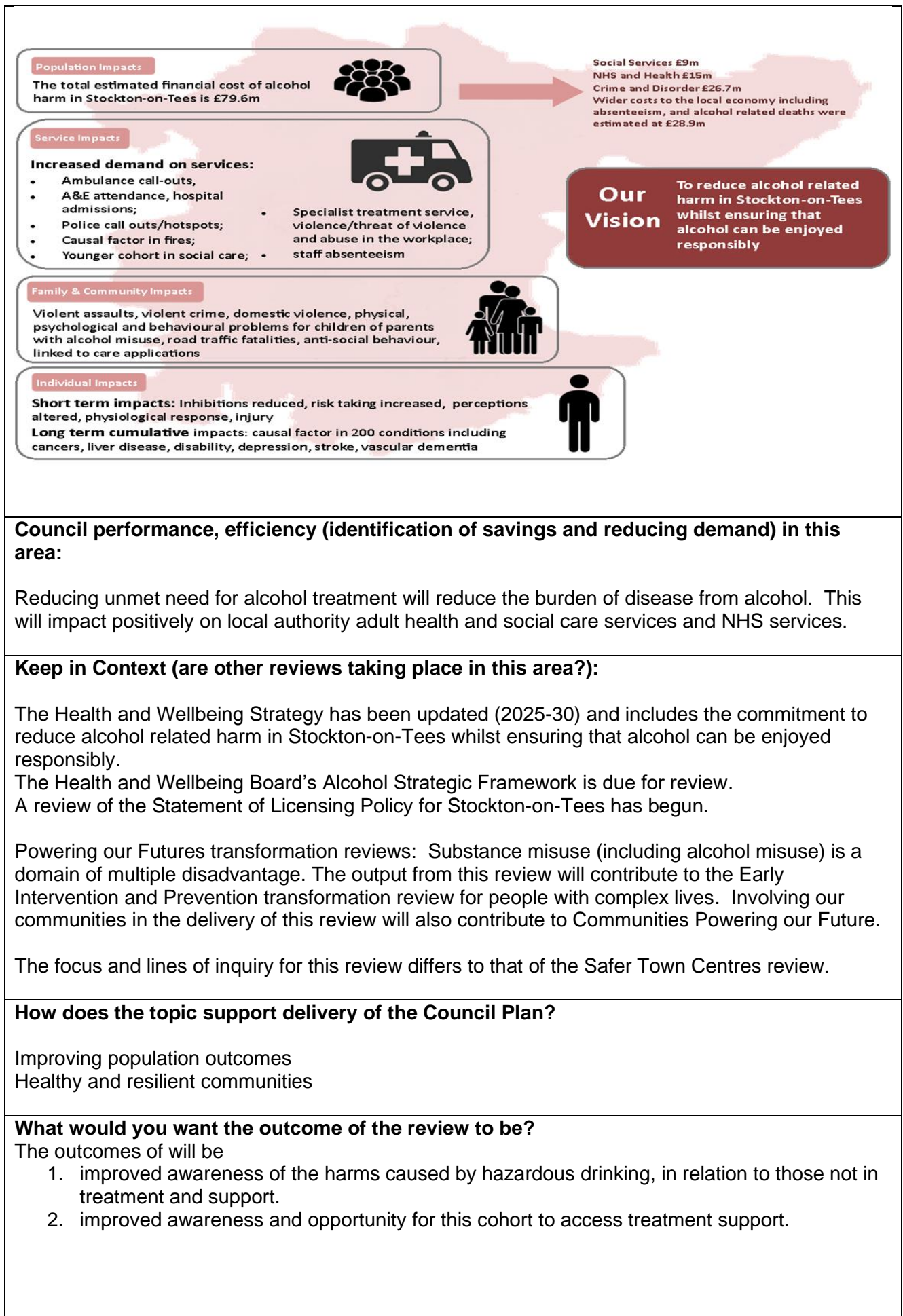
NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

This review will contribute to:
Safer and resilient communities
Health & wellbeing

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

The impact is illustrated in the figure below, which is taken from the Alcohol Strategic Framework for Stockton-on-Tees (2019-2023)



Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Reducing unmet need for alcohol treatment will reduce the burden of disease from alcohol. This will impact positively on local authority adult health and social care services and NHS services.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been updated (2025-30) and includes the commitment to reduce alcohol related harm in Stockton-on-Tees whilst ensuring that alcohol can be enjoyed responsibly.

The Health and Wellbeing Board’s Alcohol Strategic Framework is due for review.

A review of the Statement of Licensing Policy for Stockton-on-Tees has begun.

Powering our Futures transformation reviews: Substance misuse (including alcohol misuse) is a domain of multiple disadvantage. The output from this review will contribute to the Early Intervention and Prevention transformation review for people with complex lives. Involving our communities in the delivery of this review will also contribute to Communities Powering our Future.

The focus and lines of inquiry for this review differs to that of the Safer Town Centres review.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

Improving population outcomes
Healthy and resilient communities

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

The outcomes of will be

1. improved awareness of the harms caused by hazardous drinking, in relation to those not in treatment and support.
2. improved awareness and opportunity for this cohort to access treatment support.

Signed: Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Pauline Beall

Date: 14 February 2025

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Strength and Breadth of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision in Mainstream Schools

Since 2017, Stockton on Tees have had an enhanced mainstream school (EMS) model in place which supports children who require additional support than normally available in mainstream when they have a particular area of need i.e. a cognition and learning difficulty. In recent years, these placements have been overpopulated (for example for children who have language and communication needs) and underutilised in other areas (HI/VI & Physical Needs), resulting in high levels of high needs funding been distributed to settings without the children in situ to receive support.

In October 2024, the council began a consultation to repurpose its EMS provision into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEND Units. This would allow for the flexibility to meet the demand for placement, give parents the right to choose these placements for their children and also bring the provision in Stockton on Tees in line with Department for Education guidance by registering the provisions as resourced provision.

Additionally resourced provisions in mainstream are designed to support children with SEND who require more tailored support but do not require a place in a special school.

Key concerns relating to this are as follows:

- Increasing demand – current demand outweighs the number of places available and although a 9% increase was anticipated and taken into consideration, there is currently a 15% increase in demand from 2024 to 2025. This increase is largely in Early Years provision (children between 2-4 years old)
- Funding and resources – the council are required to ensure that the ARP & SEND Units are adequately resourced and funding to ensure its success for the children accessing the provision. This will have an impact of approximately £750,000 additional from high needs funding per year.
- Parental confidence and engagement
- Capital Funding
- Consistency in provision

In December 2024, the government requested that all councils begin to consider creating resourced provision within their mainstream's schools, with an announcement of further funding awaiting in Spring 2025. This new funding can be used to adapt classrooms to be more accessible for children with SEND, and to create specialist facilities within mainstream schools that can deliver more intensive support adapted to suit the pupils' needs and this coincides with the work already in development in Stockton.

In presenting these key areas to the Select Committee, we hope to highlight the issues and find solutions to the ongoing sufficiency and funding difficulties, ensuring that children in Stockton on Tees have access to the most appropriate support to meet their special educational needs.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

Ensuring the strength of additionally resourced provision in Stockton on Tees is a matter of public interest as it directly impacts the educational outcomes, wellbeing and future opportunities of children and young people with SEND from the borough. With rising demand for SEND support, is a need for greater transparency and accountability to ensure that all children receive the support they require.

Effective scrutiny of this provision will help identify any gaps, promote best practices and inform decision making. This is crucial for not only the children and families effected, but for the wider public, leading to benefits for community inclusion, social cohesion and ensuring that children remain within Stockton on Tees.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Strengthening additionally resourced SEND provision has wide reaching social, economic and environmental benefits for the area. It is anticipated that creation of these provisions will reduce the number of children who are attending schools out of the area to have their needs met, this reduces the reliance on community transport and ensures that our children can foster a peer group within the local community, also potentially reducing future reliance on social and welfare services, such as housing or adult social care. It is also anticipated that placing children in the right provision at the earliest opportunity will be reduced to some extent suspensions and exclusions of these children and increase attendance within the borough.

Sustainable investment in inclusive school facilities futureproofs educational infrastructure, creating accessible environments that benefit not just children with SEND, but the wider school community, leading to more inclusive, economically resilience and sustainable educational settings.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

We are currently spending £1.9m on EMS provisions for 209 places in Stockton schools, but by transferring these into SEN Units/ARPs and creating up to 100 additional places for children across the borough, there will be a required investment of up to £730k per year (assuming all placements are full) from high needs funding in addition to current spend.

To place 100 children in Independent Special Schools would increase the cost to the DSG to £6m per year. However, it would also result in additional transport costs which would be a direct cost to the LAs General Funds and would also have a detrimental impact on the transport review and cost saving plans.

Moving to the ARP/SEN unit model, although costing £730k extra per year for the maximum additional placements, would ultimately save £5.3m of High Needs funding per year (assuming all places are filled).

	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m
Unmitigated Cumulative DSG deficit	3.57	5.31	11.51	21.24	34.84
Increase capacity in SBC mainstream prim/sec schools (cumulative savings).		(1.29)	(6.55)	(13.35)	(23.64)
% of overall deficit					67.8%

Cost and savings based on an additional 100 places:

Financial Year	2025/26 (part yr)	2026/27 (full yr)	2027/28 (full yr)	Total
Cost of 100 places in Independent Special #	£3.5m	£6m	£6m	£15.5m
Additional cost of 100 places in SEN Units/ARPs	£430k	£730k	£730k	£1.89m
Annual saving against unmitigated forecast	£3.07m	£5.27m	£5.27m	£13.61m

Based on average £60k p.a.

** Assume all places filled from September 2025

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

This is an ongoing piece of work with ARP and SEND Units commencing from September 2025. (except for two current SEND units from September 2024)

There are no other reviews taking place in this area.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

This work aligns with the council's priorities to ensure that all children have a bright future and a sense of belonging and giving children the best possible start in life, this is greater achieved when our children are educated and build connections within the borough. It aligns with the council vision to have a sustainable community where everyone belongs and is valued.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

To ensure that SEND provision in mainstream schools in Stockton on Tees is accessible, effective and sustainable.

It is anticipated that the review would provide clear recommendations on improving the funding, sufficiency and quality of provision for children with SEND in Stockton on Tees and identify any gaps in the provision, including where additional or increased investment may be necessary.

Signed: Cllr Lisa Evans

Date: 12.02.25

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Adult Education & Skills

The Council play a significant role in supporting residents and employers to develop their skillset to help drive economic growth, increase employment and build strong and inclusive communities. The demand for these programmes continues to grow and is a key driver to support the wider aspirations of the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Powering our Future programme to help address the inequalities we face in the Borough. It is vital these programmes continue to positively respond to an evolving economic landscape and support our ambitions to drive economic growth, and increase prosperity and wellbeing.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

The Centre for Progressive Policy's Cost of Living Vulnerability Index shows Stockton-on-Tees to be one of the most vulnerable local authorities in the country:

- our poorest residents face a 3% higher inflation rate than average because a much greater proportion of their income is spent on essentials of food and energy. For them, it is a struggle to afford the basic essentials of everyday living
- Stockton-on-Tees has some of the highest poverty and deprivation rates in the country
- as a Borough, we have poorer health, higher unemployment and economic inactivity rates and high benefit claimant rates
- as of April 2024, there were 23,061 people claiming universal credit in the Borough
- in some wards, there are lower levels of educational attainment and lower quality housing stock (around 60,000 houses are estimated to lack basic insulation) than most other local authorities.
- 7.5% of the population aged 18 to 24 (965) are claiming out-of-work benefits against 4.6% nationally
- in 2021 to 2022, 24.9% of population aged 16 to 64 are economically inactive against 21.2% nationally
- in 2022 to 2023, 18.7% of children were living in relative low-income families against 19.8% nationally
- there are currently 740 (known) NEETs in Stockton-on-Tees
- Government statistics show that care leavers are three times more likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) than other young people. This has been associated with negative long-term consequences, including higher rates of homelessness, mental health problems and imprisonment.

Equally;

- 8.7% of residents have no qualifications which is higher than both the national and Tees Valley average.
- 57% of residents are qualified to NVQ Level 3 which is lower than the national and Tees Valley average.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Social

- **Social inclusion:** employment and skills development contribute to social inclusion by ensuring that people from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to work and opportunities for advancement. Reducing inequality and promoting a sense of belonging.
- **Health:** people in stable employment are more likely to have access to healthcare, improving overall public health. The Social networks formed through work can enhance mental well-being and reduce isolation.

Economic

- Employment opportunities help to stimulate the economy by providing individuals with income, which they then spend on goods and services
- A skilled workforce tends to be more productive, which boosts the overall output of an area
- Employment and the development of new skills help reduce poverty by offering stable incomes to individual and families, reducing dependencies on local government

Environmental

- As businesses shift toward sustainable practices, the creation of green jobs can improve environmental well-being while simultaneously providing employment and skills development opportunities.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

There is increasing demand on these Services which are supported utilising external funding allocations such as the Adult Skills Fund, Apprenticeship Funding and UKSPF project funding.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

Priority 1: The best start in life to achieve big ambitions

Giving Children and Young People the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive -

To increase the number of children and young people in Education, Employment and Training at ages 16-18, helping to grow their ambitions and meeting the needs of local employers.

Support for Children in Our Care -

Provide more opportunities to achieve and progress in education, employment and training

Priority 4: An inclusive economy

Ensuring all of our residents can benefit from economic opportunities by delivering and embedding a fairer distribution of wealth -

To support our residents to access secure and sustainable employment, by helping them to develop and make the most of their skills. Focusing efforts on communities that have more prevalent issues with lower skills and lower wages, as well as people facing barriers to employment, such as those living with a disability or those with long term health conditions.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

That the support provided to residents and employers through adult learning and employment initiatives continues to be fit for purpose and fulfils the priorities of the Council plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Powering our Futures programme.

Also, to better understand the support available for these groups and to streamline our approach to supporting our disadvantaged communities, including care leavers and NEETs to improve basic skills around English, maths and digital inclusion, leading to sustainable employment, by working more effectively across all Council services to improve outcomes.

- Better coordination of services for Care Leaver and NEETs within the Borough, working more closely with the Employment and Training Hub to support young people into employment.
- Targeted engagement with most disadvantaged communities to raise aspirations and improve uptake of English, maths and digital skills training.
- Raise aspirations of young people by developing a careers offer that better aligns with the skills of young people and the needs of businesses

Signed: Cllr Nigel Cooke

Date: 17 February 2025

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Community Participation Budget (CPB) and Ward Transport Budgets (WTB)

To review the effectiveness and desirability of these 2 budget schemes, giving consideration to the scope of interventions that are eligible, processes for determining the priorities for use of the funds, and the management of the projects that are funded through CPB and WTB.

The Committee will need to consider the value of CPB and WTB in the context of significant ongoing budget pressures for the Council as a whole. The Committee will also need to consider the revenue implications of the type of projects funded through these budgets.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

The projects that CPB and WTB are typically used for, are those that generate significant resident interest and engagement, albeit it at a local level.

The direct involvement of Ward Councillors in prioritising the use of these budgets is a matter of public interest.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Whilst the application of CPB and WTB results in projects that are small scale and local in character, they connect directly with resident's concerns and can have a significant impact on social and environmental well-being. The Committee may wish to explore whether this is genuine and sustained impact.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

The small scale and local, bespoke nature of the interventions funded through CPB and WTB, is not likely to represent the most cost-effective method of commissioning or procuring the work that is undertaken. In addition, the allocation of a sum to each Ward might be seen to stimulate demand, creating a desire to spend the money because it's available, looking for eligible projects. However, the direct involvement of Ward Councillors and the input of the communities they represent, helps to ensure that the interventions are well focused and likely to meet a genuine need.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

The projects supported contribute to the achievement of our priority 3, a great place to live, work and visit. They also contribute to the priority for healthy and resilient communities. The principle of co-commissioning is also relevant to the way in which CPB and WTB are delivered, with residents directly influencing the purpose and specification of works.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

Confidence that the level of investment made through CPB and WTB represents value for money and is justifiable in the context of overall budget pressures.
Clarity about the criteria and eligibility of work and the avoidance of unfunded future revenue pressures arising from the one-off capital works.

Signed: Cllr Clare Besford

Date: 14 February 2025

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Discharge to Assess (not reablement), outcomes for people leaving hospital.

Discharge to assess (D2A) is a program that helps people leave the hospital when they are safe and clinically fit for discharge. Once the person has been discharged, D2A provides ongoing care and assessment in the community dependent upon their pathway and level of need.

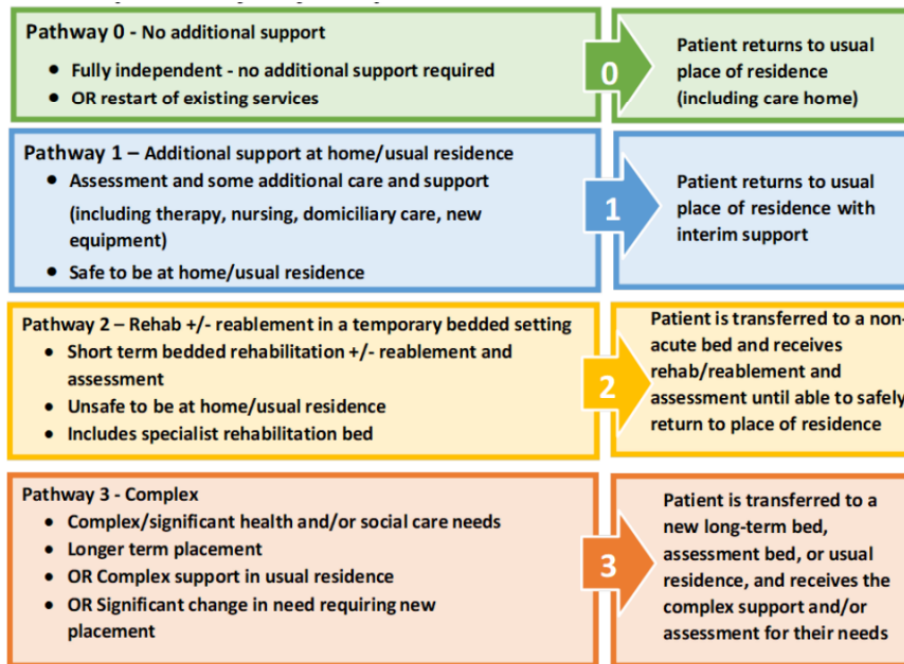
How does it work?

- People are discharged from the hospital as soon as their acute medical treatment is complete
- People are assessed in their home or in the community
- Assessments are based on the person’s needs, environment, and level of function
- The goal is to help maximise people’s independence.

There are 4 key pathways for D2A (see figure 1 below).

In 2024/25 ASH looked at Reablement service, which is a key service in pathway 1 (below).

Figure 1: D2A pathways



This review will focus on:

- Pathway 0: where people go home with an existing care at home package.
- Pathway 2: where people go into in house or spot residential beds prior for a period of rehabilitation or assessment prior to a decision about going home.
- Pathway 3: people who have health needs and are like requiring residential care long term.

This review could help understand:

- The process for supporting people efficiently and accurately through the D2A process, including the role and impact of Integrated Single Point of Access (ISPA) and Trusted Assessors.
- How effective are “in house” and commissioned residential care in supporting people to an appropriate long-term setting. This should include support for these services with therapeutic input to maximise people’s independence.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS. PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

Why is this important?

- D2A reduces the amount of time people spend in the hospital, which for people who no longer require specific care from the hospital helps prevent people from losing strength, mobility, or getting an infection.
- It improves the experience of vulnerable people
- It helps ensure people receive timely and appropriate recovery support

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Social: D2A should support equitable access for any individual who has assessed needs and will be provided free, at the point of contact, to all those that need the service.

Economic: D2A should effectively manage resources and enable the beds to benefit more people. This should include suitable arrangements made for those that should be managed elsewhere (e.g. end-of-life). Use of community beds also supports the wider residential care home market.

Environmental: By ensuring a range of good quality local provision in Stockton on Tees, residents are enabled to remain living in the borough. Travel and associated fuel costs and usage for families are reduced along with related fuel emissions.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Actual activity - Hospital Discharge		Prepopulated demand from 2024-25 plan			Actual activity (not including spot purchased capacity)			Actual activity through only spot purchasing (doesn't apply to time to service)		
		Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24
Service Area	Metric									
Reablement & Rehabilitation in a bedded setting (pathway 2)	Monthly activity. Number of new clients	65	64	64	21	30	31	37	46	47
Reablement & Rehabilitation in a bedded setting (pathway 2)	Actual average time from referral to commencement of service (days) All packages (planned and spot purchased)	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9			
Other short term bedded care (pathway 2)	Monthly activity. Number of new clients.	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other short term bedded care (pathway 2)	Actual average time from referral to commencement of service (days) All packages (planned and spot purchased)	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Short-term residential/nursing care for someone likely to require a longer-term care home placement (pathway 3)	Monthly activity. Number of new clients	7	7	7	0	0	0	11	9	11
Short-term residential/nursing care for someone likely to require a longer-term care home placement (pathway 3)	Actual average time from referral to commencement of service (days) All packages (planned and spot purchased)	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6			

Actual activity - Community		Prepopulated demand from 2024-25 plan			Actual activity:		
Service Area	Metric	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24
Social support (including VCS)	Monthly activity. Number of new clients.	104	104	104	104	104	104
Urgent Community Response	Monthly activity. Number of new clients.	522	496	566	672	574	705
Reablement & Rehabilitation at home	Monthly activity. Number of new clients.	16	11	18	58	40	30
Reablement & Rehabilitation in a bedded setting	Monthly activity. Number of new clients.	4	4	4	5	10	10
Other short-term social care	Monthly activity. Number of new clients.	4	5	5	0	0	0

Demand for D2A remains high.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

MT03: Supporting People to Live Independently

MT11: Front Door

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

- Ensuring happy and healthy lives for all – we will work hard to reduce health inequalities.
- Working with our residents to build resilience and independence in their own homes

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

- Position on how effective the current pathway is supporting people to independence.
- Impact of current bed-based offer, both in house and commissioned.

Signed: Cllr Pauline Beall

Date: 13/02/25

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Planning, Governance, and Oversight of Major Capital Projects by/for Stockton Borough Council

Several major capital projects undertaken by Stockton Borough Council have, and continue to raise concerns with both members, and residents of the Borough, with regards to budget overspend, a perceived lack of forward planning to identify known/obvious risks, and a perceived determination to thwart scrutiny when concerns are raised.

The scrutiny process would examine the governance and decision-making structures that have been used on major capital projects, the information, analysis and assurance that fed into key decisions, and how decisions were made and challenged during the projects such as The Globe Theatre, Preston Park/Hall, Debenhams, Post Office/Glam, Ingleby Barwick Leisure Centre, and the continual regeneration of Stockton High Street.

In recent years Major Capital Project governance, or lack of it, seems to be the root cause for what is widely acknowledged as the main cause of a project failing to be executed on time, and on budget.

Stockton Borough Council has, unfortunately, overspent on several Major Capital Projects, resulting in extensive borrowing costs to rectify issues arising during the project. This extensive borrowing has a serious and negative impact on the financial revenue available to fund council services.

The scrutiny process would seek to identify lasting improvements made to the way in which Stockton Borough Council delivers Major Capital Projects, and not see past problems repeated.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

As elected representatives of the residents of Stockton Borough, members are acutely aware of the scrutiny that residents take in viewing how the Council spends their money on services, and how major capital projects, when failing to be executed on time and on budget, impact on the services they seek. The trend to overspend, fail to plan, and thwart scrutiny on Major Capital Budgets undertaken by SBC is not lost on residents.

There are many stakeholders who have a vested interest in the financial affairs of Stockton Borough Council, including central government, partner agencies, local public auditors and the various communities we serve. All of these look at the way the Council operates a degree of financial stewardship to help ensure that SBC spends its money wisely. This, therefore, is a key task of financial scrutiny.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

It should also be accepted that members must carry out periodic 'post implementation reviews' of major capital projects to determine whether these were delivered on time and within budget, achieved their stated aims and delivered the outcomes and value for money anticipated. This has been lacking within SBC.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

The scrutiny process is a reactive challenge to decision making, budgeting, service delivery or performance issues. In effect, using evidence to hold the council to account for its expenditure or to investigate pertinent financial concerns.

Identifying the reasons why major capital projects have gone over budget, and in the case of The Globe Theatre by excessive amounts, should have been a wake-up call for SBC, and should have been subject of an in-depth scrutiny procedure at the time. This may have identified the trend (perceived lack of governance and oversight) for allowing major capital projects to overspend the allocated budget.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

Members must ensure our council is financially sustainable and manages our assets effectively to enhance their local impact. Members must ensure we have a well-run council across areas of our business and continue to improve outcomes for communities.

We all endeavour to make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work and visit - a Borough that residents can be proud of. That is a vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy.

We all want Stockton-on-Tees to be a place of choice for younger generations to live, work, play and grow - providing an environment where they can thrive. Creating a great place to live will include an emphasis on children and young people growing up feeling safe, utilising green spaces and building their ambitions around exciting and fulfilled lives in our Borough.

These ambitions can be supported by ensuring when major capital projects are developed to invite people and attract people into our Borough they are seen to be well thought out, delivered on time, and on budget to demonstrate that our council is sustainable and well managed.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

To determine that major capital projects undertaken by SBC, have the full backing of our residents, they are value for money, they have social value, and most importantly they are well planned, with a strong governance and oversight framework that gives confidence to members and residents.

Signed:



Date:

16/2/25

Please return to: Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Delivering Best Value – Improving Stockton’s Procurement Process

To look at how SBC goes out to tender with external providers, and how we can not only ensure the process delivers best value for money but encourages local businesses to tender for work.

The review would focus on the current procurement process in place, and the obstacles in place to ensure that when the council goes out to tender for business, it seeks quotes from a wide range of sources, encourages local businesses to tender for business. This will cover all directorates and will also look at whether external providers (such as grounds maintenance) are able to provide certain services cheaper than internally. The review will also look at how we can ensure greater competition to help drive down costs.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

As this topic relates to how the council spends the money it receives from the residents of the borough of Stockton, it is of course within their interest to ensure we are able to ensure this council is truly delivering best value for money for residents.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Such a review would seek to have a very positive impact on the well-being of the area. In delivering best value for money, it would seek to support the drive to make savings and free up resource for other areas. In ensuring best value, it reduces the financial pressures and drives forward efficiencies. This topic would also look to support the local economy by ensuring local business was more easily able to tender for work, with greater emphasis put on going out to tender with to a much wider reach.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

As mentioned above, this review looks specifically at the current tendering process, how it is currently undertaken and how it can be made more efficient to ensure best value from the work undertaken by external providers. From greater competition from a wider range of sources we can ensure the best possible price, while also looking to support local businesses. The review would also investigate whether we can deliver certain services cheaper externally than we could internally. Such moves are specific to drive efficiencies and drive down costs to the council. This would then free up resources and ensure savings are made.

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

I am unaware of any other topics taking place in this area, which is a clear reason why one should take place to ensure best value for money.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

This review would like to compliment the 'Powering our Future' programme as it actively looks to ensure the council is working efficiently (in driving down costs by delivering best value for money) and also ensure greater working with external partners to deliver best value for money while also supporting local businesses.

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

To see the tendering process of the council work actively to deliver best value in the quotes it receives.
To help support local businesses and encourage them to tender for business.
To look at whether external providers are able to provide certain services (grounds maintenance for example) cheaper and more efficiently than internally.

Signed: Cllr Niall Innes

Date: 15/02/2025

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Scrutiny Review of Fly Tipping

To scrutinise the current procedures around fly tipping, through enforcement especially, and what we can do to save costs to the borough through CFYA.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

Fly tipping is a blight on local communities, not only is it an eyesore, it can attract pests, and effect local businesses

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Economic savings through the reduced rate of fly tipping and catching offenders, enhances social pride in areas.

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Recent freedom of information report has CFYA report and enforcement report for Mandale and Victoria at 232 and 104 fly tips respectively.

With only 8 issues fly tipping penalties (4paid)

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

No

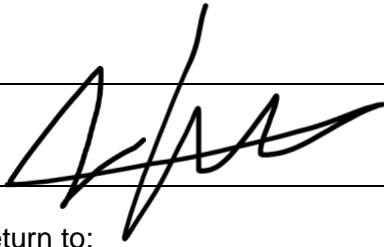
How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

To reduce costs especially in the CFYA department

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

A more robust plan to reduce the amount of fly tipping and to issue more penalties to those responsible for the act.

Signed:



Date: 06-02-2025

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

**Select Committee Work Programme
Suggested Review – Pro Forma**

Summary of issue you wish to be scrutinised, including key concerns and outcome for scrutinising the topic?

Children Not in School (CNIS)

Children not in school covers a range of scenarios where a child is not accessing a full-time education. The range of reasons a child may not be accessing a full time education at a school is vast and covers;

- All reasons for absence from school including authorised absence, unauthorised absence
- Pupils on reduced/part-time time tables
- Pupils who are accessing Alternative Provision not in a registered school (whether arranged by the school or the local authority)
- Pupils receiving Home and Hospital Provision
- Pupils who are CME (Children Missing Education)
- Children who are EHE (Electively Home Educated)
- Children who have no school base and are EOTAS (Educated Other Than at School)
- Children who move into the borough and are waiting for a school place

Safeguarding of children in education is secure

- Identifying all scenarios where a child may be or become a CNIS.
- Provide clarification around overall responsibility and oversight to ensure systems are in place and there are no gaps.

Please be clear about the focus of the review and desired outcome.

NOTE: ENTRIES BELOW RELATE TO ISSUE CATEGORIES OF THE PICK PROCESS.
PLEASE REFER TO THE EXPLANATION NOTES TO THIS FORM FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.

Public interest justification:

Safeguarding of Children who go missing from education.

Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area:

Timely engagement and access to education results in meeting the councils key priorities

Council performance, efficiency (identification of savings and reducing demand) in this area:

Strengthened systems for Children Not in School has the potential to:

- improve attendance further
- improve pupil outcomes
- reduce associated anti-social and criminal activity
- reduce demands on community safety resources

Keep in Context (are other reviews taking place in this area?):

Improving Attendance particularly in secondary schools is one of the key aspects of the Appreciative Enquiry.

How does the topic support delivery of the Council Plan?

This scrutiny would support delivery of the following design principles:

- reduce inequality and prioritise prevention
- put communities at the heart of everything we do
- use data and intelligence to inform our decision

What would you want the outcome of the review to be?

Safeguarding of children in education in Stockton is secure

- Identifying all scenarios where a child may be or become a CNIS.
- Ensuring a system or process is in place for each scenario thus minimising the time children are out of education
- Provide clarification around overall responsibility and oversight to ensure systems are in place and there are no gaps.
- Support for resource (if necessary)
- Assure accountability across teams and services and ensure the children of the borough have access to the education they are entitled

Signed: Cllr Lisa Evans

Date: 14/02/25

Please return to:

Judy Trainer, Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD

Email: judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk; Tel: 01642 528158

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People Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants

PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS**

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.

Statutory Forward Plan

Key Decisions

28 February 2025 - 30 June 2025

Description of Matter / Decision Required Key Decision?	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Leader	Identity of Decision Taker (eg Cabinet or Council or Joint Arrangement)	Decision Due Date	Principal Consultees	Method of Consultation	How Interested Parties may submit representations to decision-takers and end date for representations	Reports and background papers submitted to decision-taker for consideration	Notes / Comments
<p>Annual Procurement Plan/ Higher Value Contracts and Social Value Update Report</p> <p>The report seeks approval from Cabinet for the procurement of higher value contracts. The report includes all known contract awards scheduled for 2025/26. The report also includes a Social Value update.</p> <p>Key</p> <p>Para No</p>	<p>Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Leader of the Council</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>	<p>13 Mar 2025</p>		<p>Meetings and emails with Cabinet Members.</p>	<p>martin.skipsey@stocketon.gov.uk</p> <p>Martin.skipsey@stocketon.gov.uk</p>		<p>A CIA is not required.</p>

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Chair’s Update – March 2025

Scrutiny Review – Reablement Service	
Achieved since last meeting	<p>Since the last Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting in December 2024, three evidence-gathering sessions have taken place for this review.</p> <p>The third session was held in December 2024 and focused on a submission from North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT). The stated desire to move to 24/7 reablement provision was probed by the Committee in terms of its potential impact on staffing need, as was the ‘hospital at home’ (Virtual Frailty Ward) initiative. Members also queried if there were any established links between reablement provision and end-of-life care.</p> <p>Session four took place at the Committee meeting in January 2025 where Members heard from SBCs delivery partner, Peopletoo (commissioned to assist the Council in assessing the impact of current ways of working and analyse the best model for continuing to support people to maximise their independence) in relation to the findings of its review of local reablement provision as part of the ongoing SBC <i>Powering Our Future</i>-related work.</p> <p>The fifth, and final, evidence session was held in February 2025 and included a contribution from the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector (via Catalyst), as well as consideration of customer feedback data and approaches / good practice examples from outside of the Borough. Regarding the VCSE contribution, Members expressed concern about the lack of a clear point of contact within both Catalyst and the Council when it came to reablement matters.</p> <p>To understand how staff who worked within the local Reablement Service felt about the existing offer from their perspective, a staff survey was issued in January 2025. 25 responses were received (out of a total workforce of 47) – feedback will be shared with the Committee once collated.</p>
Problems or concerns	<p>Challenges continue to arise in relation to ongoing developments around local reablement provision which are being progressed through the Council’s <i>Powering Our Future</i> (POF) initiative whilst the Committee undertakes its review of these services. The complexity of running two stands of work concurrently had presented a number of difficulties with regard to scope and timescales.</p> <p>The Committee has highlighted these concerns to the relevant Director and Cabinet Member, and this has led to some improvements in the timely supply of information – the Committee will continue to monitor this and feedback as appropriate. Discussions have also taken place internally to improve communication and achieve clarity on the scope of ongoing scrutiny work where this is running alongside wider transformation work.</p>

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Planned this / next month	The Committee will consider a summary of all the evidence received as part of this review at an informal session in March 2025. Draft recommendations will then be formulated.
On track – yes / no	Yes

Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>NTHFT Maternity Services: Senior NTHFT representatives presented a further update to the Committee in December 2024 on developments in relation to the Trust's maternity services (this was the third such update following issues raised by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in 2022 regarding NTHFT maternity provision). Members welcomed a broadly positive picture, with comments / queries raised around midwifery apprenticeships, health visitation, and the potential for maternity testing within the new Community Diagnostic Centre in Stockton.</p> <p>Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) Annual Report: The Committee considered the latest TSAB Annual Report (for 2023-2024) at its meeting in January 2025. Presented by the TSAB Independent Chair, Members sought clarity on some of the stated data regarding Section 42 enquiries, and discussed joint arrangements between children's and adult services, training, and other safeguarding initiatives across the TSAB footprint.</p> <p>Care Quality Commission (CQC): The Committee was disappointed to be informed that the CQC was unable to fulfil its request for a presentation on the CQCs national State of Care Annual Report 2023-2024, along with a reflection on local provision, at the January 2025 Committee meeting.</p> <p>Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) 2025: Mindful of recent developments involving pharmacies (closure of one within Stockton-on-Tees earlier in 2024; the push for the public to go to pharmacies instead of GPs for certain issues / treatments) and the anticipated publication of an updated PNA in October 2025, the Committee requested further details on the existing situation regarding pharmacy provision across the Borough, whether this was deemed sufficient, and what was being identified as part of the consultation phase of the latest PNA review. A presentation was given at the meeting in February 2025, with Members querying the consultation process, the potential impact of new parking charges on pharmacy use, and existing sites.</p> <p>NTHFT Quality Account 2024-2025: Communication from senior 'Group' (the NTHFT / STHFT partnership) personnel continues to be poor in terms of scrutiny-related requests. The annual Quality Account item has been moved back from the usual March meeting slot to May, though confirmation of who will be preparing the required documentation and who will be presenting this to the Committee is still yet to be received despite numerous attempts.</p>

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

NHS Updates / Consultations	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>Arrival Medical Practice and Riverside Medical Practice (Proposed Merger): The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) shared details on 24 December 2024 of a proposed merger between the Arrival Medical Practice and Riverside Medical Practice – this was subsequently shared with the Committee for any comment.</p> <p>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): The TEWV Chair issued notification on the 6 February 2025 of the impending departure of the Trust's Chief Executive.</p> <p>Preston Farm Pharmacy (Closure): The NENC ICB issued notification on 11 February 2025 of the sudden closure of Preston Farm Pharmacy – this was subsequently shared with the Committee for any comment.</p>

Regional Health Committees	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee: The chair and support function for the Committee sits with Hartlepool Borough Council for 2024-2025. The third meeting of this municipal year took place on 9 January 2025 – items included a further TEWV update on Tees Respite Care, a Clinical Services Strategy Update ('Group' model), a Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy presentation, and a North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS) performance update. The next meeting is scheduled for 13 March 2025 – this will include consideration of Quality Account-related presentations from relevant NHS Trusts.</p> <p>Southern Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) / Integrated Care System (ICS) Joint Health Scrutiny Committee: No meetings are currently scheduled.</p> <p>North East Regional Health Committee: No meetings are currently scheduled.</p>

Monitoring	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>No updates had been received by the Committee since the last Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p> <p>Future progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care at Home (April 2025) • Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care (TBC)
Requests for more information	None

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Next Scrutiny Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none">To be confirmed

Remaining 2024-2025 Meetings (all 4.00pm unless stated)
Tuesday 18 March 2025 (informal)

Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update March 2025

Scrutiny Review – Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Select Committee's review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment culminated in a report setting out 17 shared objectives.

Given the breadth of the work, a recommendation lead has been identified for each objective and it is the intention that progress updates will be provided at each future Select Committee meeting on particular recommendations with the relevant recommendation lead attending each meeting.

At the February meeting the Select Committee received action plans in respect of:

- Recommendation 2 – Forge Positive Relationships
- Recommendation 5 – Managing Emotions
- Recommendation 12 – Strengthen Transition Arrangements
- Recommendation 14 – Review Behaviour Policies

Key issues highlighted and discussed:

- Work was underway to analyse suspension data to understand if there was a correlation with behaviour policies. Some policies were less relational whilst others were more influenced by trauma informed practice. Officers were also working with the Virtual School to understand how much consideration was being given to Children in our Care in Behaviour Policies
- The importance of influencing Academy Trusts and Central Government was highlighted. Officers advised that regular meetings were taking place with the DfE; these meetings provided an opportunity to share the ongoing success of the Appreciative Inquiry regionally and nationally
- Members requested details of the local retention of Stockton students in post 16 pathways compared to students educated out of Borough. Officers undertook to provide this to Committee Members and commented that the data had been a driver to convene a Stockton Post 16 Strategic Board made up of senior leaders from all Stockton Post 16 providers to collaboratively design a Stockton Post 16 Strategy

Further updates are scheduled into the Select Committee Work Programme.

Scrutiny Review – Holiday Activities and Food Programme known locally as Holidays Are Fun (HAF)

The Select Committee's current review is Holiday Activities and Food Programme known locally as Holidays Are Fun (HAF).

HAF is a DfE funded programme that provides activities and healthy meals to children and young people during holiday periods, predominantly for those on benefit related free school meals. It is delivered in partnership through SBC and Catalyst. It involves a range of providers, including schools, delivering a variety of activities.

The review will consider if HAF is inclusive of and attended by those families who most need it and the impact that the programme has had on family health and social and economic wellbeing.

At the February meeting the Committee were advised that confirmation had been received from the DfE that all local authorities would receive funding to continue to deliver the

Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update March 2025

Holiday Activities and Food programme into 2025. The Council had received its allocation which was slightly less than the previous year.

The Committee received a presentation setting out feedback from the provider survey and also discussed and agreed questions for consultation and engagement with children and young people during the half term HAF provision.

Key improvements highlighted by providers included:

- Improving the booking system
- Reviewing costs per head (for example a tiered approach could be adopted)
- Ensuring that we are reaching those in most need
- Reducing none attendees
- Considering funding for children who are not eligible
- Creating opportunities to promote best practice
- Having one application form for all holiday periods
- Improved communication around SEND children so providers can better respond to an individual child's needs
- Increasing attendance

The next meeting of the Committee would be an informal session to review the summary of evidence and discuss draft recommendations. Further feedback would also be considered at that meeting from:

- Stockton Parent Carer Forum
- Northshore Careers Fair
- Engagement with Middlesbrough Council
- Feedback from Children and Young People from the February 2025 Half Term provision

Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance

Key Issues / Problems or concerns	No reports since last update.
Problems or concerns	None
Requests for more information	None

Monitoring

Key Issues / Problems or concerns	<p>Outstanding monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships - A further progress update to be scheduled in due course • Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment - Ongoing
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Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update March 2025

Next Scrutiny Review
TBC

Remaining 2023-2024 Meetings (all 5.00pm unless stated)
12 March 2025 (informal)

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Community Safety Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Scrutiny Review – Welcoming and Safe Town Centres	
Achieved since last meeting	<p>Two evidence-gathering sessions for this review have been held since the last update to the Executive Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The fifth session in early-January 2025 considered views from local business forums / groups as well as SBC dementia-friendly initiatives within town centre spaces.</p> <p>The sixth and final session in late-January 2025 focused on contributions from the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector (via Catalyst), feedback on a Stockton town centre-related research project undertaken by a Council officer, and developments on this scrutiny topic in other Local Authority areas. Feedback on responses to the SBC Ward Councillor survey (issued in December 2024) was also shared.</p> <p>In related matters, the Committee Chair and supporting officers attended the Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) 'Big Committee' meeting in early-February 2025 to ascertain the views of young people on the Borough's town centre spaces.</p>
Problems or concerns	None
Planned this / next month	The Committee will consider a summary of all the evidence received as part of this review at an informal session in February 2025. Draft recommendations will then be formulated.
On track – yes / no	Yes

Monitoring	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>No updates have been received by the Committee since the last Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p> <p>Future progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly-Grazed Horses (TBC) • Tree Asset Management (March 2025) • Outdoor Play Provision (TBC – mid-2025)
Requests for more information	None

Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP): Minutes of previous SSP meetings are now periodically included on Committee agendas so Members are sighted on developments within that forum.

Community Safety Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

	<p>Domestic Abuse: Duties to Victims: The Chair of the Domestic Abuse Steering Group (SBC Director of Public Health) attended the Committee meeting in late-January 2025 to provide the Group's thoughts on the recent Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman report (https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2024/oct/councils-risk-compounding-problems-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse-if-they-do-not-follow-proper-process-ombudsman-says) regarding victims of domestic abuse sometimes being let down by Councils using an outdated and too narrow definition of what abuse means. Following a presentation, discussion covered a range of issues including links to mental health services, gender-specific accommodation, partnership-working with the police, and the awareness of professionals around signs of abuse when visiting properties.</p>
<p>Requests for more information</p>	<p>None</p>

Next Scrutiny Review

- To be confirmed

Remaining 2024-2025 Meetings (all 4.30pm unless stated)

Thursday 27 February 2025 (informal) Thursday 27 March 2025

People Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Scrutiny Review – Disabled Facilities Grant	
Achieved since last meeting	<p>The Committee reviewed the summary of evidence received and consider recommendations at the informal meeting in December, before agreeing their final report and recommendations at their meeting in February.</p> <p>The Committee has received evidence from 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. They have also considered customer satisfaction survey results and consultation also took place with residents via Stockton Parent Carer Forum.</p> <p>The 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, as well as calling for strengthen the regulations for new builds so that adaptations are not required when the occupants needs change.</p> <p>The report was subsequently presented and endorsed at Cabinet in March.</p>
Problems or concerns	None
Planned next month	Review complete
On track – yes / no	Yes

Monitoring	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>The initial progress update for the Cost of Living Response was considered at the November meeting.</p> <p>Progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Living Response - May 2025
Requests for more information	None

Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	No reports received since previous update.
Requests for more information	None

People Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Next Scrutiny Review
TBD

2025-2026 Meetings (all 4.00pm unless stated)
Monday 7 April 2025 Monday 12 May 2025 Monday 2 June 2025 Monday 7 July 2025 Monday 8 September 2025 Monday 6 October 2025 Monday 3 November 2025 Monday 8 December 2025 Monday 5 January 2026 Monday 2 February 2026 Monday 2 March 2026

Place Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Scrutiny Review – Affordable Housing	
Achieved since last meeting	<p>The Committee received evidence at their January meeting regarding returning empty homes back to use as well as proposed changes to the Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy which include adding an extra band priority, Band One Plus. Members received an update on the how the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 affect affordable housing. The interim findings of the Affordable Housing Option Appraisal were also presented, which suggested that a hybrid approach including enabling, partnerships, and direct delivery is appropriate to address the affordable housing needs of the borough.</p> <p>The committee met informal in February to discuss the summary of evidence and draft recommendations. Members have received evidence not only from officers of the council for the review but also Registered Providers, private developers, a private letting agent, the Northern Housing Consortium, the Local Government Association, and Housing Action Teesside.</p> <p>The Committee's draft recommendations reflect the need to refine the options in the Affordable Housing Option Appraisal, the concern with the lengthy process for returning empty properties back to use, and the pressure being added to the local housing register by factors in the private rental sector. They also ask that the impact of proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy be reported back to the Committee.</p>
Problems or concerns	None
Planned next month	The Committee will meet on 10 March to agree the final report and recommendations
On track – yes / no	Yes

Monitoring	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p>Progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burial Provision (March 2025) • Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space (May 2025) • Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste Collections (May 2025)
Requests for more information	None

Place Select Committee Chair's Update – March 2025

Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	No reports received since previous update.
Requests for more information	None

Crustacean Deaths Collaborative Working Group	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	The final report is being prepared summarising the evidence received and the working groups' recommendations. The working group has taken evidence not only from the community and relevant organisations but also scientists and advisors.
Requests for more information	None

Next Scrutiny Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim and Faith Burial Provision
Remaining 2025-2026 Meetings (all 4.00pm unless stated)
Monday 14 April 2025 Monday 19 April 2025 Monday 9 June 2025 Monday 14 July 2025 Monday 15 September 2025 Monday 13 October 2025 Monday 10 November 2025 Monday 15 December 2025 Monday 12 January 2026 Monday 16 February 2026 Monday 9 March 2026

Executive Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-2025

In addition to the Standing Items:

- Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme
- Select Committee Chairs' Updates
- Statutory Forward Plan

Date	Item	Attending
7 May	Final Report of Crime and Disorder Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Outdoor Play Provision (Executive Summary for information)	Gary Woods
23 July	Final Report of Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care (Executive Summary for information)	Gary Woods
	Final Report of Place Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Unauthorised Roadside Advertising (Executive Summary for information)	Michelle Gunn
	Topic Suggestion – Muslim and Faith Burial Provision	Jonathan Nertney
	MTFP Outturn	Garry Cummings / Clare Harper
	Council Plan Update	Ian Coxon
17 September	MTFP Quarter 1	Garry Cummings / Clare Harper
19 November	Council Plan Consultation	Geraldine Brown
	Final Report of Children and Young People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment (Executive Summary for information)	Judy Trainer
17 December	MTFP Quarter 2	Garry Cummings / Clare Harper
	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review Letter 2023/24	Ged Morton
18 March	Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/26 – Selection of In-Depth Scrutiny Reviews	Jonathan Nertney
	Final Report of People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants (Executive Summary for information)	Michelle Gunn

Regular Reports

- Council Plan Updates
- Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Updates
- Select Committee Final Reports (Executive Summaries)