

**Date:**

Tuesday 23 September 2025 at 2.00 pm

**Venue:**

Council Chamber, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 6BJ

**Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair)**

**Cllr Kevin Faulks (Vice-Chair)**

Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Marilyn Surtees and Cllr Laura Tunney

## Agenda

1. **Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 10)
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes** (Pages 11 - 16)  
To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 22 July 2025.
5. **Financial Update and MTFP 2025/26 - Quarter 1** (Pages 17 - 24)
6. **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - Annual Complaints Report 2024/25** (Pages 25 - 28)
7. **Scrutiny - Overview and Performance** (Pages 29 - 36)
8. **Chairs' Updates** (Pages 37 - 48)
9. **Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme** (Pages 49 - 50)

## **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.

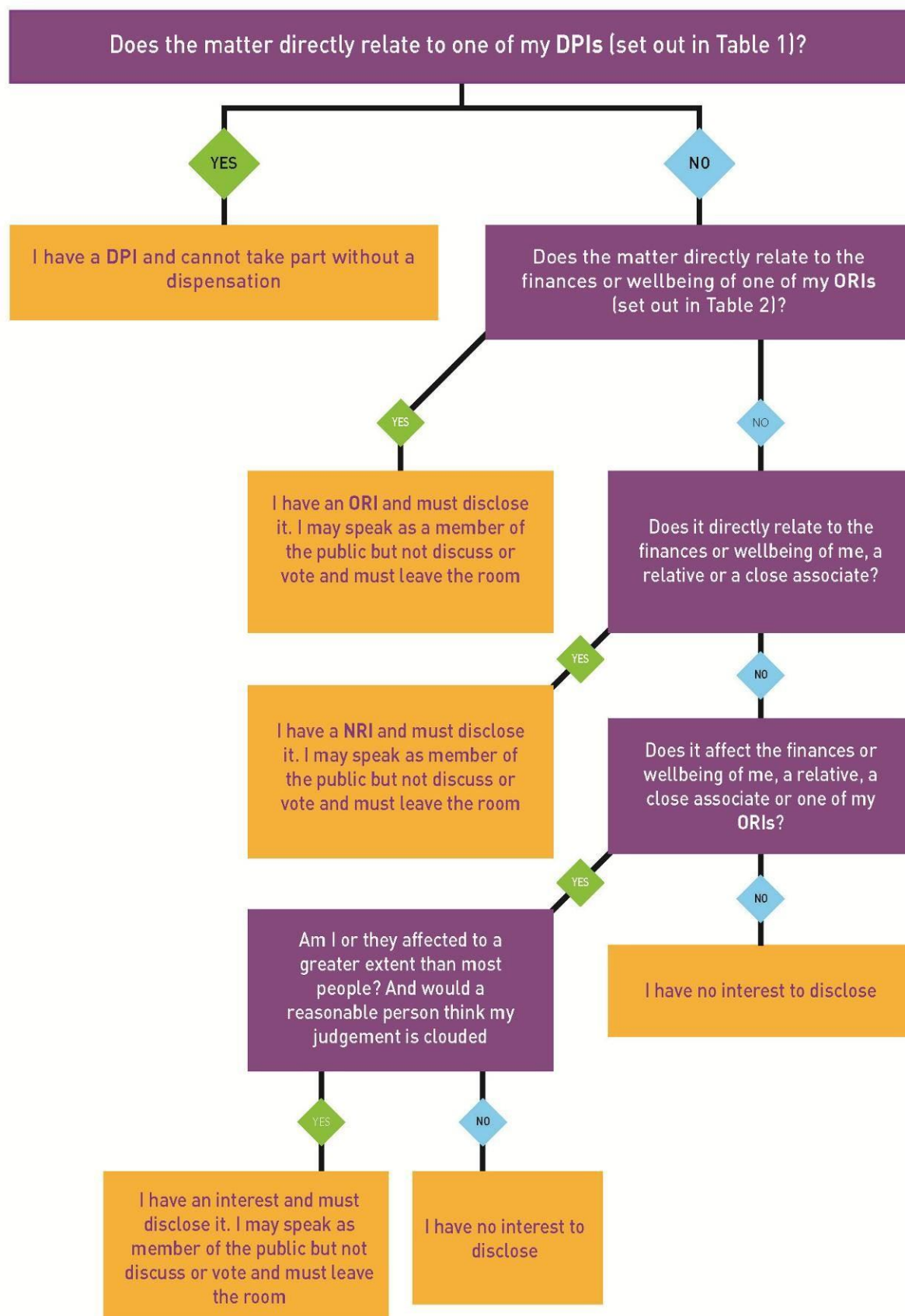
Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please.

Contact: Democratic Services Manager, Judy Trainer on email [Judy.Trainer@stockton.gov.uk](mailto: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**

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

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

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

## **Table 2 – Other Registrable 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

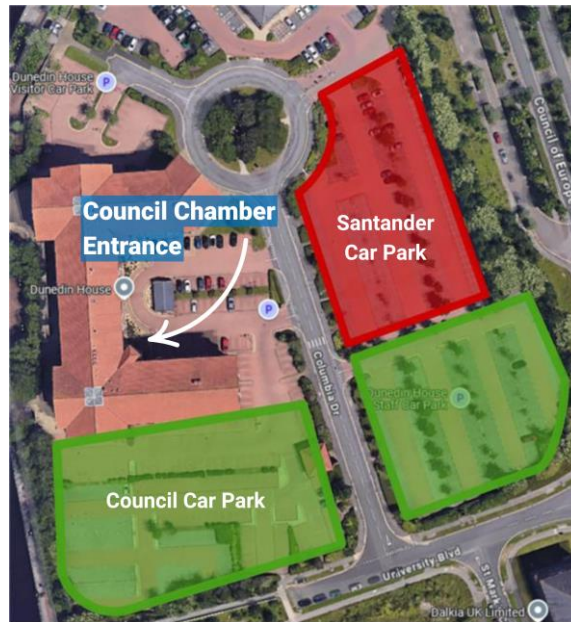
(iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

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## Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

### Entry

Entry to the Council Chamber is via the Council Chamber Entrance, indicated on the map below.



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

The emergency exits are located via the doors on either side of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber.

Fires, explosions, and bomb threats are among the occurrences that may require the emergency evacuation of Dunedin House. Continuous sounding and flashing of the Fire Alarm is the signal to evacuate the building or upon instruction from a Fire Warden or a Manager.

The Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point is in the overflow car park located across the road from Dunedin House.

**The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2**

Map of the Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point - the overflow car park:



All occupants must respond to the alarm signal by immediately initiating the evacuation procedure.

When the Alarm sounds:

1. **stop all activities immediately.** Even if you believe it is a false alarm or practice drill, you MUST follow procedures to evacuate the building fully.
2. **follow directional EXIT signs** to evacuate via the nearest safe exit in a calm and orderly manner.
  - do not stop to collect your belongings
  - close all doors as you leave
3. **steer clear of hazards.** If evacuation becomes difficult via a chosen route because of smoke, flames or a blockage, re-enter the Chamber (if safe to do so). Continue the evacuation via the nearest safe exit route.
4. **proceed to the Evacuation Assembly Point.** Move away from the building. Once you have exited the building, proceed to the main Evacuation Assembly Point immediately - located in the **East Overflow Car Park**.
  - do not assemble directly outside the building or on any main roadway, to ensure access for Emergency Services.

**5. await further instructions.**

- **do not re-enter the building under any circumstances without an “all clear”** which should only be given by the Incident Control Officer/Chief Fire Warden, Fire Warden or Manager.
- do not leave the area without permission.
- ensure all colleagues and visitors are accounted for. Notify a Fire Warden or Manager immediately if you have any concerns

**Toilets**

Toilets are located immediately outside the Council Chamber, accessed via the door at the back of the Chamber.

**Water Cooler**

A water cooler is available at the rear of the Council Chamber.

**Microphones**

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

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## Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday 22nd July 2025.

**Present:** Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (Chair), Cllr Kevin Faulks (Vice-Chair), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Mohammed Mazi (sub for Cllr Niall Innes), Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Tony Riordan and Cllr Marilyn Surtees

**Officers:** Clare Harper, Jonathan Nertney, Gary Woods and Michelle Gunn

**Also in attendance:** None

**Apologies:** Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Sufi Mubeen and Cllr Laura Tunney

### **ESC/9/25 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **ESC/10/25 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **ESC/11/25 Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the Committee meeting held on 20 May 2025.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting on 20 May 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **ESC/12/25 MTFP Update (Outturn 2024/25)**

The Committee was presented with the 'Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – Outturn March 2025' report which was considered by the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Cabinet last week (17 July 2025) and outlined the Council's draft financial performance and position as at 31 March 2025. Summarised by the SBC Assistant Director – Finance, key elements highlighted included:

- Summary: The overall financial position was similar to that projected at the end of December 2024 (as outlined in the budget report in February 2025), with a variance of £69,000 from the previously reported position. Actions taken to manage the overspend of £7m were agreed as part of the budget report, and the position had continued to be carefully monitored.

There had also been a notable movement in the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, increasing to £6.7m as a result of growing numbers of children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs). The Capital Programme had been updated to incorporate new schemes and reflect those schemes completed as at the financial year-end.

- General Fund: The included table showed an updated £7.447m total overspend (compared to the previously projected £7.378m in quarter 3), with the reasons for any significant variances from those previously reported subsequently summarised for each SBC directorate.
- Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block: The growth in demand for services for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) had increased sharply during 2024-2025 (as experienced by many Councils across the country), creating significant financial pressure on the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant (a ringfenced amount that was not part of the General Fund). During the year, there was a 17% increase in children with an EHCP. The opening deficit at 1 April 2024 was £3.8m – this had increased by £2.9m during 2024-2025, leaving a closing deficit at 31 March 2025 of £6.7m.
- Collection Fund: A ringfenced account which included the actual amount collected for both Council Tax and business rates, the opening position as at 1 April 2024 was a deficit of £591,000. Performance during the financial year in 2024-2025 had been positive, creating a surplus which had cleared the opening deficit, and leaving a balanced closing position at the end of the year. The positive performance due to additional Council Tax growth was reflected in the MTFP projections as part of the 'MTFP Update and Strategy' report to Council in February 2025.
- General Fund Balances and Addressing the Overspend in 2024/25: The total General Fund Balances at 31 March 2025 were £8m, in line with the agreed level and as outlined in the report to Cabinet in February 2025. In order to fund the overspend in 2024-2025 (as agreed in the budget report in February 2025), reserves had been used to fund the overspend position of £7.447m. The earmarked reserves position had reduced in-year from an adjusted opening position of £46.5m to £30.2m. The General Fund Balances remained at £8m.

In response, Committee comments / questions were recorded as follows:

- General Fund (paragraph 3): Regarding uncollected debt within the Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate, Members asked for confirmation of the increase in the level of bad debt that resulted in an increase of £296,000 to the bad debt provision.
- General Fund (paragraph 5): Further to the reported overspend of £150,000, Members requested clarity on the original budget amount in relation to the Community Safety (Adults, Health and Wellbeing) purchase of equipment to support the digital switchover and also queried if such equipment could be repurposed for further use in the future.
- General Fund (paragraph 9): In terms of Children's Services, Members sought further detail on the 'technical accounting' reference used in relation to the profit SBC received from the joint venture arrangement with Spark of Genius. It was explained that the matching principle was used to prepare accounts in order to align income and expenditure to the time periods within the financial years that were being reported on. In this case, following advice from the Council's external auditors, the estimated income relating to this joint venture arrangement was amended which meant the Council had to account for 18 months of profit share (a one-off adjustment for the 2024-2025 year).

- General Fund (paragraph 11): For the entry under the Finance, Transformation and Performance directorate, Members questioned whether the stated dividend was for the 2024-2025 year (given the 2023-2024 dividend was already shown in the Hampton by Hilton hotel's accounts). The Committee was informed that the dividend referred to in the MTFP report was paid to the Council during 2024-25 and related to financial year 2023/24. The audit of the Hotel Company's accounts was underway for the financial year 2024/25. Following the completion of this audit, the Hotel Company's board would meet to decide on the dividend relating to 2024/25. Members asked why this paragraph was included in the outturn statement for the 2024-2025 period (a report which reflected the Council's financial position, not the hotel's). The Committee was informed that this was due to the Council receiving the funds from the Hotel during the financial year 2024/25. Members requested confirmation of the actual total dividend paid to SBC (inclusive of the additional £150,000 quoted).
- General Fund (paragraph 13): Highlighting the further £110,000 overspend on the shopping centre relating to additional voids and tenants leaving (Regeneration and Inclusive Growth), Members pointed out that this was on top of an already reported overspend and requested the total overspend for the year. Referencing previous statements from the then Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing that decisions to change the retail infrastructure within key areas of the Borough would enable the Council to make more money, Members asked what the impact would be on the budget should the situation regarding void lettings continue, and what action was being taken to address this issue. The SBC Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth would be approached to provide a response following this meeting.
- Collection Fund (paragraph 21): Responding to a Committee request for further detail, Members heard that the improved performance around Council Tax growth had turned a deficit of £591,000 at 1 April 2024 to a minor surplus at year-end (31 March 2025) – this was therefore reported as a balanced closing position.
- Addressing the Budget Gap (paragraph 25): Clarity was sought around the stated savings figures associated with the SBC Powering Our Future programme as the report appeared to indicate that the combined updated savings targets for 2025-2026 (£1.35m) and 2026-2027 (£2.256m) was now £2.2m less than the £5.8m previously identified. The Committee was informed that the updated targets reflected what was left to identify in each of these years rather than a change in the amount of overall savings required. A breakdown was included in the Budget setting report to Council in February 2025. Further updates on the Powering Our Futures Programme would be brought to future meetings of Cabinet. Allocations of investment relating to Central Stockton and North Thornaby could be provided following this meeting (including any envisaged impact upon the Central Stockton and North Thornaby blueprint).

AGREED that:

1. the 'Medium-Term Financial Plan – Outturn March 2025' report be noted;
2. responses be provided in relation to the queries set out above.

Consideration was given to the Statutory Forward Plan (1 June 2025 – 31 May 2026) document.

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

## **ESC/14/25 Chairs' Updates**

Members were provided with updates from the Chairs of each Select Committee. Areas highlighted included:

### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE**

Scrutiny Review – Reablement Service: Whilst still not sighted on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report following its inspection of SBC adult social care services, the Committee had now received the Peopletoo (external consultants) findings. Revised timelines for concluding this review would be discussed at the next meeting in July 2025 – however, the Committee's final report would not be presented to Cabinet until September 2025 at the earliest.

### **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE**

Scrutiny Review – Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment: Further Action Plans were considered by the Committee in June 2025 in relation to recommendations on improving communication, identifying and supporting young carers, extending the enrichment offer, and celebrating achievements. Final Action Plans were scheduled to be presented to the Committee in September 2025 – updates on progress of the agreed actions would then be provided at future meetings.

Scrutiny Review – Holiday Activities and Food Programme known locally as Holidays Are Fun (HAF): Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility had increased year-on-year in England, although Government funding had reduced slightly (if the funding remained the same, there would be less funding for each Local Authority). It was reported that the local HAF booking system was working better now.

Members drew attention to a recent press release which appeared to suggest that nearly a third of HAF places were yet to be booked, and requested that up-to-date information on take-up of this initiative be included in the next Chair's Update for this Select Committee.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY SELECT COMMITTEE**

Scrutiny Review – Children affected by Domestic Abuse: In advance of the next evidence-gathering session that would take place later in July 2025, some nationally-recognised developments involving local domestic abuse support services had emerged – however, it was understood that this had yet to be communicated to a wider audience.

Members commented on the ongoing need for the Council and its partners to more effectively communicate areas of good practice, particularly when this had been acknowledged / commended outside the Borough. A request was made for further details of this emerging domestic abuse-related news to be included in the next Chair's Update for this Select Committee.

## PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Scrutiny Review – Partnership Working in Early Help: Following agreement of the review's scope and plan in May 2025, evidence-gathering commenced in June 2025 with the extent of the existing SBC early help outlined and discussed. Further contributions had since been received from School Support, with future submissions anticipated from other partners (Cleveland Police, Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust, Family Action) which also offered early help services.

## PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

Scrutiny Review – Muslim and Faith Burial Services: The evidence-gathering phase for this review was coming to a conclusion, with next month's informal meeting scheduled to review the information received and formulate draft recommendations. The Committee was confident of arriving at solutions that would be welcomed by local communities using these services.

Monitoring: Reference was made to the recently agreed Action Plan in relation to the previously completed Affordable Housing review, as well as the ever-changing national picture around this particular scrutiny topic which the Council and its partners were having to contend with. It was confirmed that the letter to Government regarding Local Housing Allowance Rates had been sent (via the SBC Assistant Director – Housing and A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees) and that this could be followed-up if required.

AGREED that the Select Committee updates be noted.

## **ESC/15/25 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme**

### CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair had no further updates.

### WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme. The next meeting was due to take place on 23 September 2025 where a MTFP Quarter 1 update would be presented, along with the latest annual review letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman regarding recorded complaints against SBC during 2024-2025.

A report in relation to the scrutiny function's role in overview and performance matters (originally intended for this meeting) was also anticipated for the September 2025 agenda, though the SBC Head of Democratic Services noted recent Government announcements around the Local Government Outcomes Framework (LGOFF) (a new approach to outcome-based accountability for Councils in England) which may result in this item being deferred to a later Committee meeting. Assurance was given that work continued on the Stockton-on-Tees Plan (which would be further developed to reflect the outcomes of the LGOFF consultation phase (due to close on 12 September 2025)) and the accompanying key performance measures which would underpin its delivery.

AGREED that the Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

Chair: .....

## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2025**

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

## **CABINET DECISION**

**Resources and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling**

### **FINANCIAL UPDATE AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (2025/26 QUARTER 1)**

#### **SUMMARY**

This report summarises the Council's financial performance and position at the end of the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year. The Powering Our Futures programme, and in particular the transformation mission has identified savings of £5.8m by 2026/27 to date. The updated savings target is now £1.35m in 2025/26 and £2.256m in 2026/27. The transformation programme, alongside the wider Powering our Futures Programme, will continue to look to address the budget gap, alongside ensuring improvements to services to local residents.

The financial position for the Council for the first quarter of the financial year (to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025) highlights a projected overspend of £1.684m against the budget. Growing demand for Council services and the increased cost of delivery is putting pressure on several budget headings. Work is underway to look at ways to mitigate this projected overspend and the position will continue to be closely monitored and managed throughout the remainder of the financial year.

The financial challenges facing Stockton reflect a wider national picture, with councils across the country experiencing significant and well-documented pressures. Stockton has managed these pressures responsibly, using earmarked reserves over recent years to support the Medium Term Financial Plan and maintain stability during a period of exceptional strain. Looking ahead, reliance on reserves alone is not sustainable. Work is already under way on the 2026/27 budget and the updated MTFP, ensuring that planning is proactive and focused on maintaining financial resilience. Cabinet will continue to receive regular updates on progress and the measures being developed.

The report also presents an update on the Capital Programme.

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS**

To update Members on the Council's financial performance and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the update to the Medium Term Financial Plan and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.

2. That the revised Capital Programme at **Appendix A** be noted.

## DETAIL

### FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

#### GENERAL FUND

1. The following table details the projected budget outturn position for each Directorate in 2025/26, based on information to 30th June 2025. The position includes the emerging impact of inflationary pressures and details of the key variances are described in subsequent paragraphs of the report.

Directorate	Annual Budget	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Q1 Over/(Under)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	106,163	105,720	(443)
Children's Services	62,782	63,427	645
Community Services, Environment & Culture	56,739	57,597	858
Finance, Transformation & Performance	15,337	15,282	(55)
Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	2,233	2,401	168
Corporate Services	11,676	11,497	(179)
Corporate Items	8,802	8,892	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>263,732</b>	<b>264,816</b>	<b>1,084</b>
Pay Offer		0	600
<b>Revised Total</b>	<b>263,732</b>	<b>264,816</b>	<b>1,684</b>

2. The projected position indicates a financial pressure for the current financial year, largely because of growth in demand for council services and additional pressures due to higher pay award than budgeted. All Directorates are considering opportunities to reduce / defer spend to support the position and the position will be kept under close review for the remainder of the year, with actions underway to try to improve the position, however the challenge to do so whilst maintaining current service provision is more and more difficult in the current financial environment.

#### Reasons for Variances over £100,000

##### Adults, Health and Wellbeing

3. There is a projected underspend against budgets for Community Based Services for people with physical disabilities, including older people of (£568,000). This is mainly due to demand for the service being lower than estimated following the implementation of the new Care at Home contracts in 2024/25.
4. Expenditure on residential placements for older people is expected to be (£200,000) less than budget due to more income from client contributions than anticipated.
5. Demand for residential placements for people with Learning Disabilities has increased significantly, with the number of clients exceeding the budgeted numbers generating a projected overspend of £378,000.

## **Children's Services**

6. Children's Services have experienced unprecedented budget pressures in recent years due to huge increases in the cost of residential placements as well as escalating needs, requiring greater levels of care. Members will recall the commentary on the pressures in previous reports and the investment in Children's Services across recent years.
7. A proposal to modernise the Fostering Service as part of the Transformation Review of Children in Our Care was approved by Cabinet in July. The objective is to address the declining number of foster carers and the increasing number of children in external private provider care, to support better outcomes for children in our care, and help give them the best start in life. The proposal aims to build sufficiency within the mainstream fostering service by encouraging new foster carers, retaining existing ones, and meeting the diverse needs of children in care. The business case anticipates less reliance on costly external residential placements, therefore relieving pressure on the budget across the medium term.
8. A significant number of children have come into care since budget setting and are being supported in a connected foster care arrangement. This is generating a projected overspend of £610,000 to the year end.
9. Services provided for young people aged 16/17 in care and care leavers, such as support and accommodation costs and living allowances, are currently expected to exceed the budget by £200,000.
10. The academy model is proving to be successful in filling social worker posts and agency spend is down significantly this year compared to previous years. However, there are still several vacancies across the service which is generating a projected underspend. This is offset by several smaller pressures on expenditure budgets resulting in a projected underspend of (£224,000).

## **Community Services, Environment and Culture**

11. The number of children requiring Home to School transport has continued to grow this financial year. As a result, the service has a predicted overspend of £638,000.
12. Members will be aware of the high inflation increases in recent years, particularly in relation to food costs. This has meant that the cost of providing our catering services has increased significantly. As a result of this there are budgetary pressures across the catering service including schools and cafes predicted at £336,000.
13. Income from Green Waste disposal is projected to exceed the current budget leading to additional projected income of (£169,000).
14. Members will be aware that in previous years we have earmarked resources to support TAL to manage inflationary pressures in respect of energy costs and £500,000 is currently included in the budget. In previous MTFP updates, we have reported that due to the overall financial performance of TAL, this resource has not historically been required. Due to energy prices continuing to fall and usage being carefully managed it is currently anticipated that these full resources will not be required in 2025/26, saving (£500,000).
15. The highways maintenance budget has a complex mix of cost and income drivers, making it a volatile budget. We are currently experiencing increases in prices for materials and contractors, which is anticipated to lead to a financial pressure this year. These costs will be partly offset by staffing savings across the service, with the anticipated pressure being £102,000 by the end of the year.

16. The major capital investment of Preston Park Museum has resulted in a disruption to operational plans, leading to closure of the museum for a prolonged period this financial year. The costs of operating the museum continue to grow, also causing pressure against the budget. As a result there is an estimated overspend against budget of £216,000.

17. In the Libraries service, costs for running the service exceed the budget available. £182,000.

### **Finance, Transformation and Performance**

18. There are anticipated to be significant savings across the Directorate due to staffing vacancies, leading to a projected underspend of (£347,000).

19. There are financial pressures emerging due to an increase in payments of benefits where subsidy is not paid at the normal 100% rate. This is in relation to supported accommodation and increased provision of temporary accommodation linked to increasing pressures of homelessness. This is projected to create an expenditure pressure of £250,000 within the housing benefits budgets.

20. Expenditure on the corporate mail and paper is anticipated to be higher than budget, as well as new equipment being required, which is generating a predicted overspend of £117,000.

### **Regeneration and Inclusive Growth**

21. There are anticipated to be savings due to staffing vacancies within the planning service, leading to a projected underspend of (£245,000).

22. We are experiencing rising financial pressures in relation to the running and maintaining of the Council's assets portfolio thus leading to a projected overspend of £155,000. Work is ongoing through the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan to develop and find different uses for assets to minimise these costs.

23. Wellington Square is anticipated to have a shortfall on shopping centre income due to vacant units of £200,000. The Council will continue to work with prospective tenants on future lettings to mitigate against this.

### **Corporate Services Directorate**

24. There are anticipated to be significant savings across the Directorate due to staffing vacancies, leading to a projected underspend of (£236,000).

### **Corporate Areas**

25. There are no significant variances to report at Q1.

### **Pay Offer 2025/26**

26. The pay award for 2025/26 for employees on National Joint Council (inc. Chief Officers) terms and conditions has been agreed with the trade unions. The terms of the pay award are that all employees will receive an increase of 3.2%. This was paid to employees as part of their August salary. The MTFP for 2025/26 included a provision at 3%, therefore the additional amount above this has resulted in a budget pressure of £600,000.

### **Powering Our Futures**

27. Members will be aware from the various briefings and reports that the Powering our Futures programme is now progressing at pace and updates on progress of the programme will continue to be reported to Cabinet.

28. The Powering Our Futures programme, and in particular the transformation mission has identified savings of £5.8m by 2026/27 to date. The updated savings target is now £1.35m in 2025/26 and £2.256m in 2026/27. The transformation programme, alongside the wider Powering our Futures Programme, will continue to look to address the budget gap, alongside ensuring improvements to services to local residents.

### General Fund Balances & Reserves

29. The Council aims to retain General Fund Balances at a prudent level, currently at £8,000,000.

30. In addition to the £8m General Fund balances the Council holds several earmarked reserves. This funding is held for a variety of purposes including for known and committed risks, such as the insurance fund and revenue funding for the capital programme. Due to overspends in previous years, reserves have reduced significantly.

31. If in-year savings do not materialise to fund the projected overspend, funds would need to be redirected from these reserves. The use of reserves to fund overspends is not sustainable and it is a key area that we must work to avoid as part of the transformation programme.

### CAPITAL

32. As with revenue expenditure and income, the public sector and local authorities are now experiencing significant pressures relating to capital schemes and construction contracts. The position will be closely monitored and any impact on the Capital Programme identified.

33. The Capital Programme is shown at **Appendix A** and summarised in the table below:

<b>CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2027</b>	<b>Current Approved Programme £'000</b>	<b>Programme Revisions £'000</b>	<b>New Approvals £'000</b>	<b>Revised Programme £'000</b>
School Investment Programme & Childrens Services	16,081	0	7	16,089
Inclusive Growth	11,204	(60)	0	11,144
Regeneration	145,885	75	0	145,960
Transportation	24,284	353	200	24,837
Community, Environment, Culture & Leisure	20,274	370	401	21,045
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	5,252	0	9	5,261
Xentrall ICT	900	0	0	900
Council Wide	20,000	0	0	20,000
<b>Total Approved Capital MTFP</b>	<b>243,879</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>245,234</b>

### Reasons for movements over £100,000

#### New approvals

#### *Transportation*

34. The Greens Beck Culvert £401,000 has been added to the programme. This is funded by grant from the Environment Agency.

35. Newport Bridge works are planned to rectify an imbalance in the structure. The funding for the scheme is from CRSTS which is already included within the capital programme, with additional funding of £200,000 from Middlesbrough Council being added to the programme above.

### **Programme revisions**

#### ***Community & Environment, Culture & Leisure***

36. £370,000 has been added to the 2025/26 planned maintenance programme. This is funded by MEND grant via The Arts Council for work at Preston Park Museum and Grounds.

#### ***Transportation***

37. The Thornaby to Stockton Cycleway has additional TVCA funding of £353,000.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

39. No direct implications.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

40. The report summarises the financial position for 2025/26 based on information for the first quarter of the financial year.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

41. None

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

42. This update to the MTFP is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

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

43. Not applicable.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

44. Medium Term Financial Plan Update & Strategy Report to Council 19th February 2025

**Name of Contact Officer:** Clare Harper  
**Job Title:** Chief Financial Officer  
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**Email Address:** Clare.Harper@Stockton.gov.UK

## Capital Programme June 2025 – Appendix A

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2027	Current Approved Programme	Programme Revisions	New approvals	Revised Programme
<b>SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME &amp; CHILDRENS SERVICES</b>				
School Investment Programme	15,442,436	0	0	15,442,436
Children Investment	639,007	0	7,254	646,261
<b>SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME &amp; CHILDRENS SERVICES</b>	<b>16,081,443</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,254</b>	<b>16,088,697</b>
<b>INCLUSIVE GROWTH</b>				
Inclusive Growth & Development	8,453,564	(60,000)	0	8,393,564
Office Accommodation	2,750,000	0	0	2,750,000
<b>INCLUSIVE GROWTH</b>	<b>11,203,564</b>	<b>(60,000)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11,143,564</b>
<b>REGENERATION</b>				
Stockton Town Centre Schemes	18,947,601	0	0	18,947,601
Reshaping Town Centres	8,730,275	75,000	0	8,805,275
Billingham Town Centre	30,000,000	0	0	30,000,000
Thornaby Town Centre	33,070,923	0	0	33,070,923
Re-Development of Castlegate Site	30,934,381	0	0	30,934,381
Yarm & Eaglescliffe LUF	23,909,840	0	0	23,909,840
Infrastructure Enhancements, Regeneration & Property Acquisitions	291,717	0	0	291,717
<b>REGENERATION</b>	<b>145,884,737</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>145,959,737</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
City Regional Sustainable Transport	12,553,782	0	200,000	12,753,782
Other Transport Schemes	10,199,021	352,755	0	10,551,776
Developer Agreements	1,530,973	0	0	1,530,973
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>24,283,776</b>	<b>352,755</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>24,836,531</b>
<b>COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE &amp; LEISURE</b>				
Energy Efficiency Schemes	400,000	0	0	400,000
Environment and Green Infrastructure	9,048,023	0	401,000	9,449,023
Waste	8,125,939	0	0	8,125,939
Building Management	1,251,758	369,733	0	1,621,491
Vehicle Replacement	1,448,278	0	0	1,448,278
<b>COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE &amp; LEISURE</b>	<b>20,273,998</b>	<b>369,733</b>	<b>401,000</b>	<b>21,044,731</b>
<b>ADULTS, HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b>				
Adults & Public Health Investment	202,000	0	0	202,000
Housing Regeneration	1,450,514	0	0	1,450,514
Private Sector Housing	3,599,195	0	8,996	3,608,191
<b>ADULTS, HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b>	<b>5,251,709</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,996</b>	<b>5,260,705</b>
<b>XENTRALL ICT</b>				
Xentrall ICT Network	900,000	0	0	900,000
<b>XENTRALL ICT</b>	<b>900,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>900,000</b>
<b>COUNCIL WIDE</b>				
Unallocated council wide invest to save	20,000,000	0	0	20,000,000
<b>COUNCIL WIDE</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>
<b>Total Approved Capital MTFP</b>	<b>243,879,227</b>	<b>737,488</b>	<b>617,250</b>	<b>245,233,965</b>

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**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE  
SCRUTINY****23 SEPTEMBER 2025****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
CORPORATE SERVICES**

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2024/25**

## **Summary**

The report provides details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) annual review letter for 2024/25. The annual review letter details that there were 30 enquiries submitted to the Ombudsman during 2024/25 (a reduction from the previous year), 8 met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman. Of the 8 complaint investigations, all were upheld. All recommendations made by the Ombudsman, following their investigations, have been accepted and implemented by the Council.

## **Recommendations**

1. Executive Scrutiny to note the report.

## **Detail**

1. Each year the Ombudsman publishes its annual letter and summary of statistics on the complaints and enquiries it has received about Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and the decisions made. The Council has received the latest report for the financial year ending 31 March 2025.
2. Of the 30 complaints and enquiries dealt with by the Ombudsman in 2024/25, 8 were progressed to investigation, with all 8 of the complaints being upheld. The number of complaints investigated by the LGSCO has decreased since the previous year (13 in 2023/24) suggesting that more complaints are being appropriately resolved and addressed locally without the need for escalation to the Ombudsman.
3. Of the 8 upheld Ombudsman complaint investigations, 3 related to Adults Services, 2 related to SEND and Inclusion, 1 related to Planning, 1 related to Revenues and Benefits and 1 regarding Community Transport.
4. The report details that the LGSCO was satisfied with the remedy offered by the Council (such as an apology, financial redress) in advance of the complainant raising the complaint with the LGSCO, in 3 out of the 8 cases. Remedy guidance for officers undertaking complaint investigations, has been strengthened in the complaints training programme delivered by the Information Governance Team and will also be included in the annual Complaints Officer Forum in the new year.

5. A copy of the 2024/25 performance tables received from the LGSCO is attached at **Appendix I** of this report. A useful guide to interpretation of the Ombudsman's statistics is available on the [LGSCO website](#).

### Financial Implications

6. None as a direct result of this report. The financial implications of individual complaints would be dealt with separately as part of the responses to those complaints.

### Legal Implications

7. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report. They may, however, arise on a case-by-case basis, depending on the particular circumstances of the complaint and related decision and Legal Service input is called upon in these cases. The Corporate Governance Group also has a Legal Service representative.

### Risk Assessment

8. LGSCO complaint investigations and associated decision notices create public relations risks to the Council and can undermine resident confidence. The Council's Complaints Policy and associated procedures are designed to minimise these risks, and the oversight provided by the Complaints Team and Corporate Governance Group provide assurance to senior management and Members that complaints are taken seriously, corrective action is implemented and learning maximised.

### Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors

9. The Ombudsman complaints information does not indicate any significant ward specific information or trends.

### Background Papers

10. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review of Local Government complaints for 2024/25 has been published and relevant extracts have been included in this report. A copy of the complete report can be viewed on the [LGSCO website](#).

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## **Appendix I - Stockton data from the annual report 2024/25**

<b>Complaints upheld</b>	
<b>100%</b> of complaints investigated were upheld.	National average of <b>80%</b> in similar organisations
<b>8</b> upheld decisions	
<b>4</b> upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Average for authorities of Stockton's type is <b>5.3</b> upheld decisions per 100, 000
Statistics are based on a total of <b>8</b> investigations for the period between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	

<b>Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations</b>	
<b>100%</b> of cases the Ombudsman were satisfied Stockton had successfully implemented for recommendations.	National average of <b>100%</b> in similar organisations

<b>Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation</b>	
In <b>38%</b> of upheld cases the Ombudsman found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman	
<b>3</b> satisfactory remedy decisions	
Statistics are based on a total of <b>8</b> upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	

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# Overview and Scrutiny



# Statutory Framework

Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function of the Leader and Cabinet model and has the following broad roles:

- Policy Development
- Holding the Cabinet (and other bodies e.g. health service) to account
- Investigating issues of local concern
- Scrutiny of other organisations

# Overview Role

- In contrast to deep dive in-depth scrutiny reviews, effective scrutiny needs an element of oversight or overview
- Proposal to introduce regular performance reporting to Scrutiny, aligned to Council priorities in the Stockton-on-Tees Plan
- This will support Statutory Guidance on the types of information that might be shared to enable overview and scrutiny Members to discharge their roles effectively

# Stockton-on-Tees Plan

## Measuring Progress

STOCKTON  
ON  
TEES



POWERING OUR FUTURE  
**THE STOCKTON-  
ON-TEES PLAN**  
2024-2028



# STOCKTON ON TEES

## OUR VISION

Stockton-on-Tees is home. It's a warm and friendly place where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of the Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place where everyone can grow and succeed. We will continue to work together to reduce inequalities and barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.

Read the  
full plan



1

### THE BEST START IN LIFE TO ACHIEVE BIG AMBITIONS

A safe and inclusive community where everyone can thrive. Working hard to prevent the impact of poverty, creating a bright and healthy future with a shared sense of belonging. Supporting children in our care and creating equality of opportunity

2

### HEALTHY AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Building happy and healthy lives, supporting those who are experiencing poverty. Ensuring that our residents are resilient, independent

3

### A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

A vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy that residents can be proud of



4

### AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Growing the local economy and cementing our role as the well-connected, economic heart of Tees Valley. Ensuring that all residents can benefit from secure and sustainable jobs

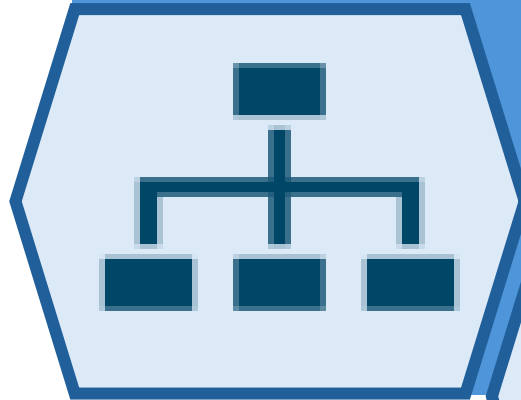
5

### SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL

A well-run financially sustainable Council that improves outcomes for communities



## Bi-Annually



### Cabinet

- Tier 1 (Council outcomes)



### Select Committees

- Tier 2 (service outcomes & progress update)

## Annually



### Exec Scrutiny

- Tier 1 (Council outcomes)



### Full Council

- Tier 1 (Council outcomes)

PRIORITIES

- List of priorities that the specific service is currently working on:
- *Priority 1*
- *Priority 2*
- *Etc.*

INDICATORS

- List of indicators (outcomes) that measures the progress of all the PRIORITIES:
- *Indicator 1*
- *Indicator 2*
- *Etc.*

WHATS BEEN  
DONE

- List of actions that have been undertaken to try and improve the INDICATORS
- *Action 1*
- *Action 2*
- *Etc.*

PLANNED  
ACTIVITY

- List of actions that have been proposed to try and improve the INDICATORS. These will be moved into WHATS BEEN DONE once complete.
- *Planned 1*
- *Planned 2*
- *Etc.*

# Joined up approach

## Local Government Outcomes Framework (LGOF)

- 15 outcomes that Government expects to work with LAs on, to deliver key national priorities for local people and communities.
- Underpinned by outcome metrics (100+) drawing from existing data sources to show how progress will be measured.
- Expected to “go live” in April 2026.

## Corporate Complaints

- New process to collect complaints

**\*The indicators encompassed within these programmes of work will form an integral part of evaluating progress against the Stockton-on-Tees Plan**

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

Scrutiny Review – Reablement Service	
<b>Achieved since last meeting</b>	<p>This review was paused following the Committee's agreement in April 2025 that its final report to Cabinet should be delayed until it had received the full findings of the Peopletoo (external consultants) report on local reablement provision, as well as the outcome of the late-2024 Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of SBC adult social care services.</p> <p>In early-July 2025, the Peopletoo findings were shared with the Committee. At its meeting later in July 2025, Members requested an informal session to consider this report and asked that the relevant Cabinet Member and SBC officers were in attendance to provide comment / address queries.</p> <p>The Committee continues to await the CQC report following its late-2024 inspection of SBC adult social care services.</p>
<b>Problems or concerns</b>	As raised in previous Chair's Updates, the availability of necessary information for the Committee to scrutinise has been a challenge during the course of this review.
<b>Planned this / next month</b>	An informal session to consider the Peopletoo report on local reablement provision is scheduled to take place in mid-September 2025.
<b>On track – yes / no</b>	No – see above.

Scrutiny Review – Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service	
<b>Achieved since last meeting</b>	<p>A draft scope and plan was presented to, and subsequently approved by, the Committee at its July 2025 meeting. The proposed aims for the review would be to provide assurance around current service delivery, highlight any gaps and, in turn, help shape future developments for local provision.</p> <p>Several contributors had been identified in relation to this scrutiny topic, including relevant teams / officers from the SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate, the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), and Eastern Ravens (specifically around young carers transitioning into the adult carers service). As with all in-depth reviews, it was also vital to understand the experiences of those using the service, therefore such feedback would be sought and considered. It was anticipated that the Committee's final report would be presented to the SBC Cabinet in February 2026.</p>
<b>Problems or concerns</b>	None
<b>Planned this / next month</b>	The first evidence-gathering session will take place in September 2025 and will involve an initial presentation from the SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate.

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

On track – yes / no	Yes
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Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p><b>Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone:</b> Following last year's (June 2024) presentation, senior SBC officers were invited to update the Committee on developments around the proposed Care and Health Innovation Zone – this subsequently took place at the July 2025 meeting.</p> <p><b>SBC Adult Social Care Strategy:</b> In July 2025, the Committee was presented with a report in relation to the ongoing refresh of the SBC Adult Social Care Strategy (the current version covers 2021-2025). Members requested a further opportunity to comment on this following the consultation period.</p> <p><b>Visit to NTHFT Discharge and Command Centre:</b> Members of the Committee undertook a visit to the North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) Discharge and Command Centre at the University Hospital of North Tees on 28 July 2025.</p> <p><b>Care Quality Commission (CQC):</b> Following consideration of the latest CQC / PAMMS quarterly inspection update report in June 2025, the Committee agreed that a letter should be sent by the Chair to the CQC reflecting ongoing frustrations around the regulator's output and its engagement with the scrutiny function – this was subsequently drafted and sent to the CQC Chief Executive on 11 August 2025. A reply from the CQC Operations Manager (Network North) was received on 4 September 2025 which sought to provide assurance over the future direction of the regulator – however, the response did not include any reference to 'scrutiny' or views / plans on engaging with scrutiny functions.</p>

NHS Updates / Consultations	
Key Issues / Problems or Concerns	<p><b>NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB):</b> In July 2025, the NENC ICB launched its Oral Health and Dental Strategy which aims to improve access to routine dental care (like check-ups), increase the number of urgent care appointments, tackle dental workforce recruitment and retention issues, and focus on preventing poor oral health. The strategy (and a 'plan on a page') can be accessed via <a href="https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/our-work/oral-health-and-dental-strategy-2025-27/">https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/our-work/oral-health-and-dental-strategy-2025-27/</a>.</p> <p><b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT):</b> Tees Valley Community Diagnostic Centre in Stockton Town Centre has carried more than 10,000 health tests and scans since it opened and is planning for further expansion – after local leaders officially marked its opening (for further details, see <a href="https://www.nth.nhs.uk/news/diagnostic-centre-marks-more-than-10000-health-tests-and-checks-just-weeks-on-from-its-opening/">https://www.nth.nhs.uk/news/diagnostic-centre-marks-more-than-10000-health-tests-and-checks-just-weeks-on-from-its-opening/</a>).</p>

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

	In August 2025, NTHFT, in conjunction with the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS), launched a new service called 'call before convey' which was designed to prevent avoidable hospital admissions and reduce the risk of hospital-associated deterioration (for further details, see <a href="https://www.nth.nhs.uk/news/north-east-ambulance-service-and-north-tees-and-hartlepool-nhs-trust-to-launch-new-initiative-to-keep-patients-safe-at-home/">https://www.nth.nhs.uk/news/north-east-ambulance-service-and-north-tees-and-hartlepool-nhs-trust-to-launch-new-initiative-to-keep-patients-safe-at-home/</a> ).
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### Regional Health Committees

<b>Key Issues / Problems or Concerns</b>	<p><b>Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee:</b> The chair and support function for the Committee sits with Redcar &amp; Cleveland Borough Council for 2025-2026. The last meeting took place on 17 July 2025 where agenda items included a NHS dentistry update (NENC ICB), a CAMHS update (TEWV), a respite care / adult learning disability update (TEWV), and a Community Diagnostic Centre update (NTHFT). The next meeting is scheduled for 2 October 2025 (agenda to be confirmed).</p> <p><b>Southern Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) / Integrated Care System (ICS) Joint Health Scrutiny Committee:</b> No meetings are currently scheduled.</p> <p><b>North East Regional Health Committee:</b> No meetings are currently scheduled.</p>
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### Monitoring

<b>Key Issues / Problems or Concerns</b>	<p>No updates have been considered 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"> <li>• Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care (September 2025)</li> </ul>
<b>Requests for more information</b>	None

### 2025-2026 Scrutiny Reviews

- Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service
- Adult Education and Skills

### Remaining 2025-2026 Meetings (all 4.30pm unless stated)

Tuesday 23 September 2025	Tuesday 20 January 2026
Tuesday 21 October 2025	Tuesday 17 February 2026
Tuesday 18 November 2025	Tuesday 17 March 2026
Tuesday 16 December 2025	

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## Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update September 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 September meeting the Select Committee will receive final action plans in respect of:

- Recommendation 11 - Strengthen our approach to career pathways for children, young people and their parents
- Recommendation 15 - Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need
- Recommendation 16 - Strengthen Support for Parent / Carers to develop language and reading skills

The lead officer for implementing the recommendations attends the meeting and presents an action plan setting out planned actions and progress to date on a range of initiatives supporting delivery of the objective.

Now that action plans have been submitted in respect of each of the recommendations, the Select Committee will be receiving progress updates from the lead officers at future meetings.

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

The September meeting will receive an update on the summer programme.

### Scrutiny Review – Additionally Resourced SEND Provision

The overall aim of the scrutiny review is to receive an update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with secondary schools to secure additional applications from the secondary sector, exploring the barriers to the schools becoming Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs) and identifying ways in which we may overcome this to secure the provision required for children and young people in the borough. Not having a full complement of secondary schools taking up the places risks undermining the effectiveness and reach of this key element of the local SEND Strategy and means that there may be implications for children upon transition to secondary that there may not be the same type or level of support available to them, potentially creating pressure on special school places and missed opportunities for inclusive education in mainstream settings. The Select Committee will therefore be exploring the following key lines of enquiry as part of the review:

- How will the transfer improve the outcomes for children with special educational needs across our Borough?
- How does the project support the Council's vision and strategy for SEND provision?
- What does DfE Guidance tell us?

## Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update September 2025

- Will the changes ensure that there is sufficient and suitable educational provision for SEND pupils in both primary and secondary?
- What are the barriers to secondary schools becoming additionally resourced provision? How can the number of ARP placements in secondary be increased?
- To what extent do families and schools understand the changes and how will they be engaged during implementation?
- Can lessons be learnt from the primary ARP model and the higher uptake?
- Is the funding provided to ARP adequate and sustainable for them to provide the support needed?

The July meeting received evidence from the Stockton Parent Carer Forum and North East and North Cumbria ICB about their involvement in the work to date, feedback from parents/ carers, the opportunities from moving to ARPs, challenges and next steps. The September meeting will hear from a primary and secondary school about their experience of moving to ARPs.

### Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance

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

### Monitoring

<b>Key Issues / Problems or concerns</b>	<p>Outstanding monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships - A further progress update to be scheduled in due course</li> <li>• Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment - Ongoing</li> </ul>
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### Next Scrutiny Review

Children not in School

### Remaining 2025-2026 Meetings (all 5.00pm unless stated)

17 September 2025  
 15 October 2025  
 12 November 2025  
 17 December 2025  
 14 January 2026  
 11 February 2026  
 11 March 2026

## Community Safety Select Committee Chair's Update – September 2025

Scrutiny Review – Children affected by Domestic Abuse	
<b>Achieved since last meeting</b>	<p>The second evidence-gathering session in July 2025 featured contributions from the Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG) and the commissioned support service, Harbour.</p> <p>Regarding the DASG submission, the Committee expressed concern that only 10% of local schools had received training on domestic abuse, and was keen to learn how effective the GP Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) within primary care was (and how this was determined). Queries were also raised in relation to how third-party referrals (i.e. those raising domestic abuse-related concerns from outside the environment that these were / allegedly were occurring) were handled and interactions with housing associations.</p> <p>Reflecting upon the information provided by Harbour, the Committee praised the local input towards the recently published 'Tell Nicole' report (a national project capturing the voices of individuals affected by domestic abuse) which included artwork from children and young people across the Borough – see the following link: <a href="https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/dac_bcyp_tell-nicole_report_FINAL-DIGITAL-2.pdf">https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/dac_bcyp_tell-nicole_report_FINAL-DIGITAL-2.pdf</a>. Other discussion points included the support given to fathers who were victims of domestic abuse, referral rates into Harbour (Stockton-on-Tees had the highest), and how success was measured in terms of the interventions used by Harbour.</p>
<b>Problems or concerns</b>	None
<b>Planned this / next month</b>	The next evidence-gathering session in September 2025 is expected to consider evidence from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (maternity), and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (health visitors).
<b>On track – yes / no</b>	Yes

Monitoring	
<b>Key Issues / Problems or Concerns</b>	<p>The following updates were considered by the Committee since the last Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting:</p> <p><b>Outdoor Play Provision:</b> The first progress update on the agreed actions in relation to the previously completed review of Outdoor Play Provision was given to the Committee at its meeting in July 2025. Reflecting a first-stage strategy paper that was presented to Cabinet earlier in July 2025, several actions had now been completed, though Members again requested further</p>

## Community Safety Select Committee Chair's Update – September 2025

	<p>clarity around maintenance requirements of the new Stockton waterfront park. Since a number of actions were yet to be achieved, a further update would be required (likely to be in October 2025 following an anticipated report to Cabinet earlier that month).</p> <p>Future progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fly-Grazed Horses (TBC)</li> <li>• Outdoor Play Provision (TBC – October 2025)</li> <li>• Welcoming and Safe Town Centres (TBC – mid-2026)</li> </ul>
<b>Requests for more information</b>	<b>Outdoor Play Provision:</b> Members requested further clarity around maintenance requirements of the new Stockton waterfront park.

### Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance

<b>Key Issues / Problems or Concerns</b>	<p><b>Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP):</b> Minutes of previous SSP meetings are now periodically included on Committee agendas so Members are sighted on developments within that forum.</p> <p><b>Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy:</b> The Committee will receive a briefing on the ongoing refresh of the local Community Safety Strategy (the current version expires at the end of 2025) from the relevant SBC officers and Cabinet Member at its meeting in September 2025.</p>
<b>Requests for more information</b>	None

### 2025-2026 Scrutiny Reviews

- Children affected by Domestic Abuse
- Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budgets

### Remaining 2025-2026 Meetings (all 4.30pm unless stated)

Thursday 25 September 2025	Thursday 29 January 2026
Thursday 30 October 2025	Thursday 26 February 2026
Thursday 27 November 2025	Thursday 26 March 2026
Thursday 18 December 2025	

## People Select Committee Chair's Update – September 2025

Scrutiny Review – Partnership Working in Early Help	
<b>Achieved since last meeting</b>	<p>A Committee member attended the Children and Young People workshop in July, where partners in early help discussed the self-assessment descriptor which was taken from the Department for Education (DFE) Early Help Systems Guide, identifying what is working well and the priorities to work on. Effective coordination and communication between partners was highlighted.</p> <p>A focus group was held in August with service users of the Family Hub and Family Action to gain their experience of accessing and navigating the service and the online offer. It was felt that the Family Hubs provided lots of support but would like more services located in the Hubs. Similarly, issue-based information and links to professional services was seen as useful to place on the Facebook page.</p> <p>The Committee receive evidence from several partners that offer early help services in September: Cleveland Police who deliver PITSTOP, an early intervention triage service, Harrogate &amp; District Foundation Trust who deliver the 0-19 services, and Family Action who are carrying out differing services and courses supporting families. Each partner discussed their offer and how they felt partnerships were working. Information sharing between different services was highlighted by all partners as key to ensuring effective Early Help support.</p>
<b>Problems or concerns</b>	None
<b>Planned next month</b>	The Committee will receive evidence from Catalyst and Stockton Parent Carers Forum.
<b>On track – yes / no</b>	Yes

Monitoring	
<b>Key Issues / Problems or Concerns</b>	<p>Progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of Living Response - November 2025</li> <li>• Disabled Facilities Grant – November 2025</li> </ul>
<b>Requests for more information</b>	None

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

**People Select Committee  
Chair’s Update – September 2025**

<b>Next Scrutiny Review</b>
Post 16 Provision

<b>2025-2026 Meetings</b> (all 2.00pm unless stated)
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 – September 2025

Scrutiny Review – Muslim and Faith Burial Services	
<b>Achieved since last meeting</b>	<p>The Committee met informally in September to review the evidence received during the review and formulate draft recommendation.</p> <p>During the course of the review members have received information regarding the number of burials per year, the types of burial chambers available, the experience of other councils who have provided burial chambers, burial rituals in Muslim and Jewish faiths, and the views of local faith leaders and funeral directors for the Muslim community.</p>
<b>Problems or concerns</b>	None
<b>Planned next month</b>	The Committee will agree the final report and recommendations at its meeting in October.
<b>On track – yes / no</b>	Yes

Monitoring	
<b>Key Issues / Problems or Concerns</b>	<p>Progress updates regarding previously completed reviews will be received by the Committee as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burial Provision (October 2025)</li> <li>Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste Collections (November 2025)</li> <li>Affordable Housing (December 2025)</li> </ul>
<b>Requests for more information</b>	None

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

Next Scrutiny Review	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance of Capital Projects</li> </ul>	
Remaining 2024-2025 Meetings (all 4.00pm unless stated)	
<p>Monday 13 October 2025  Monday 10 November 2025  Monday 15 December 2025  Monday 12 January 2026  Monday 16 February 2026  Monday 9 March 2026</p>	

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## Executive Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025-2026

In addition to the Standing Items:

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

Date	Item	Attending
20 May	Final Report of Children and Young People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of HAF (Executive Summary for information)	Judy Trainer
	Final Report of Community Safety Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres (Executive Summary for information)	Gary Woods
22 July	MTFP Outturn	Clare Harper
23 September	MTFP Quarter 1	Clare Harper
	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Complaints Report 2024/25 and the New Complaints Policy	Ged Morton
	Scrutiny – Overview and Performance	Geraldine Brown
18 November	Final Report of Place Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Provision (Executive Summary for information)	Michelle Gunn
	Scrutiny – Overview and Performance	Geraldine Brown
16 December	MTFP Quarter 2	Clare Harper
20 January	Final Report of the Children and Young People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision (Executive Summary for Information)	
	Final Report of the People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working in Early Help (Executive Summary for Information)	
17 March	Scrutiny Work Programme 2026/27 – Selection of In-Depth Scrutiny Reviews	Jonathan Nertney
	Final Report of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Adult Carers Support Service (Executive Summary for Information)	

	Final Report of the Community Safety Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse (Executive Summary for Information)	
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**Regular Reports**

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