

**Date:**

Tuesday 16 December 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 Hugo Stratton

## Agenda

1. **Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 10)

2. **Apologies for Absence**

3. **Declarations of Interest**

4. **Minutes** (Pages 11 - 18)

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 November 2025 (to follow)

5. **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Public Report** (Pages 19 - 48)

6. **Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)** (Pages 49 - 68)

7. **Scrutiny Review of Reablement Service** (Pages 69 - 74)

Final Report of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Reablement Service (Executive Summary for Information)

8. **Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Services** (Pages 75 - 78)

Final Report of the People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Services (Executive Summary for Information)

9. **Crustaceans Death Working Group - Terms of Reference** (Pages 79 - 84)

10. **Forward Plan** (Pages 85 - 86)

11. **Chairs' Updates**

Verbal Updates will be provided at the meeting.

**12. Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme** (Pages 87 - 88)

## **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.

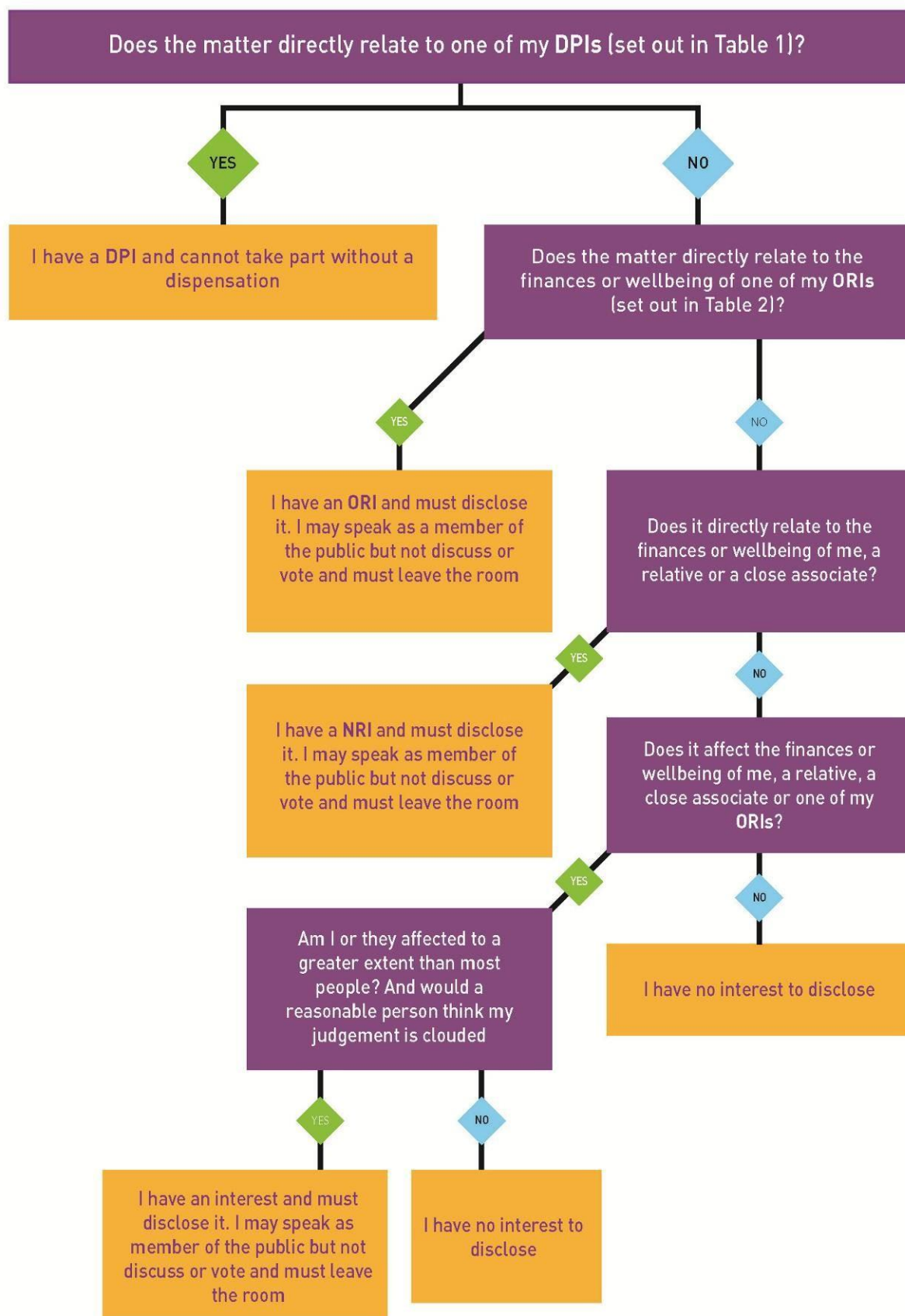
Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please.

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

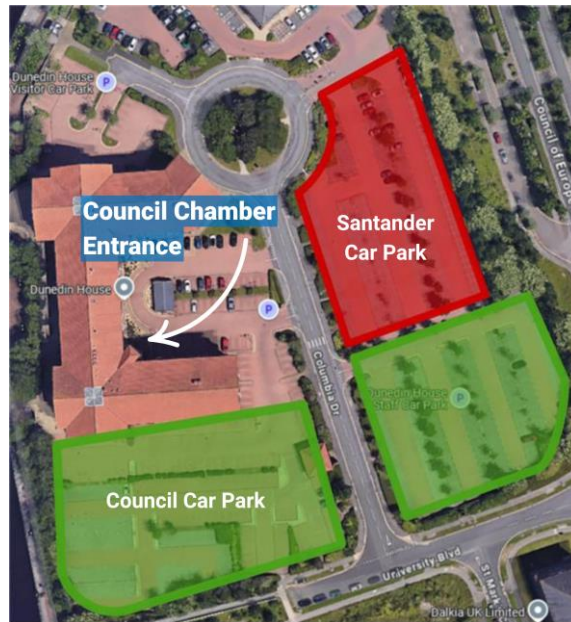
(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

(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

## 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 18th November 2025.

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

**Officers:** Reuben Kench, Neil Mitchell, Majella McCarthy, Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Geraldine Brown, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods and Junita Agyapong

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE and Cllr Sally Ann Watson

**Apologies:** Cllr Niall Innes and Cllr Tony Riordan

### ESC/24/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### ESC/25/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

### ESC/26/25 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting on 23 September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### ESC/27/25 Call in Meeting Procedure

The Committee noted the meeting procedure.

### ESC/28/25 Call In Outdoor Play Provision

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report setting out the background to the call-in and supporting documents.

The decisions taken by Cabinet, taken on 16 October 2025, in relation to outdoor play provision had been subject to a valid call-in. The call in applied to the following decisions:

RESOLVED

1. The Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 be approved.

2. The site-specific recommendations, subject to financial approvals of the additional £150,000 pa contained within the 2026/27 MTFP report to be presented in February 2026 be approved. This would enable 23 Council-owned play areas to be prioritised for retention, development or redevelopment, ensuring high maintenance standards and delivering good play value. A further 9 play areas will also be retained subject to availability of resources, while 11 sites would be subject to phased decommissioning and repurposing.

3. The series of additional cross-cutting actions relating to the development, design and management of play provision be noted.

The following Members and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Nigel Cooke, Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture
- Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services (Monitoring Officer)
- Reuben Kench - Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture

In addition, Members who had signed the call-in request had been invited to attend the meeting.

The following documents has been included with the agenda for the meeting for consideration by the Executive Scrutiny Committee:

- Call in Form
- Cabinet Report
- Cabinet Decision Record
- Report of the Monitoring Officer

On behalf of the Councillors who had submitted the call-in request of the Cabinet decision, Councillor Shakeel Hussain urged the Committee to refer the matters back to Cabinet for reconsideration, explaining the rationale for the call-in, which related to:

- The decision had not been made in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles
- No consultation had been carried out with ward Councillors, Parish Councils and families affected
- The financial rationale was unclear
- Cabinet's decision ignored the Select Committee's recommendation which gave a clear instruction to consult and engage

Questions from Committee Members and responses included:

1. Why was there no consultation and engagement prior to Cabinet making the decision?

The Cabinet Member commented that the Cabinet Report had been based on the work of the Community Safety Select Committee undertaken during 2024. He felt that there seemed to be some confusion about the process and that the decision was not to close the play areas. The proposals would be subject to phased decommissioning. Once a play area was nearing decommissioning, timescales and consultation and engagement would take place. This might result in the play area being transferred to local ownership at that time or being re-purposed. Only one site was scheduled for

decommissioning during the next four years. This process met the principles set out in the Cabinet report in July 2025.

2. If a decision had already been made, it didn't matter if a site was scheduled for decommissioning tomorrow or in five years' time. Should not consultation and engagement have taken place prior to the decision being made?

The Cabinet Member commented that the decisions taken were in line with the Select Committee's report and reflected fairness and affordability. There was never a presumption that all play areas would remain. There would also be an impact assessment to guide the decisions.

3. Some of the sites were in village locations with no public transport. Should not consultation and engagement have taken place with these communities?

The Cabinet Member commented that the Cabinet report contained detailed information about the size of the play areas and the quality and maintenance of equipment and a spread of provision. The strategy also sought to invest in bigger destination parks and there was an expectation that residents would travel to those destination parks. He reminded the Committee that open spaces were valuable for recreation even where there was no play equipment. Significant engagement would take place prior to any planned decommissioning.

4. When did consultation become engagement? The Select Committee report did not identify specific locations. Why are we identifying sites without consultation?

The Cabinet Member commented that the Council was investing in sites going forward and reiterated that engagement would take place at the appropriate time. Engaging now would be inadvisable. The decision had been in line with previous reports to Cabinet, a Member Briefing and progress updates to Community Safety Select Committee.

5. Communities deserved play provision on their doorsteps. Should we not prioritise neighbourhood play over expensive town centre schemes? Why was the Council spending £300,000 on the opening of the Waterfront Urban Park in Stockton at the same time cutting local provision?

The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that discussion needed to be confined to the subject of the call-in and the opening of the Waterfront Urban Park was not part of the Cabinet decision.

A Member of the Committee commented that there were options for local communities to retain play areas through transfer and Ward Councillor budgets for example.

6. How did the decommissioning of 11 local play parks correspond with the maintenance costs of the Stockton Waterfront Urban Park? What were the ongoing maintenance costs and why were these not included in the Cabinet report? We have never had a clear answer and have been advised that meetings are ongoing to agree the scope and duration of the maintenance package with Timberplay.

The Cabinet Member commented that the strategy was evidence based. Many Councils were closing a significant number of play areas. The strategy agreed by Cabinet was investing in quality provision with destination schemes and, where

possible, local sites. It would be impossible to determine future maintenance costs but the well-informed strategy was focusing on retaining quality provision.

The Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture advised that the previous budget for play areas had been combined with the cemetery and allotment budgets and had been insufficient. For the first time, a discretionary play area maintenance budget had now been identified in the MTFP. The maintenance set aside for the Waterside Urban Park was for the whole site and not just for the play area.

7. Would there be an advanced timeline for consulting with Town and Parish Councils prior to any decommissioning as their budgets were set well in advance?

The Cabinet Member advised that Town and Parish Council were to be emailed with the strategy but this had been put on hold due to the call-in. He confirmed that engagement would take place once timeframes were known.

8. The wording of the strategy between the Cabinet reports in July and October altered from “consultation” to “engagement”. In the Long Newton area there was no provision for miles.

The Cabinet Member commented that the Council could not prioritise every local play area but the principles within the strategy would be applied fairly. In the Long Newton area, there was a low number of households and low play need and the current play area would cost thousands to replace. However, there was opportunity for engagement about re-purposing the site.

9. Did Cabinet reject the Select Committee proposals on consultation?

The Cabinet Member commented that the Cabinet decisions were within the spirit of the Select Committee report.

It was proposed by Councillor Ann McCoy and seconded by Councillor Jim Beall that the decision was taken in accordance with the decision making principles as set out in the Councils Constitution and that no further action be taken.

On being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED (7 Councillors voting in favour and 5 Councillors voting against).

AGREED That no further action be taken.

## **ESC/29/25 Call In Children's Residential Homes**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report setting out the background to the call-in and supporting documents.

The decisions taken by Cabinet, taken on 16 October 2025, in relation to the Powering our Future -Transformation Review: Children in our Care -Therapeutic Residential Care for Children Experiencing Mental Health Challenges and Behavioural Distress had been subject to a valid call-in. The call in applied to the following decisions:

RESOLVED

1. Inclusion in the Capital Programme be approved of a scheme to deliver two Council-run children's homes (one solo and one dual) providing three places in total, based on current estimated total capital costs of £1.467 million.
2. The Council's match-funding requirement of £733,500 be met from the existing Council Wide Investment Fund approved by Council in February 2025, utilising prudential borrowing already authorised within that approval, with associated borrowing costs to be met from within Children's Services budgets through reduced reliance on external placements.
3. The Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, the Chief Financial Officer, and the Director of Corporate Services be authorised to:
  - a) identify and acquire two suitable properties within the approved budget envelope;
  - b) procure and let contracts for design, refurbishment, fit-out and equipment; and
  - c) take all necessary steps to register and operationalise the homes in line with the grant conditions and regulatory requirements.

The following Members and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Clare Besford, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
- Ged Morton, Director of Corporate Services (Monitoring Officer)
- Majella McCarthy, Director of Children's Services

In addition, Members who had signed the call-in request had been invited to the meeting.

The following documents has been included with the agenda for the meeting for consideration by the Executive Scrutiny Committee:

- Call In Form
- Cabinet Report
- Decision Record
- Report of the Monitoring Officer

On behalf of the Councillors who had submitted the call-in request of the Cabinet decision, Councillor Shakeel Hussain urged the Committee to refer the matters back to Cabinet for reconsideration, explaining the rationale for the call-in, which related to:

- The decision had not been made in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles
- Expenditure was not proportionate to the issue
- There were no clear aims or information
- The options appraisal was weak

Questions from Committee Members and responses included:

1. How could £1.4m be justified for such a small number of children when there were 25 children in unregulated care?

The Cabinet Member commented that some of the children cost that much in revenue so it was proportionate to provide accommodation in-house with the wide range of services in place.

2. Could the Cabinet Member confirm that children with complex needs would be served by this proposal and that the expenditure was therefore justified?

The Cabinet Member commented that the proposals were trauma informed and there was place based evidence that we would deliver better outcomes in Stockton. She stressed that there was an aspiration to look after our children in the Borough. However, this was just one part of the puzzle; research also showed that the need for complex care could have been reduced in 20% of cases with earlier intervention.

3. Why were children being placed in un-regulated residential provision?

The Cabinet Member advised that Councils were forced to use unregulated residential provision as they had a statutory provision to provide care. However, when those provisions were used there were additional monitoring requirements and the Council worked with unregulated providers to get them Ofsted registered. Unregulated providers were not automatically unlawful and were often in adjoining Council areas.

4. Why would it be two more years before the houses were identified?

The Cabinet Member commented that purchase could be problematic for a number of reasons including finding the right property, obtaining planning permission, building works and registration requirements.

5. There was no clear business plan and lack of a clear strategy to deal with other children out of Borough.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that there were a range of measures being put in place including other residential provision, edge of care provision and measures to increase fostering capacity. She was confident that there was a clear strategy.

6. How will the proposals reduce our expenditure?

The Cabinet Member commented that the numbers of children in our care and their particular needs was ever changing. Doing nothing would not be an option and increasing capacity was essential. The Cabinet report did not, however, guarantee savings and the Council was more likely to have to use unregulated provision if they didn't have their own in-house provision.

7. It was crucial that there was engagement with Members and communities where homes were being identified. Would there be early engagement?

The Cabinet Member confirmed that there would be early engagement with Ward Councillors if there were plans to purchase a home in their ward.

It was proposed by Councillor Jim Beall and seconded by Councillor Carol Clark that the decision was taken in accordance with the decision making principles as set out in the Councils Constitution and that no further action be taken.



On being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED (7 Councillors voting in favour and 5 Councillors voting against).

AGREED That no further action be taken.

**ESC/30/25 Stockton-on-Tees Plan - Progress 2025**

Following Council agreement of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan in 2024, it was agreed that Executive Scrutiny would receive bi-annual performance updates of the Tier 1 outcomes.

The indicators presented provided Executive Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Council's progress against the high-level outcomes identified in the Stockton-on-Tees Plan.

AGREED that the report be noted.

**ESC/31/25 Forward Plan**

AGREED that the Forward Plan be noted.

**ESC/32/25 Chairs' Updates**

AGREED that the progress updates be noted.

**ESC/33/25 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme**

AGREED that the work programme be noted.

Chair: .....

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**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****18 NOVEMBER 2025****REPORT OF THE MONITORING  
OFFICER**

# **Local Government and Social care Ombudsman Public Report following Investigation Reference 24 013 122**

## **Summary**

On 24 July 2025, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issued a Public Interest Report concerning Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's handling of a young person's Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. The Ombudsman determined that this case merited a public report because of its seriousness and the wider implications for service delivery and statutory compliance.

The Ombudsman found that the Council failed to secure the special educational provision set out in the young person's Plan and did not carry out the required annual review, despite sending correspondence to the family stating that a review had taken place. This resulted in the young person missing significant education and caused distress and uncertainty for the family. The investigation also revealed that this was not an isolated error: ninety-nine other families had been sent similar letters stating that annual reviews had been completed when no meeting or consultation had in fact taken place.

Section 31(2) of the Local Government Act 1974 requires the Council to bring any Public Interest Report from the Ombudsman before Cabinet, full Council, or another delegated committee of elected members, and to provide the Ombudsman with evidence that this has happened. In addition, section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places a personal duty on the Monitoring Officer to report to members where maladministration or injustice has been identified. Following Cabinets consideration of the report, they have taken the additional voluntary step of inviting the Executive Scrutiny Committee to consider the Ombudsman's findings and the Council's improvement actions, in order to reinforce oversight and support continuous improvement

This report therefore brings the Ombudsman's findings before Executive Scrutiny Committee and sets out both the remedies directed by the Ombudsman and the action already taken by the Council.

## **Recommendations**

Executive Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the Ombudsman's findings and the Council's improvement actions and provide any further comment and recommendations to strengthen the improvement process.

## Detail

1. The Ombudsman's investigation concerned a young person, referred to as Y, who had an Education, Health and Care Plan. The Council failed to secure the provision specified in that Plan and failed to carry out the required annual review. Nevertheless, correspondence was issued to Y's parent, Ms X, stating that a review had taken place.
2. As a consequence of these failings, Y missed four and a half terms of education between May 2023 and July 2024. The Ombudsman concluded that this amounted to maladministration causing injustice. The family experienced distress, frustration and uncertainty, and the young person was denied the support to which they were legally entitled.
3. The investigation also identified systemic failings. Between July 2024 and May 2025, the Council issued ninety-nine annual review letters recording reviews as complete when no meeting had been held. Although in most cases annual reviews were in fact carried out, this practice was misleading, risked masking gaps in provision, and undermined confidence in the Council's processes.
4. To remedy the injustice, the Ombudsman required the Council to apologise formally to Y and Ms X, to make a payment of £5,700 to recognise the lost education and a further £200 for the distress caused by misleading correspondence, and to repeat its earlier offer of £1,800 for the period prior to May 2023. The total redress of £7,700 has been funded from the SEND budget. The Council issued the apology on 14 August 2025 and completed the payments on 18 August 2025.
5. The Ombudsman also required the Council to write to the ninety-nine affected families to explain the error, to apologise, and to invite any concerns about their child's provision. Those letters were sent on 14 August 2025.
6. In terms of systemic improvement, the Ombudsman directed the Council to develop an action plan to ensure that every child and young person with an EHC Plan receives an annual review each year. That plan must set out specific actions, timescales and resources, be approved by the relevant committee, and be monitored by both members and senior officers. The Ombudsman also required the Council to review its procedures for delivering Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) provision and for securing This document was classified as: OFFICIAL post-16 placements, so that statutory requirements are met and provision is properly monitored.
7. The Council has accepted all of the Ombudsman's recommendations in full. Considerable progress has already been made. The practice of issuing "no change" letters has been stopped. All families who may have been affected have now had a full annual review. A strengthened annual review process was introduced in September 2025, with clear responsibilities and escalation points, and with regular oversight through the SEND Service Improvement Board. Revised procedures for EOTAS and post-16 placements have been drafted and are being implemented.

## **Community Impact Implications**

8. The Ombudsman's findings relate to failings that caused significant distress to families and denied children educational opportunities. The Council has acted to restore confidence by apologising, offering redress, and strengthening systems so that statutory duties are met.

## **Corporate Parenting Implications**

9. There are no direct corporate parenting implications arising from this report.

## **Financial Implications**

10. The total amount payable recommended by the Ombudsman as set out in their report is £5700.00. The Ombudsman did not make a recommendation for the period up to May 2023 as was outside the period of their investigation. The Council has agreed to repeat its earlier offer of £1800.00 to remedy fault in this period. The financial remedy agreed totals £7,700. This has been met from the SEND budget. The payment is a one-off cost and does not impact the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan. The wider improvement actions are being delivered within existing resources.

## **Legal Implications**

11. Under the Local Government Act 1974, the Ombudsman has the power to investigate the complaint and to issue a report where there has been maladministration causing injustice. The Ombudsman has the power to make recommendations to the Council on how to improve its services and to put things right for the complainant.
12. Under section 26D and 34E, as amended of the Local Government Act 1974, the Ombudsman has the power to investigate matters coming to their attention during an investigation, if they consider that a member of the public who has not complained may have suffered an injustice as a result.
13. On receiving a report in the public interest from the Ombudsman, the Council is required to give public notice in two local newspapers and make the report available to inspect by the public at the Council's offices.
14. The Council must not disclose any information to third parties that could identify the complainant or other individuals referred to in the report. Therefore, the young person and his mother are referred to as Y and 'Ms X and officers are not identified by name.
15. The Ombudsman's powers under the Local Government Act 1974 require the Council to consider this public report formally. The Monitoring Officer has a personal duty under Section 5 and 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to report maladministration and to advise on the correct governance route. Cabinet is the appropriate forum under Stockton's executive arrangements.
16. Statutory publicity requirements have been met notices placed in local newspapers and copies made available in public libraries..

## **Risk Assessment**

17. The proposed actions are assessed as low to medium risk. Reputational and service delivery risks are mitigated through the action plan, strengthened oversight, and reporting to both Scrutiny and Cabinet

### **Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors**

18. Not ward specific

### **Background Papers**

19. Appendix A: Ombudsman Public Report (Ref. 24 013 122) (Web Link)  
<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/special-educational-needs/24-013-122>
20. Appendix B: Annual Review Action Plan (summary version, including example letters and revised process)
21. Appendix C: Revised Procedures for Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) (Summary Version)
22. Appendix D: Revised Procedures for Post-16 Placements (Summary Version)

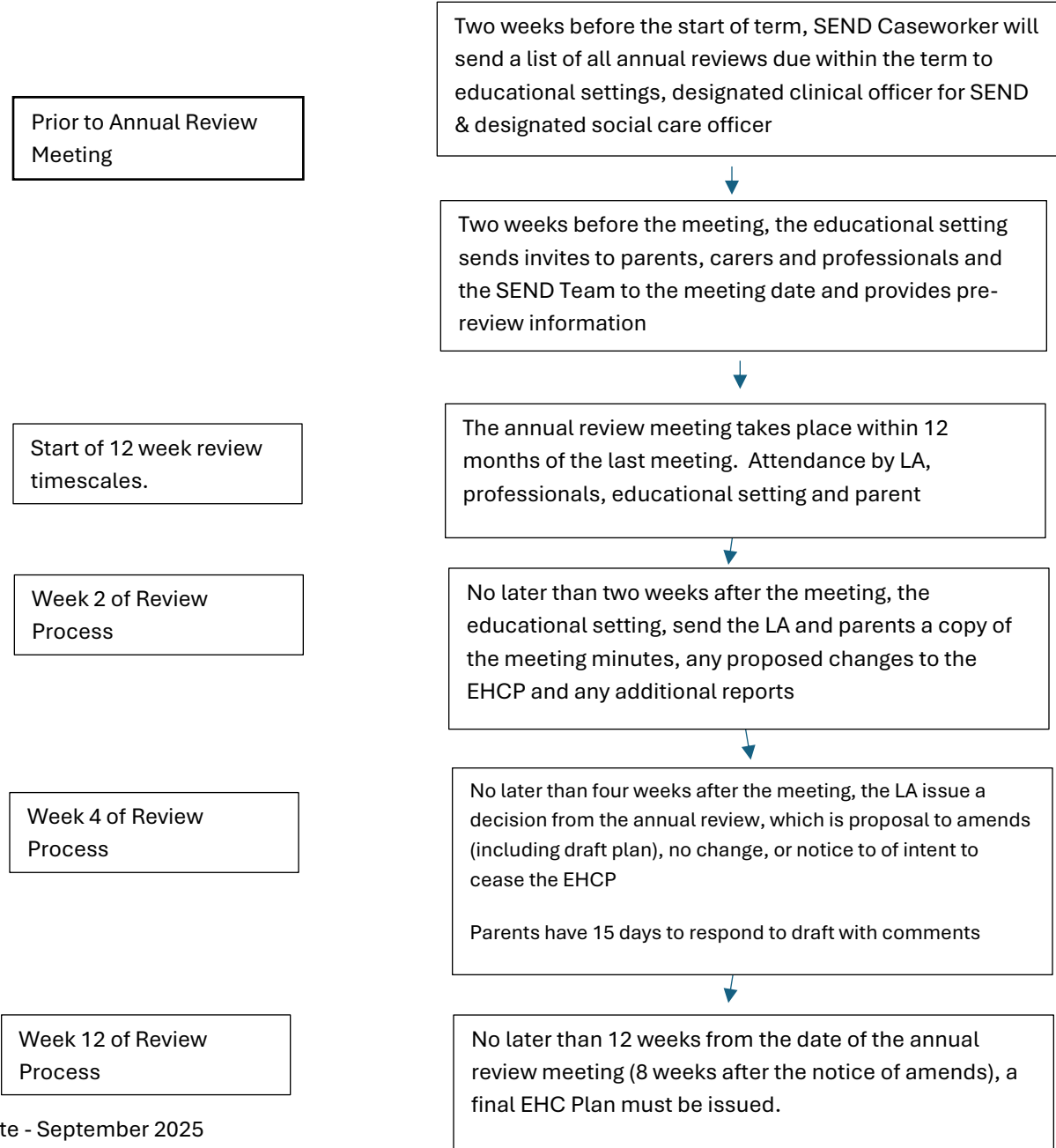
Name of Contact Officer: Ged Morton

Post Title: Monitoring Officer (Director of Corporate Services)

Telephone number: 01642 527003

Email Address: [ged.morton@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:ged.morton@stockton.gov.uk)

# Annual Review Process for EHC Plans



### **Duty** - Notification and Scheduling of Annual Reviews

## Timeline

### Task

### By who

Autumn Term Start 1<sup>st</sup> Sept  
Spring Term Start 1<sup>st</sup> January  
Summer Term Start 1<sup>st</sup> May

- LA SEND Team to send a list of **all** review due dates for the upcoming term to SENDCo's via email.
- \*The local authority **must** review EHC plans as a minimum every twelve months, and the review **must** be held within 12 months of any previous review. The decision following the review meeting **must** be notified to parent/carer/young person within 4 weeks of the review meeting and within 12 months of the date of issue of the EHC Plan or previous review.
- LA SEND Team to send a list of all review due dates for upcoming term to DCO and DSCO, to inform Health and Social Care Professionals.
- LA SEND Team to ensure a list of children not in school e.g. preschool, EHE, EOTAS and NEET is also prepared.
- When the LA SEND Team hold the termly SENCO meetings at the start of the Summer term they also need to discuss the early Autumn term reviews due.
- Autumn term review dates to be sent 2 weeks before the end of the Summer term by LA Send team to allow education providers(schools/colleges etc) to have this information ahead of summer break

LA SEND Team Caseworker for setting or cohort and SENDCo

SEND Caseworker Assistant



## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school holidays.</li> <li>• Contingency; all LA SEND Team casework assistants are able to undertake these tasks to ensure there is always staff to cover this part of the process.</li> <li>• Caseworkers to be monitored at their 1:1s around the termly SENCo meetings to ensure the relevant review dates are discussed.</li> <li>• The children and young peoples next stage of Transition should also always be discussed at the termly SENCo meeting.</li> <li>• Escalation; to senior caseworker / Team manager with any concerns around this part of the process.</li> </ul>	
First two weeks of each term and end of Summer term.	<p><b>Scheduling of annual reviews.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authority (LA) SEND Team collaborates with SENDCo's to agree on dates for all EHCP Annual Reviews due that term. Where a review is due during the school holidays, SEND Team to discuss with SENDCo at termly meeting and have moved forwards.</li> <li>• Termly, meetings are to be booked in for the first two weeks of each term.</li> </ul> <p><i>Example:</i>  1-14<sup>th</sup> September to discuss Autumn reviews and transition years. Transition review final deadline is 15<sup>th</sup> February for Years -2 and 6.  1-14<sup>th</sup> January to discuss Spring reviews and any outstanding transitions, particularly for P16. Transition review final deadline is 31<sup>st</sup> March for Post 16.  1-14<sup>th</sup> May to discuss Summer reviews.</p>	LA SEND Team Caseworker for setting or cohort and SENDCo

## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<p><i>7-21<sup>st</sup> July to discuss following Autumn (September) reviews, prior to Summer break. This is not exhaustive, and LA SEND Team should manage caseloads throughout the school year in liaison with each setting SENDCo.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contingency; Where for any reason the school does not confirm meeting dates the LA SEND Team caseworker will monitor and hold any review meeting if required.</li> <li>Escalation: Where there are any concerns around the SENDCo's not confirming review dates, this should be raised with LA SEND Team Senior Caseworker in the first instance to pick up with the school SENDCo.</li> <li>Where dates are still not confirmed further escalation to LA SEND Team, Team Manager to contact HT/ Principal.</li> <li>If dates are still not resolved to pass to LA SEND Team Service lead to contact school HT/Principal to arrange meeting to ensure the review dates are arranged.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>No later than 2 weeks before the annual review is due.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Confirmation of Review dates.</b></li> <li>Confirmed schedule of Annual Reviews for the term to be added to Liquid Logic workflow and the Annual Review Outlook Calendar.</li> <li>SENCo's to confirm to the LA SEND Team in box; <a href="mailto:Annualreviews@stockton.gov.uk">Annualreviews@stockton.gov.uk</a> where the meeting date was not held to ensure the LA are aware and monitor for the alternative date within the week.</li> </ul>	<p>Casework Assistant to add to Liquid Logic (LL) and Outlook Caseworker to utilise Outlook Calendar and LL to plan with weekly/ termly priorities.</p> <p>SENCo's.</p>

Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Contingency; all LA SEND Team caseworkers and casework assistants are able to undertake these tasks to ensure there is always staff to cover this part of the process.</li><li>LA SEND Team Senior Caseworker to monitor this part of the process is in place through weekly system reports</li><li>Escalation: LA SEND Team Senior Caseworker to raise any issues with LA SEND Team manager.</li></ul>	
<div>Duty - Pre-Review Preparation</div> <div>(Compliance – reviews must take place at least every 12 months SENDCOP Section 9.166 onwards)</div>		
Timeline	Task	By who
At least 4 weeks before the scheduled review meeting  * all relevant information should be collated one month before the meeting date to allow time for information to be provided.	<div>Pre Review Information</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Request updated reports from professionals (health, social care, therapists).</li><li>Completion of Pupil views, Parent/carer views, attendance and progress data.</li><li>Contingency: where no updated reports are received, previous reports to remain in place until the Annual Review meeting.</li></ul>	School/ Education Setting LA SEND Team for EHE, EOTAS, Pre and NEET
At least 2 weeks before the scheduled review meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Invitation to the review meeting to be sent to Parents, Professionals and LA SEND Team.</li></ul>	School/ Education Setting LA SEND Team for EHE, EOTAS, Pre and NEET

## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Where a young person is NEET, once they become NEET a review must be held to review the outcomes and provision and their plans for the future.</i></li> <li>• If reports are not received within 2 weeks, the school sends reminders and escalates to LA if needed.</li> <li>• Contingency: previous reports to remain in place until discussed at the Annual review meeting.</li> <li>• Escalation: Where updated reports are not received LA SEND Team Senior Caseworker to escalate to Designated Social Care officer (for Social care) and Designated Clinical Officer (for health).</li> <li>• Where any social care advice is not received for any Children in our Care then Virtual School to be informed by caseworker.</li> </ul>	LA SEND Team escalates to DCO and DSCO where required.
At least 2 weeks before the scheduled review meeting.	Pre-review information should be shared with: Parents/carers Professionals LA SEND Caseworker via the Annual Review inbox <a href="mailto:annualreview@stockton.gov.uk">annualreview@stockton.gov.uk</a>	School/ Education Setting LA SEND Team for EHE, EOTAS, Pre and NEET
When received into the Inbox	Documents should be clearly labelled and accessible, e.g. passwords removed and should be saved into the child/ young person's file.	Caseworker Assistant to save using the file protocol.

### Duty – Annual Review Meeting

*(Compliance – reviews must take place at least every 12 months SENDCOP Section 9.166 onwards)*

Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

Timeline	Task	By who
On the scheduled date of the annual review meeting	Meeting chaired and held, with all relevant parties	School/ Education Setting LA SEND Team to chair EHE, EOTAS, Pre and NEET
On the scheduled date of the annual review meeting	Where necessary LA SEND Caseworker attends in person or virtually, once agreed attendance is required following termly SENDCo meeting.	LA SEND Team Caseworker
On the scheduled date of the annual review meeting	<p>Review all sections of the EHC Plan A to K, using the working document format:</p> <p><b>Bold</b> text shows suggested text to be added, <del>Strikethrough</del> shows suggested text to be removed. Proposed changes are made live during the meeting. Outcomes and provision are updated collaboratively.</p> <p>Contingency: Where a review is cancelled or needs to be rearranged, this should take place <b>within 1 week</b> of the original due date and paperwork returned ASAP and <b>within 2 weeks</b>.</p>	<p>School/ Education Setting LA SEND Team for EHE, EOTAS, Pre and NEET</p> <p>LA SEND Team Caseworker for setting or cohort and SENDCo</p>

Duty – Submission of Review Paperwork		
(Compliance – SENDCOP Section 9.176 onwards)		
Timeline	Task	By who
Within 2 weeks of the Annual Review meeting taking place. (no later than two weeks but as soon as possible after)	<p>Submission of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Completed annual review paperwork including recommendations of updates made on working document of EHC Plan for review.</li></ul>	School/ Education Setting LA SEND Team for EHE, EOTAS, Pre and NEET

## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of the meeting using the Local Authorities Annual Review paperwork and signed by the SENDCo and Headteacher.</li> <li>Any supporting evidence such as professional reports or updates by professionals at the meeting, which will be used to provide information and/or be used to update the EHC Plan.</li> </ul>	
Contingency at week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where paperwork is not returned - reminder sent to SENDCo to paperwork is now overdue</li> </ul>	Caseworker Assistant (TMs monitor through Triage)
Contingency at week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where paperwork continues to be overdue - Escalation to Head Teacher</li> </ul>	Caseworker Assistant escalates to Service Lead and Service Lead Escalates to Head Teacher / Principle/al.
Throughout post review timescale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log to be held on the child file of when reminders are sent.</li> </ul>	Caseworker Assistant / Service Lead

### Duty – LA Decision and Draft Plan

*(Compliance – Decision and Draft (where applicable), must be issued no later than 4 weeks following Annual Review meeting SENDCOP Section 9.176 onwards)*

Timeline	Task	By who
<b>4 weeks after the meeting</b> All decisions should be issued no later than week four following Annual Review	Monitor for paperwork being received.  Make 'Triage legal Decision' and amendments once paperwork is logged as received and logs Draft ready for Triage/ Signing.	Caseworker

## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

<p>Meeting, or as soon as possible after post review information is received. (No later than week 4)</p> <p>Triage to always be completed within 1 week of receipt of paperwork, always ensuring the 4 week deadline is met. This includes the signing of the EHCP.</p>	<p><i>(this should be monitored by the CW daily as well as triaging officer)</i> <i>*legal decision is; amend / cease / no change.</i></p> <p>Amendments to be saved in the child file in folder 10 (current plan). Folder 10 should be in order as per the child file protocol.</p> <p>Send draft to be signed to 'draftstobesigned' inbox with LA response due date as the subject, to enable TM's/ SCW to prioritise signing, based on statutory dates. <i>(Example: Child's Name LA Response Due 02/09/2025)</i></p>	
No later than week 4/ day 28 after the meeting date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final check on the triage and make final legal decision (LA Response) as well as check any SENDMAP decisions, or CNIS panel decision or any other queries and sign Draft EHC Plans where required.</li> <li><i>(CW can log Triage decision, but will not send case to SENDMAP without final decision being made from TM/ SCW)</i></li> </ul>	Team Manager and/ or Senior Caseworker
No later than week 4/ day 28 of the meeting date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'LA Decisions made' report to be provided to Admin for the previous working day, along with No change decision letters and intent to Cease letters.</li> </ul>	Casework Assistant
No later than week 4/ day 28 of the meeting date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cease EHC Plan – if ceasing at Triage - LA intent to cease letter issued, with copy of previous Final EHC Plan. (Watermark Ceased), email saved in child file along with PDF version of EHC Plan and Appendices and Liquid Logic updated with completion date.</li> </ul>	<p>Corporate Admin</p> <p>Casework Assistant</p>

## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not to be closed on Liquid Logic until 2 weeks have passed to give time for appeal.</li> </ul>	
No later than week 4/ day 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amendment decision – working document as prepared by Caseworker, is signed and becomes Draft EHC Plan and forwarded to Caseworker.</li> <li>Signed draft is forwarded to ‘signeddrafts’ with relevant appendices, including review minutes, working document amendments and reports. <i>(The LA decision due date to be added to the subject box so that admin is aware of due date to be sent out. Example: Child’s Name LA Response Due 02/09/2025)</i></li> </ul> <p>Issue of draft EHC Plan/ decision letter via email, email saved in child file along with PDF version of EHC Plan and Appendices and Liquid Logic updated with completion date.</p>	<p>Team Manager and/ or Senior Caseworker</p> <p>Caseworker</p> <p>Corporate Admin</p>
No later than week 4/ day 28	No change decision – previous final is issued with No change decision letter and review documents (inc. suggested amendments, and record of meeting).	Corporate Admin
Contingency: No post review paperwork provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Week2: follow up with reminder at week 2 following review meeting date and update log in child file.</li> <li>Week 3: escalation if paperwork is not received by week 3 following review meeting date and update log in child file.</li> <li>Week 3: escalate to Head Teacher/Principal.</li> <li>Week 4: If paperwork is still not received, LA SEND Team to then contact school to arrange new review date. Review will remain open with no decision made.</li> </ul>	<p>Casework Assistant</p> <p>Casework Assistant</p> <p>Service Lead</p> <p>Caseworker</p> <p>Caseworker</p>



## Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Week 7: if no paperwork has been received / review meeting not held, LA SEND Team to contact parent/carer and professionals to arrange and hold (chair) the review within setting.</li> </ul>	
<b>Duty – Issuing of Final EHC Plan</b> <i>(Compliance – Final must be issued within 12 weeks of Annual Review Meeting, Regulations 20, 21, and 22 of the SEND Regulations 2014)</i>		
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>By who</b>
15 calendar days following issue of Draft EHC Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final EHC Plan is prepared including any parent representations</li> <li>Sent to 'finals to be signed' for authorisation.</li> </ul>	Caseworker
15 calendar days following issue of Draft EHC Plan and within 8 weeks of Draft EHC plan being issued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final EHC Plan signed by Duly Authorised Officer</li> <li>Forwarded to 'signed finals' copying Caseworker in, for issuing.</li> </ul>	Team Manager/ Senior Caseworker
15 calendar days following issue of Draft EHC Plan and no later than 8 weeks of Draft EHC Plan being issued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final EHC Plan is issued via email, saved in the child file using Child File Protocol.</li> <li>completion date logged on Liquid Logic.</li> </ul>	Corporate Admin

### Resources:

[SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf](#)

[The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#)

# Annual Review Process for EHC Plans

## **Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) Process**

**September 2025.**

### **Overview**

The EOTAS provision within Stockton-on-Tees is a structured educational pathway designed to support children of compulsory school age who are not currently on the roll of a mainstream or special school. This provision is activated under specific circumstances, namely:

- When a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) moves into the local authority and a school place cannot be immediately secured. (please refer to move in process)
- When a child with special educational needs is unable to access education in any school setting due to complex SEND, medical, emotional, or behavioural needs and the Local Authority agree that there is no suitable school placement for them, owing to these presenting needs following guidance under Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. (please refer to annual review process)

In such cases, the child may be registered under EOTAS, ensuring that their right to education is upheld through tailored, high-quality teaching arrangements.

### **Decision Making Process**

The initial decision and authority to register a child as requiring EOTAS rests with the local authority's SEND Decision making panel, (SENDMAP).

Following an Annual or Interim Review of the EHCP, a caseworker will refer to SENDMAP following triage decision made by a team manager or senior caseworker within two weeks of triage. (please see annual review process)

The decision to agree EOTAS is made considering the following factors:

- Child's circumstances
- Educational history
- Availability of appropriate school placements.
- Suitability of school placements
- Section F of the EHC Plan.
- Parental views
- Child or Young Person Views
- Multi Agency Professional Views

Once SENDMAP determines that EOTAS is the most suitable interim or long term arrangement, the child is formally registered as EOTAS within the local authority's system and this will also be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The responsibility to track attendance, engagement and ensure any welfare visits are completed sits with the Vulnerable Learners Service.

### **Operational Implementation**

Following the decision, the Placements and Governance Team assumes responsibility for operationalising the EOTAS provision. Their duties include:

- Providing the child's updated information status information to Inclusion and Vulnerable Learners Service Area.
- Commissioning a qualified teacher through a quality approved teaching agency, ensuring that the educator is appropriately matched to the child's academic profile and Section F of the child's EHC Plan if one is in place.
- Informing parents and current educational setting of the decision, verbally and in writing. This information is saved on the child's record.

To ensure the educational package is tailored to the child's individual needs, the Home and Hospital Teaching (VLT) will if requested collaborate closely with Placements and Governance. This service provides expert input on the child's:

- Age
- Academic ability
- Aptitude and learning style

This collaborative approach ensures that the commissioned teaching provision is both appropriate and aspirational, enabling the child to continue working towards their academic potential, including any examinations they were previously preparing for.

### **Monitoring and Safeguarding**

Once the teaching arrangement is in place, the child's details are shared with the Inclusion and Vulnerable Learners Teams by SEND Placements and Governance via email. The team manager (VLT) also receives a copy of the SENDMAP minutes. The VLT will then be responsible for the duration of the EOTAS Package to:

- Monitor attendance and engagement with the teaching provision.
- Conduct safeguarding and welfare visits in instances where the child fails to attend scheduled sessions.
- Participate in the monitoring of the quality of the education and progress made. (Please see Appendix 3)

Welfare visits are designed not only to encourage re-engagement with learning but also to ensure the child's overall wellbeing and safety in their current environment.

### **Governance and Quality Assurance**

Throughout the EOTAS process, all involved services operate under a framework of governance, accountability, and quality assurance. Six monthly annual reviews are conducted to assess the effectiveness of the provision, the child's progress, and any changes in circumstances that may warrant a transition back into a school setting.

Monthly assurance meetings will take place from September 2025 (please see Appendix 1) chaired by the Strategic Lead for SEND, and attended by the Team Manager, Vulnerable Learners, Service Lead SEND Placements and Governance, Service Lead Alternative Provision and The Head of Education and Inclusion.

The EOTAS provision in Stockton-on-Tees reflects a commitment to inclusive education and safeguarding for vulnerable learners. Through coordinated decision-making tailored teaching arrangements, and robust monitoring, the local authority ensures that every child receives an education that is both meaningful and responsive to their individual needs.

### EOTAS Process Flowchart – Stockton-on-Tees

#### Trigger Event

Child has an EHCP and moves into the local authority with no school place available, or following annual review a panel decision is requested in respect of suitability of EOTAS provision owing to a child's SEND Needs.



#### Decision by SEND

SENDMAP decide whether the child should be registered as EOTAS following annual review (please refer to Annual Review Process) and inform SEND Placements and Governance Team via minutes of the meeting.

Notification should be stored on the child's file record via SENDMAP Feedback form.

Decision will be shared in writing and verbally with parent and current educational setting.



#### Placements and Governance

Commissions a quality approved teacher via an agency and shares child's EHCP confirming that the provider can meet the provision in Section F. Teacher is selected for the child based on academic ability and subjects/exams previously studied with support of Home and Hospital Teacher if requested.



#### Information Sharing

Child's details are sent to the Inclusion and Vulnerable Learners Team (VLT) via email and VLT adds the pupil to System C and attendance and quality tracking commences.

The EHCP will be updated by SEND Assessment and Review to reflect EOTAS. (picked up from the minutes from SENDMAP meeting).

Section I of the EHCP should be blank in line with guidance in SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Any further updates to the EHCP would be made in line an annual or interim review.



**Monitoring and Safeguarding**

Inclusion and Vulnerable Learners Team (VLT) track attendance and engagement.

Safeguarding/welfare visits are conducted if the child is not attending.

Monitoring and oversight of the quality of education in line with Appendix 3



**Assurance**

Monthly meeting with key staff to update and review progress, attendance and oversight of all children on EOTAS roll.

## **Appendix 1.**

**Terms of Reference:** EOTAS Assurance Meeting

**Frequency:** Monthly

**Chair:** Strategic Lead: SEND Practice

**Attendees:** Head of Education & Inclusion, Team Manager Vulnerable Learners, Service Lead Alternative Provision, Service Lead SEND Placements and Governance, Virtual School Headteacher.

### **Purpose**

To provide strategic oversight and assurance of Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) arrangements across the local authority, ensuring all statutory duties are met and that provision is appropriate, effective, and responsive to the needs of children and young people.

### **Objectives**

- To monitor compliance with Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated SEND Code of Practice guidance.
- To review and assure the quality, suitability, and impact of EOTAS packages.
- To ensure robust multi agency decision-making and governance around EOTAS placements.
- To track and evaluate outcomes for children and young people receiving EOTAS provision.
- To identify and address any gaps in provision, safeguarding concerns, or risks to statutory compliance.
- To oversee transitions into and out of EOTAS, including reintegration planning and post-16 pathways.
- To ensure parental engagement and the voice of the child are central to all decisions.

### **Scope**

- Oversight of all children and young people currently registered as EOTAS.
- Review of new children accessing EOTAS, ongoing cases, and those approaching transition or reintegration.
- Monitoring of attendance, engagement, and progress data.
- Assurance of commissioning arrangements and quality of provision.
- Consideration of legal thresholds, suitability tests, and EHCP compliance, including updating EHCP following EOTAS Decision.
- Alignment with wider SEND strategy and inclusion priorities.
- Discussion and decision making around any children who there are concerns.

### **Monitoring Outcomes**

- Improved educational outcomes and engagement for EOTAS learners.
- Evidence of statutory compliance across all cases.
- Timely and appropriate decision-making with clear audit trails.
- Reduction in children missing education or receiving unsuitable provision.
- Strengthened multi-agency collaboration and accountability.

### **Reporting & Governance**

- Key actions and decisions will be recorded and tracked for oversight but on the child's file.
- If an attendee is not available a sub will be required. In the absence of the chair the meeting will be chaired by the Head of Education & Inclusion.
- Escalations or concerns will be reported to the Assistant Director, Education, Inclusion & Achievement.
- Summary reports may be shared with senior leadership, elected members, and relevant scrutiny panels.
- Quarterly updates to be provided to SEND Strategic Group in report format.



## **Appendix 2 – Statutory Compliance**

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Legal Basis</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
Parental engagement	Children and Families Act 2014	SEND Service – SEND Placements and Governance
Suitability test for EOTAS	Section 61 CFA 2014	Strategic Lead – SEND Service
EHCP amendment	SEND Code of Practice	SEND Service – SEND Assessment and Review
Attendance monitoring of attendance, quality and provision.	Education Act 1996	Vulnerable Learners Team
Provision funding	Section F of EHCP	SEND Service

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Quality Assurance of EOTAS**

Quality assurance in EOTAS provision ensures that all educational experiences delivered outside mainstream settings meet rigorous standards of teaching, safeguarding, and learner outcomes.

We regularly monitor and evaluate EOTAS packages of education to ensure they are tailored to individual needs, promote engagement, and align with the broader educational goals of the local authority.

Through robust quality assurance processes, including site visits, progress reviews, and stakeholder feedback—we maintain high standards across all EOTAS providers and ensure accountability.

<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Persons Responsible</b>	<b>Activities Undertaken</b>	<b>Reporting</b>
<b>Weekly</b>	Vulnerable Learners Team (VLT)  AP Team	-Gather attendance data - Monitor attendance - Welfare visits ( if required) - Gather information re welfare visits by other agencies (if appropriate)  -Ensure we have received tutor reports and copies of pupil work	- Attendance to feed into liquid logic - Recording of any welfare checks and saved in child files and tracker  Tutor reports to be saved in child files in <b>folder 12 EOTAS</b>
<b>Half Termly</b>	Specialist Teachers/Home and Hospital teachers  AP Caseworker/ VLT EOTAS caseworker	-Work Scrutiny – Random sample of 10 pupils across age ranges  - Overall attendance summary for all EOTAS pupils- OA/PA/SA	- Completed work scrutiny proforma saved in AP folder and shared with Service Leads VLT and AP  - Summary shared with Service leads AP and VLT
<b>Termly</b>	AP caseworker/ VLT EOTAS caseworker	- Review all Learning Plans including progress and outcomes	-All reviewed new learning plans to be saved with new dates in child files (in

			folder 12 EOTAS). All previous plans to remain saved as separate documents
<b>Annually</b>	Alternative Provision Team/ specialist teachers	-Quality Assurance of providers	- QA reports saved by Service Lead AP

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## **Post 16 Phased Transfer Process**

**To include Year 11 to Year 12 transfers and all Post 16 placement decisions.**

### **1. Identification of Phase Transfer Cohort**

**Timeline:** Summer term year 10 / Start of Autumn Term (September) year 11 / Autumn term post 16

**Action:** LA SEND Review Team identifies all Year 11 students with EHCPs expected to transition to Post-16 provision the following September through power Bi report.

LA SEND team to also identify any young people in post 16 that will not be continuing in their current provision, and will be moving into an alternative educational provision in the following year, done through place planning, Annual Reviews, at termly SENCO meetings with colleges and providers, discussion with Careers team, Virtual School, with Social Workers and discussions with families and young people.

**Responsibility:** Review Team working with P&G Team, schools, Colleges, training providers, Careers, Social Workers and wider professionals, alongside parent/carers and young people.

*Legal Basis: Regulation 18 of SEND Regulations 2014*

### **2. Early Annual Review Planning (ie any Annual Reviews to discuss phased transition not held in Summer term year 10, to be held in Autumn term year 11)**

**Timeline:** Autumn Term (ideally by October half-term) to be confirmed at termly SENCO meetings early Autumn term where possible.

**Action:** Schools/settings schedule Annual Reviews for phase transfer cohort.

\* LA prioritises attendance at these reviews

**Responsibility:** School SENCo & LA SEND Team

*Note: Reviews should be held no later than January to allow time for consultation and naming before 31 March*

### **3. Conducting the Annual Review**

**Timeline:** Summer year 10/ Autumn Term to January

**Action:** Review focuses on:

- Preparation for Adulthood (PfA)
- Desired Post 16 outcomes
- Suitable provision (college/training provider/ EOTAS etc)
- Working document of the EHCP updated live

## **Post 16 Phased Transfer Process**

**To include Year 11 to Year 12 transfers and all Post 16 placement decisions.**

Young person and families views central to all decision making

**Responsibility:** School SENCo, LA SEND Caseworker, Young Person & Family

*Legal Basis: SEND Code of Practice 2015, paras 9.166–9.185*

### **4. Submission of Review Paperwork**

**Timeline:** Within 2 weeks of the Annual Review meeting (please refer to Annual review process for further detail)

**Action:** School submits:

- Post Annual Review paperwork
- Updated EHCP working document
- Meeting minutes
- Supporting evidence
- Young person and families views
- Caseworker will present to SENDMAP for discussion of next steps, type of placement required and transition plan.

**Responsibility:** School SENCO

### **5. LA Decision and Consultation**

**Timeline:** Summer term to January to be named by 30th March

**Action:** Paperwork received from school/college / paperwork triaged / decision letter & draft plan issued within 4 weeks of the meeting date (see Annual Review process). Draft plan section I will be blank in to draft plan.

LA consults with preferred Post 16 provider  
Parents and young person given 15 days to respond

**Responsibility:** LA SEND Review Team

*Legal Basis: SEND Regulations 2014, Regulation 18*

### **6. Final EHCP Issuance**

**Timeline:** 12 weeks following review, no later than 30 March

## **Post 16 Phased Transfer Process**

**To include Year 11 to Year 12 transfers and all Post 16 placement decisions.**

**Action:** LA must determine that it is inappropriate for the young person to attend a school or Post-16 institution and that SEND Map has agreed to any change of provision.

LA issues the Final EHCP where possible naming the current school/provision also naming the preferred next college/provider placement for Post 16.

To include appeal rights.

**Responsibility:** LA SEND Review Team / Placement and Governance Team

*Legal Basis: Section 61 of Children and Families Act 2014*

## **B. EHCP Structure for EOTAS if accessed post 16**

**Timeline:**

**Action:** Section I: Left blank (no named institution). Detailed description of bespoke provision is added into section F of the EHCP (ie tutor/therapy/online learning etc)

EOTAS must be agreed through SEND Map or reassessment.

**Responsibility:** LA SEND Review Team / Placement and Governance Team

*Legal Basis: SEND Code of Practice 2015, para 9.42 & 9.96*

## **C. Review and Monitoring**

**Timeline:** ongoing

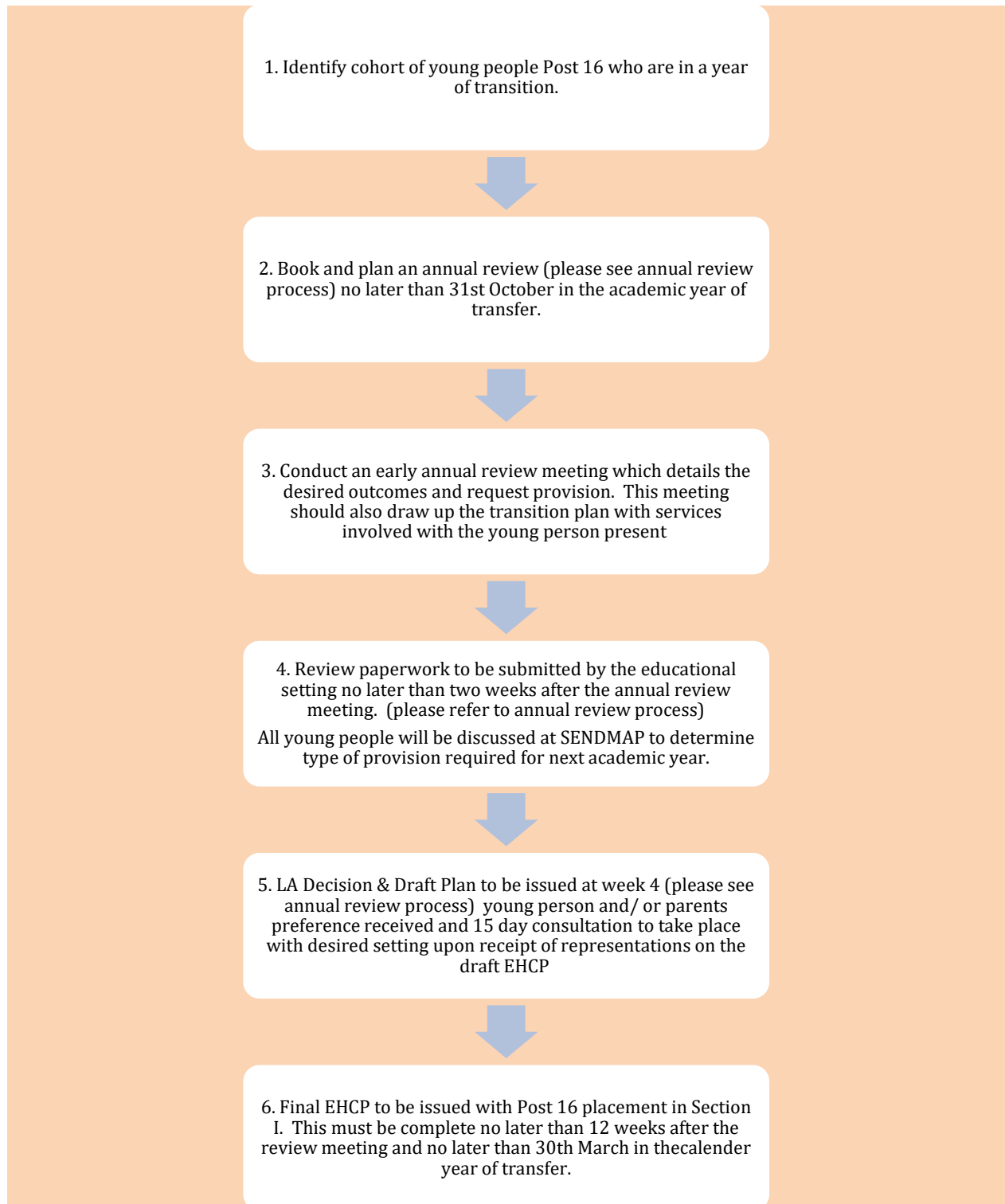
**Action:** LA remains responsible for delivering provision.

**Responsibility:** LA SEND Review Team

*Legal Basis: SEND Code of Practice 2015, para 9.173*

## Post 16 Phased Transfer Process

To include Year 11 to Year 12 transfers and all Post 16 placement decisions.





**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****16 DECEMBER 2025****REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

# Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

## Summary

Like many councils across the country, the Council is seeing greater demand and cost pressures across council services which is leading to a predicted larger overspend against budget by the end of 2025/26 financial year. The areas that we are experiencing the greatest budgetary challenges are Adults Social Care, Children's Social Care and Home to School Transport. Mitigating actions have been identified since Quarter 1 to positively reduce the forecast overspend to £4.127m. Work is continuing to identify further actions to mitigate the overspend, however if the current forecast position materialises this will need to be met from earmarked reserves, which is not a sustainable approach.

Over the summer the Government launched the Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation, which is a fundamental change to how local authorities are funded. The Fair Funding Review 2.0 aims to produce a fairer, evidence-based system that targets funding towards areas with high deprivation and need. The Government has now published their response to the consultation alongside a Local Government Policy Statement which gives an indication of how the changes will impact Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. This report includes the latest estimate of the planned changes; however, we will not know the actual impact until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement expected week commencing 15 December.

The report also provides an indicative update to the MTFP. The emerging position reflects rising costs and demand pressures which exceed the expected increase in Government funding. As a result, the projected budget gap across the MTFP has widened; £11.5m in 2026/27, £18.4m in 2027/28 and £18.7m in 2028/29.

The scale of this gap means that a strengthened programme of service reviews, efficiencies and cost reductions will be required, alongside a measured and time-limited use of reserves with a clear replenishment strategy. Work is underway with Directors to identify a deliverable set of proposals for the February budget, with early emphasis on accelerating existing activity within Powering Our Future and expanding its scope where necessary.

Powering Our Future continues to provide the Council's overall framework for service transformation and improvement. It has already delivered several tangible benefits. However, given the heightened financial context, the programme now needs to operate at a greater pace

and scale. Over the coming weeks, Directors will be required to identify specific, evidenced savings proposals that can be progressed through POF and our design principles for inclusion in the 2026/27 budget, supported by clear delivery milestones.

Further detail on potential service changes, efficiency options and reserves strategy will be brought forward in the February budget report. The Council will also shortly begin consultation on the 2026/27 budget to support transparent decision-making and ensure stakeholders can understand and comment on the choices ahead.

The report also contains rationale for the virement of monies between projects within the Thornaby Town Deal programme, to support works in the Regeneration of Thornaby Town Centre workstream.

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)**

To update Members on financial performance in 2025/26 and to outline proposals for the 2026/27 Budget and MTFP based on latest available information.

### **Recommendations**

Executive Scrutiny Committee is asked to note:

1. The updated financial position for 2025/26.
2. The revised Capital Programme at Appendix A.
3. The virement of £500,000 from the Connecting Thornaby – Cycleways workstream allocation alongside £235,000 from the North Thornaby workstream into the Regenerating Thornaby Town Centre workstream.
4. The emerging issues for the MTFP.

### **Detail**

#### **FINANCIAL POSITION 2025/26**

#### **FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2025**

##### **GENERAL FUND**

1. Members will be aware that the report to Cabinet in September, which covered the first quarter of the financial year, reported a pressure of £1.684m. Growing demand for Council services and the increased cost of delivery is putting pressure on several budget headings.
2. The following table details the projected budget outturn position for each Directorate in 2025/26, based on information to 30 September 2025.

Directorate	Annual Budget £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Projected Variance Q2 Over/ (Under) £'000	Projected Variance Q1 Over/ (Under) £'000	Movement from Q1 £'000	Mitigating Actions £'000	Adjusted Projected Movement Q1-Q2 £'000
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	107,081	108,783	1,702	(443)	2,145	(680)	1,465
Children's Services	63,680	66,642	2,962	645	2,317	(285)	2,032
Community Services, Environment & Culture	56,861	58,128	1,267	858	409	(441)	(32)
Finance, Transformation & Performance	15,844	15,471	(373)	(55)	(318)	0	(318)
Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	3,262	3,633	371	168	203	(335)	(132)
Corporate Services	12,203	11,944	(259)	(179)	(80)	(52)	(132)
Corporate Items	4,802	4,502	(300)	90	(390)	(750)	(1,140)
<b>Total</b>	<b>263,733</b>	<b>269,103</b>	<b>5,370</b>	<b>1,084</b>	<b>4,286</b>	<b>(2,543)</b>	<b>1,743</b>
Pay Offer	0	600	600	600	0	0	0
Transformation Savings Shortfall	0	700	700	0	700	0	700
<b>Adjusted Total</b>	<b>263,733</b>	<b>270,403</b>	<b>6,670</b>	<b>1,684</b>	<b>4,986</b>	<b>(2,543)</b>	<b>2,443</b>
Mitigating Actions			<b>(2,543)</b>				
<b>Revised Q2 Variance</b>	<b>263,733</b>	<b>270,403</b>	<b>4,127</b>				

3. The projected position indicates a significant financial pressure for the current financial year, largely because of growth in demand for council services. All Directorates are considering opportunities to reduce / defer spend to support the position and this will be kept under close review for the remainder of the year.

### Mitigating Actions

4. Following the projected overspend at Quarter 1, senior officers undertook an urgent exercise to identify mitigating actions that could improve the projected overspend. This has identified (£2.543m) of savings that can be used to improve the in-year financial position, to a predicted £4.127m predicted overspend. This includes actions such as reviewing and maximising grants, rebasing budgets and holding vacancies.

### Reasons for movements since Quarter 1 over £100,000

#### Adults, Health and Wellbeing

5. Demand for Adult Social Care Services has continued to increase in the quarter with pressures emerging across all budgets for residential services. The forecasted budget position on residential placements for Older People, including those with mental health conditions, has worsened by £667,000 since Quarter 1. Demand for residential placements for people with Learning Disabilities has increased further, with several

additional clients requiring services over the past quarter, generating an increased projected overspend of £138,000.

6. There has been an increase in the number of people requiring support from Care at Home services due to mental health conditions, with the projected position being £288,000 worse than at Quarter 1.
7. Increased demand across Adult Social Care Services is increasing the requirement for Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs) assessments, with additional assessors' costs to meet demand. There is expected to an increased overspend on this budget of £229,000.
8. There are anticipated savings within the Housing Service, mostly due to staffing vacancies of (£259,000).
9. A review of debtor invoices outstanding for the Directorate has been undertaken. This has highlighted an increase in outstanding debt. All debts are being reviewed to identify mitigating action, however, it is prudent to include the requirement for a contribution to the provision for bad debts which is likely at the year-end, this has been estimated at £820,000.
10. Deep dive analysis is being undertaken across all pressure areas to understand the contributing factors, and where possible, robust mitigations will be put in place to manage this position.

### **Children's Services**

11. Pressures within Children's Services are continuing this financial year. The number of Children in Our Care has increased since the Quarter 1 financial position was reported. Children placed in connected care or special guardianship arrangements has increased this quarter, with a further pressure of £140,000 anticipated across these budgets.
12. Several children have been placed into external children's homes since Quarter 1. The remaining budget for growth that was assumed to be sufficient in Quarter 1 has now been utilised and this budget is now projecting an overspend of £1.9m.
13. Demand for services for children with disabilities, such as short breaks provision and respite care is expected to be higher than budget and a projected overspend against this budget is now anticipated at £315,000.
14. Recruitment of Education Psychologists continues to be challenge and is a recognised national issue for Local Authorities. Due to the need to use external professionals to deliver assessments, the budget is projected to be overspent £278,000.
15. Additional grant income has been received from Department of Education, including grants to fund the employer national insurance costs of non-teaching staff, which is offsetting the overall position (£400,000).

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

16. The number of children requiring Home to School Transport has continued to grow in the quarter. As a result, the service has a further predicted overspend of £257,000.

17. A shortfall of car parking income and additional costs to deliver the service, have resulted in a forecast pressure of £250,000.
18. The HVE service is anticipated to make a (£261,000) saving. This is predominantly related to additional work and subsequently income to the service. Some of this is partially offset by additional costs associated with delivering the aforementioned work.
19. The facilities management service has received additional income and this is the driver of the (£138,000) improvement.
20. Vehicle services have experienced further pressures due to increased costs on parts and the renewal of hired vehicles at a higher rate. These result in a movement of £271,000.
21. The Highways Service has seen additional income due to recovering Section 74 and Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) from contractors. This has improved the position by (£122,000).

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

22. The emerging pressure described at Quarter 1, due to an increase in payments of benefits where subsidy is not paid at the normal 100% rate, relating to supported accommodation and increased provision of temporary accommodation, has been reviewed alongside potential grant funding. Additional income has now been assumed to offset this pressure and the financial position has improved by (£219,000).
23. Further salary savings since Quarter 1 in the Administration Service are anticipated to generate projected savings of (£100,000).

### **Regeneration and Inclusive Growth**

24. The Council will continue to work with prospective tenants on future lettings to mitigate against the shortfall on income at Wellington Square, however, there continue to be vacant units, leading to a further anticipated pressure. Car parking income will also be slightly lower than budgeted. The overall additional pressure will be £100,000.

### **Corporate Services**

25. There have been no significant movements in the projected position for Corporate Services.

### **Corporate Areas**

26. A review of Treasury Management costs (AMRA) costs has been undertaken as part of mitigating the financial position. The Council is currently benefiting from an improved investment position in the short term, due to interest rates remaining at a higher rate, resulting in savings against budget of (£630,000).

### **Dedicated Schools Grant**

27. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ringfenced grant the Council receives to deliver defined education services including Schools, Early Years and Special Educational Needs (High Needs). The grant is awarded by the Department for Education on an annual basis and the amount is determined by a national formula.

Members will be aware that we are experiencing growing demand in services for pupils with Special Educational Needs. This is also true of many Councils across the Country.

28. The Dedicated Schools Grant is accounted for in a separate ring-fenced account and guidance states that any deficit should not be funded from the Council's General Fund. This deficit is therefore not included within the Council's overall budget gap. The deficit was at £6.72m at 31 March 2025 and it is forecast to increase to £11.37m by 31 March 2026. The main reasons for the estimated growth in budget deficit is increased demand in the number of children with SEND and increased complexity of need generating higher top-up payments per child.

29. Details of estimated variances against budget exceeding £200,000 are:

- a) £231,000 resulting from an increase in cost / number of SEND pupils placed in other LA maintained schools.
- b) £1.2m relating to the anticipated additional costs arising from the introduction of new Additional Resource Provision / Special Education Needs units and continuing support to the remaining Enhanced Mainstream School provisions.
- c) £580,000 relating to exceptional high needs payments for pupils within both mainstream and special academies.
- d) £612,000 in top up payments for greater costs and additional pupils educated in academy schools located outside of Stockton-on-Tees.
- e) £1.71m in excess of budget to non-maintained and independent providers. This is mainly due to a significant growth in the number of children educated in independent special schools. Since March 2023 the number of placements has increased by 56% and the cost forecast to increase by 89% across the same time period.
- f) £200,000 overspend estimated related to alternative provision costs and costs associated with excluded pupils.

### **Powering our Futures – Progress Towards Closing the Budget Gap**

30. The Powering Our Futures programme, and in particular the transformation mission has identified savings of £5.8m by 2026/27 included within the budget report in February 2025. In addition, the Fostering Review has also identified further savings across the MTFP. The remaining savings target for 2025/26 is £1.350m and £2.256m in 2026/27.

31. The 2025/26 position can be updated as follows:

- The transformation review on Supporting People to Live Independently continues to have a positive impact on services for people with a physical disability in the community and has achieved £500,000 savings per year towards the transformation target.
- Staffing within the administration service has been reviewed under the transformation review of Administration and Business Services and several vacant posts can now be removed from the structure, contributing £170,000 per year towards the savings target.

32. The updated position for 2025/2026 means there remains a savings target of £700,000 in this year. Work is ongoing with the existing reviews with further savings anticipated to be achieved. The delivery of these savings will be considered as part of the MTFP report in February.

### General Fund Balances and Reserves

33. The Council aims to retain General Fund Balances at a prudent level, currently £8,000,000. This figure has remained unchanged since 2022/23 and a review is being undertaken to assess the appropriate level of general fund balances and earmarked reserves considering the Council's MTFP.
34. As described in paragraphs above, should the projected position for the current financial year materialise at year end, then the sum of £4,127,000 would need to be funded from reserves.
35. Like many councils across the Country over recent years the Council has experienced unprecedented demand and cost pressures upon services and budgets. This has resulted in a number of overspends, which has been funded by reserves. As a result, the level of earmarked reserves has reduced considerably and, as expressed in previous reports, this position is unsustainable. The budget and MTFP must ensure the Council's financial resilience and sustainability, and having an appropriate level of reserves to smooth the impact of financial uncertainty is critical.
36. The table below summarises the current estimated planned usage of reserves. The figures exclude school balances and reflects planned contributions to reserves in 2025/26, reflected in the adjusted opening balance figure. The forecast opening balance for 2026/27, allows for funding of the 2025/26 projected overspend:

<b>Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>Adjusted Opening Balance  £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Usage 25/26  £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Opening Bal 26/27  £'000</b>
Capital Scheme Reserves	(6,724)	3,450	(3,274)
Insurance Fund	(5,193)	500	(4,693)
Service Development & Improvement	(3,457)	2,286	(1,171)
Partnership / Statutory Reserves	(2,474)	798	(1,676)
Transformation & Implementation	(2,207)	1,294	(913)
MTFP Support Reserve	(2,182)	2,182	0
Pooled Funds and Interest Rate Risk	(1,962)	962	(1,000)
PFI Scheme Liability	(1,547)	15	(1,532)
Public Health Reserve	(1,175)	888	(287)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(26,921)</b>	<b>12,375</b>	<b>(14,546)</b>

37. The budget report will include a detailed review of the Council's reserves levels and proposals on how to address the reserves to a more sustainable level across future years whilst managing the immediate financial challenges.



## **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025 – 2028**

38. The projected position across the medium term has been reviewed.

### **Current Approved MTFP**

39. The current approved position in February 2025 was as follows:

	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Budget Gap	2,937	3,892	4,411

40. The table above includes rolling forward the MTFP for an additional year into 2028/29, this is based on the same assumptions as the report to Council in February 2025.

### **Financial Outlook**

#### **Fair Funding Review 2.0**

41. The Fair Funding Review 2.0 represents a significant reform of how Central Government funding is distributed to local authorities in England, having not been substantially updated since 2013/14. During Summer 2025 the Government launched a consultation on plans to refresh this methodology.
42. From 2026/27, there will be a new system for allocating funding to councils, which will reflect an updated assessment of needs and abilities to raise revenues via council tax. The Government does not propose to move immediately to the updated allocations but instead to phase them in over three years.
43. The proposals will see several reforms to Local Government finance, including a shift to multi-year financial settlements from 2026/27 and steps to consolidate the number of grants received by local authorities.
44. As part of the Fair Funding Review 2.0, the Government is also proposing a major reset of the Business Rates Retention System. The reset aims to redistribute retained rates income in line with relative need, growth and resources. This will have a significant impact upon the retained business rates of individual local councils.
45. Indicative numbers are included later in this report of the estimated impact of these changes upon the Council. At this stage these numbers are only estimates and are likely to change. The provisional local government finance settlement, expected week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> December, will include allocations at a local authority level, this will then be confirmed in the final local government finance settlement expected in February 2026.

#### **Local Government Finance Policy Statement and the Autumn Budget**

46. The Government announced the Local Government Finance Policy Statement on 20 November. This statement included the Government response to the Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation, and other measures which will be delivered through the 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement. Alongside this they have also



published a policy statement on resetting the business rates retention system from 2026 to 2027.

47. The main headlines from these announcements include:

- a) The recovery grant, which was introduced for the first time in 2025/26, will continue for the next three years and local authorities in receipt of this grant will be guaranteed a minimum increase.
- b) The Government have confirmed the settlement will cover a three year period.
- c) The principles of Fair Funding will be implemented, namely to produce a fairer, evidence-based system that targets funding towards areas with high deprivation and need.
- d) The model applies damping to cushion the impact of funding changes to individual local authorities as a result of the new formula. This is funded within the overall national total of funding available to fund local authorities and is applied across the three year settlement period.
- e) The business rates retention system will be reset in 2026/27.

48. The Autumn Budget was announced 26 November 2025. Due to the closeness of this announcement to this report's publication date, any potential impact of announcements within the Autumn Budget upon the Council's MTFP are not reflected within this report and will be included in the budget report to Council in February.

### **Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement**

49. The full impact of the Fair Funding Reforms will be included within our February report. Until then, our outcome of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 relies on indicative assumptions provided by external advisors and are subject to change.

50. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is now expected to be announced week commencing 15 December. This will include provisional allocations at a local authority level of the changes mentioned above. This will subsequently be confirmed in the final Local Government Finance Settlement expected in February 2026.

### **Changes to Current Expenditure Plans**

51. Since the report to Cabinet in February 2025, there are several changes which will require the MTFP to be updated. Work is ongoing to forecast the implications of national announcements described above, as well as the impact of cost and demand growth across the MTFP. The information below sets out the indicative assumptions of updates required to the MTFP.

52. Adult's Social Care - The existing MTFP includes an annual uplift of £2.5m per year in respect of the impact of National Living Wage and inflation increases on Adult Care Fees. The recent announcement setting the National Living Wage level for 2026/27 at £12.71, has now been reflected in the assumptions for the budget requirement for fee uplifts. In the current year we continue to see growth in the number of placements incurring care costs. The projections use a detailed combination of the information available across a variety of factors, which attempts to reflect these pressures across

the full three years of the MTFP. The current working assumption is a further increase of £4.5m in 26/27, £6m in 27/28 and £7.5m in 28/29.

53. Children's Social Care - Members will be aware from MTFP update reports over recent years the scale of the financial challenges Councils across the country are facing in relation to Children's Social Care costs. Since 2021/22 the average cost of an external residential placement has increased by almost 70%. Members will recall that significant investment has been made across Children's Social Care and in preventative services to try to keep pace with costs and demand, however we are still experiencing growth that outstrips this investment.
54. Children's Social Care is a major strand of the Council's transformation programme with significant time and resource invested into exploring ways to improve services, reduce demand and ultimately relieve budget pressures. The transformation programme includes areas such as fostering, residential care provision and preventative services.
55. These trends and demands within Children's Social Care are common across the country, with many local authorities facing the same issues. There are many external factors that are forcing prices up, creating a really devastating impact on council budgets. Work is ongoing within the transformation programme to try to mitigate the impact of some of these influences, however despite this it is estimated that further investment is required across the MTFP; £5m in 26/27, £9m in 27/28 and £13m in 28/29.
56. Pay award - The financial impact of the agreed pay award for 2025/26 will continue into following years. Based on more up to date information we have reviewed the pay award level required for future years. The agreed MTFP assumes 2% pay award across all years. The assumption for all years across the MTFP has been updated to 3% per year. This is in line with latest intelligence.
57. Community Transport – the level of demand for the home to school transport service continues to increase and is causing a budget pressure far greater than the additional resources allowed for within previous MTFPs. Since 2023-24 we have seen an increase in the cost of providing this service by 44%. We are therefore anticipating a further rise in costs across the Medium Term totalling £1.675m in 26/27, rising by £1m per year after ongoing. This is a pressure that is faced by many councils across the country and the financial challenges are well documented. There is a link between the growth in numbers of children with Special Educational Needs and the growth in numbers of children receiving transport to school.
58. Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit – as described in paragraphs 27-29 above, like most councils across the country, we are experiencing sharp rises in the number of children with Special Educational Needs, as a result the deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant is projected to grow in 2025/26. The deficit is currently subject to an override and not a cost that hits the Council's general fund budget. However, servicing the financing of the deficit is a cost to the Council's general fund and cannot be passed to the Dedicated Schools Grant. The current cost of this is estimated at £500,000 pa. If the deficit were to increase or decrease, these financing costs would also change.

59. Building and Utilities - the Council has previously allocated additional funding to Tees Active Limited to meet particularly high rise in inflation and utilities costs. As noted in the Quarter 1 MTFP update report to Cabinet in September 2025, this is no longer required and will result in an ongoing saving of £500,000 per year.
60. The maintenance costs for Council owned buildings has been supported by reserves for several years, however this is no longer sustainable and the additional amount required each year, £500,000, is added into the MTFP.
61. The utilities costs for SBC buildings is anticipated to increase next year by £374,000 due to an expected increase in price of electricity as notified via NEPO.
62. The Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 taken to Cabinet in July 2025 and October 2025 outlined that in order to enable 23 Council-owned play areas to be prioritised for retention, development or redevelopment, ensuring high maintenance standards and delivering good play value, a further £150,000 per annum of resources would be required.
63. Local Plan - The Council is currently working through the Local Plan cycle. There have been significant recent changes in the revised National Planning Policy Framework and in order to ensure a robust and compliant plan is formulated, additional resources are required over the duration of the MTFP, £50,000 in 2026-27, rising to £300,000 in 2028-29.
64. Local Election (May 2027) – The next local elections are due in May 2027 and the cost is estimated to be £440,000.
65. General Fund Balances – as described in paragraphs 34-38 above the Council is required to maintain an appropriate level of general fund balances. The current level is £8m which has been unchanged since 2022/23. An allowance is included within the MTFP to increase the general fund balances to an appropriate level across the MTFP.
66. MTFP Resilience/Demand – a review of the Council's reserves has been undertaken, and greater detail will be included in the budget report to Council in February on the Council's reserves position. Within last years budget report the MTFP Resilience reserve was created to reflect the difficult financial challenges we are facing. Considering the ongoing challenges, it is proposed to include within the MTFP an allowance to increase this reserve and also earmark funds to explore invest to save opportunities.
67. Mitigating Actions / Savings Plans from 2025/2026 carried forward – as described in paragraph 4 above, action has been undertaken to manage the financial position and identify ongoing budgetary savings. A number of the actions identified span across the MTFP and the savings are brought into the table below.
68. The projected expenditure increases are summarised in the table below:

	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000
<b>Changes to expenditure plans</b>			
Adults Social Care	4,500	6,000	7,500
Children's Social Care	5,000	9,000	13,000
Pay Award 3% (from 2%)	1,582	3,086	4,636
Community Transport	1,675	2,675	3,675
DSG Deficit - Borrowing Costs (SEND)	500	500	500
Building & Utilities	374	374	374
Outdoor Play Provision	150	150	150
Local Plan	50	200	300
Local Election May 2027	0	440	0
General Fund Balances	1,000	1,000	1,000
MTFP Resilience / Demand	3,000	3,000	3,000
Mitigating Actions	(1,102)	(1,238)	(1,238)
<b>Total Service Changes</b>	<b>16,729</b>	<b>25,187</b>	<b>32,897</b>

## Income and Resources

69. As noted in paragraphs 41-45, the outcome of Fair Funding 2.0 will have a significant impact on grant funding allocated to Local Authorities from Central Government. Indicative assumptions informed by external advisors have been included below, however these remain highly uncertain and may change. We will have a firmer expectation of actual funding in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which is expected week commencing 15 December and will include the provisional funding allocations for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.
70. Whilst the Fair Funding Review 2.0 is recognising needs and deprivation, the growth in services and demand is still outstripping the growth in funding available.
71. Due to the scale of changes to Local Government funding this year, significant work is ongoing to understand the impact of these changes on Stockton-on-Tees. Collaboration across councils is taking place as well as engagement with Local Government finance experts. The modelling has moved several times since the launch of the consultation and it is likely that it may change again until the Local Government Finance Settlement is announced. The numbers included may therefore be subject to change.
72. Confirmation that the Extended Producer Responsibility Grant will continue in 2026/27 was received early November and this has been included within the updated plan. The estimated allocation for 2026/27 is just over £3m. It is anticipated that producers will be incentivised by the tariff to reduce the amount of packaging they produce, therefore reducing the national total collected by the tariff, in turn reducing allocations to local authorities. We are therefore estimating a reduction in the tariff across the MTFP.
73. Council Tax and Business Rates – projections of council tax and business rates income are being updated and the figures underpinning this report will be kept under

review prior to the final budget report in February. At this point the updated MTFP includes projections of growth in the Council Tax Base.

74. These changes to resources and income are summarised in the table below:

	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>	<b>2027/28 £'000</b>	<b>2028/29 £'000</b>
<b>Potential Additional Resources</b>			
Fair Funding inc NNDR	(3,737)	(6,739)	(15,206)
Extended Producer Responsibility	(3,414)	(2,914)	(2,414)
Tax base growth	(1,000)	(1,000)	(1,000)
<b>Total Funding changes</b>	<b>(8,151)</b>	<b>(10,653)</b>	<b>(18,620)</b>

### Summary Position

75. A summary of the projected budget position over the MTFP is outlined below:

	<b>2026/27 £'000</b>	<b>2027/28 £'000</b>	<b>2028/29 £'000</b>
Opening Budget Pressure	2,937	3,892	4,411
Expenditure Pressures	16,729	25,187	32,897
Additional Income and Resources	(8,151)	(10,653)	(18,620)
<b>Budget Gap</b>	<b>11,515</b>	<b>18,426</b>	<b>18,688</b>

76. The above table demonstrates that there is a significant projected budget gap over each year of the medium-term plan. The budget gap has resulted from growth in service demand and costs outstripping the increase in funding anticipated through the fair funding reforms. As noted above the report makes informed assumptions on income levels and spend levels which may be subject to change, this will be updated in the budget report to Council in February. This assumes the original savings from Powering our Futures are achieved.

77. The current plan assumes a council tax increase of 2.9% in each year. Government have confirmed that the referendum limit in 2026/27 will stay the same as previous years at 5% increase, with indications that this may continue through to 2029. This referendum limit is made up of 2% increase for Adult Social Care Precept and 3% for core council tax. The potential additional resources available from a further 2% increase would equate to £2.5m for each year. Due to the size and immediacy of the budget gap, as part of the budget report, officers will recommend to members that the maximum council tax increase permissible within the referendum limits is applied.

78. The budget report in February will provide further detailed information on how the budget gap will be addressed. This will also factor in the outcome from residents and other stakeholders as part of the budget consultation. We have already identified savings across many council services through the Powering our Futures programme and it will be key to resolving the budget gap in future years.

79. The councils earmarked reserves have depleted over recent years due to ongoing growth in service delivery costs exceeding budgets, this means the Councils ability to

use reserves to smooth the budget position is very limited. The Council's liquidity and borrowing position remains strong and more comprehensive detail will be included within the budget report to Council in February.

80. It is therefore essential that savings and efficiencies are identified over the coming weeks as part of preparing the Council's budget for 2026/27. At this stage, work is underway to scope a realistic and deliverable programme, with early areas of focus likely to include:

- Maximisation of external income – reviewing partnership arrangements and grant funding
- Capital programme expenditure and financing review including maximisation of assets
- Targeted reviews covering a range of council services
- Review of discretionary services and fees and charges
- Exploration of income generation opportunities
- Review of contractual arrangements
- Flexible use of capital receipts to support transformation of services
- Review of the Council's approach to traded services
- Modernisation and efficiency of services

Further work is now underway through the Powering our Futures programme with Directors to assess the deliverability, impact and financial benefits of these areas and a more detailed set of proposals founded upon our design principles will be presented in the February 2026 budget report.

81. The final decision on council tax will be taken as part of the report to Council in February, along with the approach for further savings to ensure a balanced budget is set.

82. The Council will shortly be launching a consultation on our budget for 2026/27. We want to hear from everyone; residents, local businesses, and other stakeholders, so that together we can shape a financial plan that works for Stockton-on-Tees. Feedback gathered from the consultation process will be included within the February report.

## **CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

83. The updated Capital Programme is set out 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 & Children's Services	16,088	(1,760)	5,740	20,068
Inclusive Growth	11,143	(1,349)	0	9,794
Regeneration	147,293	697	0	147,990
Transportation	24,837	740	137	25,714
Community & Environment, Culture & Leisure	19,712	650	242	20,604
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	5,261	9	1,529	6,799
Xentrall ICT	900	0	0	900
Council Wide	20,000	(650)	0	19,350
<b>Total Approved Capital MTFP</b>	<b>245,234</b>	<b>(1,663)</b>	<b>7,648</b>	<b>251,219</b>

84. The Capital Programme will be updated in the report to Cabinet and Council in February.

#### **Virement Between Projects**

85. Criminal damage to the Golden Eagle in the period between asbestos surveys and work commencing, including theft of materials from the building, anti-social behaviour and arson attacks and flooding, has spread hazardous materials throughout all levels of the building. Water borne asbestos permeating through parts of the building has led to asbestos being distributed to previously well contained, uncontaminated areas. The asbestos removal and 'soft strip' (fixtures, fittings, carpets, furniture etc) need to be completed under more onerous, licensed conditions, altering i) the scope of works, ii) the programme and iii) the resources required to achieve a cleared site.

86. In order to meet the Council's duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Act 1984, measures to secure the building were implemented prior to the criminal damage, including hoarding the undercroft area of the front canopy, installing metal sheeting to all the window and door openings of the ground, first second and third floors; installing warning signs internally and externally regarding the presence of asbestos and weakened roof structure. Despite this, the building was illegally entered by individuals who have placed themselves at significant risk.

87. As a responsible client and in line with the Occupiers Liability Act 1957, it was necessary for the Council to instruct demolition contractor, MGL to commence the increased scope of asbestos removal works to prevent the risk of exposure and any further criminal trespass. This work is now underway within the budget approved in July 2025.

88. The changes to the scope of works has elongated the overall programme from the originally envisaged 36 weeks to 62 weeks taking into account the more onerous requirements and operating procedures brought about by the widened contamination,

additional labour, materials, equipment and an additional 26 weeks of preliminaries costs resulting in budget pressure of £600,000. It is therefore proposed that the budget pressure is met from unspent budgets from other projects within the Thornaby Town Deal programme, namely:

- i. Connecting Thornaby - Cycleways Project - The cycleway works have been tendered, resulting in an underspend of £500,000 against the Town Deal funding within the previously allocated budget for this project, whilst still allowing for contingency in the project
  - ii. North Thornaby Housing Workstream – project has now performed better than anticipated with all bar one target output exceeded, bringing ten problem properties under control, delivering over 9000 individual security measures incorporating the expansion of eligible areas and properties alongside over 450 energy efficiency investments in properties in the North Thornaby area, with no further property owners or tenant enquiries currently eligible for works. This leaves an underspend against budget of £235,000 across the North Thornaby programme.
89. To enable the full demolition of the Golden Eagle and achieve a cleared site, additional resources need to be allocated, and Cabinet are therefore asked to approve the virement of £500,000 from the Connecting Thornaby - Cycleways workstream alongside £235,000 from the North Thornaby workstream into the Regenerating Thornaby Town Centre workstream. Any unspent funds will then be added to the contingency budget for the other scheme within the Regenerating Thornaby Town Centre workstream, Thornaby Pavilion swimming pool and gym project.
90. Thornaby Town Deal Board have given their endorsement to this approach at the meeting held on 1 December 2025.

### **Reasons for Movements Over £100,000**

#### **New Schemes**

91. £3,980,000 has been added into the capital programme in respect of investment in schools. This comprises £3,880,000 from Developer Agreements and £100,000 from grant. Alongside this, previously unallocated grant of £1,760,000 has been attributed to specific schemes. This is in line with the School's Investment update reports taken to Cabinet in July 2025
92. £200,000 for the replacement of vehicle ramps at Cowpen Depot have been added. These are funded from RCCO.
93. Projects supporting the Accelerating Affordable Housing Delivery programme have been added. The £1,529,000 are funded by S106 Developer Agreements. This is line with the June 2025 report to Cabinet.



## Revisions

94. £650,000 has been moved from the Council Wide £20,000,000 borrowing approval to support the expansion at Billingham Forum Gym; this is in line with the July 2025 report to Cabinet.
95. Costs relating to feasibility work for Tees Central are to be removed from the Capital Programme, £550,000. This is following the July 2025 Cabinet report.
96. £1,340,000 of Indigenous Growth Fund is reallocated to the Golden Eagle, in line with the July 25 Powering Our Futures - Regeneration Mission Report.
97. The Cowpen Bewley WP to Wolviston - cycle scheme, adding in funding of £245,000, funded from grant.
98. For the Yarm/Stockton Cycleway LUF2, adding in funding of £180,000, funded from grant.
99. Ingleby Way to Thornaby - left turn filter bus scheme, adding in funding of £131,500, funded from grant.

## Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

100. 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

101. No direct implications.

## Financial Implications

102. The report summarises the financial position for 2025/26 based on information for the second quarter of the financial year and updates Members on the MTFP and Capital Programme.

## Legal Implications

103. None.

## Risk Assessment

104. This Council's MTFP is categorised as High risk. Growing demand for services, greater costs, funding uncertainty, lower levels of reserves and the requirement to generate large volumes of budgetary savings contribute towards a particularly challenging financial position. There are a number of assumptions in this report, which are subject to external factors and may change.
105. Robust financial management arrangements are in place, as well as strong governance surrounding the delivery of savings through the Powering our Futures programme. A more detailed risk assessment will be included within the budget report to Council in February.

**Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)**

106. Not applicable.

**Background Papers**

Financial Update and MTFP (2025-26 Quarter 1) - Report to Cabinet – 18 September 2025

Medium Term Financial Update and Strategy – Report to Council – 19 February 2025

Powering our Future: Regeneration Mission Update – Report to Cabinet – 17 July 2025

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## Capital Programme September 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	(1,760,000)	5,740,000	19,422,436
Children Investment	646,261	0	0	646,261
<b>SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME &amp; CHILDRENS SERVICES</b>	<b>16,088,697</b>	<b>(1,760,000)</b>	<b>5,740,000</b>	<b>20,068,697</b>
<b>INCLUSIVE GROWTH</b>				
Inclusive Growth & Development	8,393,564	(1,349,000)	0	7,044,564
Office Accommodation	2,750,000	0	0	2,750,000
<b>INCLUSIVE GROWTH</b>	<b>11,143,564</b>	<b>(1,349,000)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,794,564</b>
<b>REGENERATION</b>				
Stockton Town Centre Schemes	18,947,601	9,000	0	18,956,601
Reshaping Town Centres	8,805,275	(550,000)	0	8,255,275
Billingham Town Centre	30,000,000	0	0	30,000,000
Thornaby Town Centre	33,070,923	1,340,000	0	34,410,923
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	1,624,597	(101,746)	0	1,522,851
<b>REGENERATION</b>	<b>147,292,617</b>	<b>697,254</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>147,989,871</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
City Regional Sustainable Transport	12,753,782	0	80,912	12,834,694
Other Transport Schemes	10,551,776	655,469	0	11,207,245
Developer Agreements	1,530,973	84,588	56,086	1,671,647
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>24,836,531</b>	<b>740,057</b>	<b>136,998</b>	<b>25,713,586</b>
<b>COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE &amp; LEISURE</b>				
Energy Efficiency Schemes	400,000	0	0	400,000
Environment and Green Infrastructure	9,449,023	649,963	41,723	10,140,709
Waste	8,125,939	0	0	8,125,939
Building Management	288,611	0	200,000	488,611
Vehicle Replacement	1,448,278	0	0	1,448,278
<b>COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE &amp; LEISURE</b>	<b>19,711,851</b>	<b>649,963</b>	<b>241,723</b>	<b>20,603,537</b>
<b>ADULTS, HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b>				
Adults & Public Health Investment	202,000	0	0	202,000
Housing Regeneration	1,450,514	0	1,528,905	2,979,419
Private Sector Housing	3,608,191	9,126	0	3,617,317
<b>ADULTS, HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b>	<b>5,260,705</b>	<b>9,126</b>	<b>1,528,905</b>	<b>6,798,736</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	(650,000)	0	19,350,000
<b>COUNCIL WIDE</b>	<b>20,000,000</b>	<b>(650,000)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19,350,000</b>
<b>Total Approved Capital MTFP</b>	<b>245,233,965</b>	<b>(1,662,600)</b>	<b>7,647,626</b>	<b>251,218,991</b>



## Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

### Scrutiny Review of Reablement Service

#### Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's scrutiny review of Reablement Service.
- 1.2 'Reablement' is a short period of rehabilitation which usually takes place in a person's own home.
- 1.3 National evidence suggests that supporting early and safe discharge from hospital into a reablement-type service delivers better outcomes for individuals when compared to longer periods of hospitalisation or immediate transfer into care at home. It is also cost-effective for health and adult social care services, both reducing pressure on bed-capacity in hospitals and the need for large packages of ongoing community or residential or nursing care. Research has continued to evidence that most people prefer to remain in their own homes and communities.
- 1.4 Locally, the Reablement Service provides support for people with poor physical or mental health to help them manage their illness / condition by learning or re-learning the skills necessary for daily living (so that they can remain in the community). The service seeks to ensure that people can maximise their independence when they need it – this can include both 'step-up' care (escalation of need for people already supported to live independently) as well as 'step-down' (to avoid hospital admission or ensure safe discharges). It also promotes and supports people to be more independent and reduce the need for long-term service provision for as long as possible.
- 1.5 The offer is provided free (as mandated by the Care Act 2014) for the person receiving support for up to a maximum of six weeks. A person with ongoing care and support needs following this six weeks will be financially assessed for their ongoing contribution to their care.
- 1.6 There are a number of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) *Powering Our Future* (POF) projects that link to this review; 'Supporting People to Live Independently' and 'Early Intervention and Prevention'. The final report produced by the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee will be submitted to these workstreams for their awareness.
- 1.7 The aim for this review was to identify whether the Reablement Service offered by SBC was:
  - a) maximising independence for people being discharged from hospital and living in the community.
  - b) reducing the need for ongoing, more intensive support in people's own homes and reducing the need for admission into 24-hour care.
  - c) working effectively with NHS provision that supports people on a reablement pathway.
  - d) using technology as effectively as possible.

- 1.8 The Committee found that, rooted within legislation (Care Act 2014 s2) which requires Local Authorities to prevent, reduce or delay needs for care and support for all adults (including carers), 'reablement' was one of several short-term offers involving NHS and social care services (alongside home-based, bed-based, and crisis response care) which come under the wider umbrella of 'intermediate care'. The Care Act regulations compel Councils to provide reablement support free-of-charge for a period of up to six weeks (this was for all adults, irrespective of whether they had eligible needs for ongoing care and support).
- 1.9 Reablement involves the provision of assistance within a person's own home. This assessment and support service helps an individual to do tasks (e.g. washing, getting dressed) for themselves rather than relying on others, with support workers operating alongside the person while they regain skills and confidence. The aim was to maximise independence (doing tasks 'with' them, not 'for' them), and the service can be used to support discharge from hospital, prevent re-admission, or enable an individual to remain living at home.
- 1.10 The SBC Reablement Team was expanded in October 2024 as the Council continues its focus on early intervention and prevention as part of its ongoing *Powering Our Future* (POF) initiative. Visits to service-users occur up to four times per day, with Senior Support Workers holding regular weekly reviews with individuals to ensure they were on track to achieve their goals and adjust their support plan accordingly (they were also able to assess and order low level equipment to aid independence).
- 1.11 Other relevant stakeholders include the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), which has a key role in overseeing the health and care 'system' to plan, design and deliver intermediate care services (including reablement) following hospital discharge, with the local priority on people gaining and maintaining independence for as long as possible. The North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) was another key partner within local integrated services, working alongside SBC to provide an Integrated Single Point of Access (ISPA). There was also a well-established Integrated Discharge Team (contributing to the Trust having one of the top performing Emergency Departments in England – a reflection of the strength of pathways in place to get people home), as well as a Community Integrated Assessment Team (CIAT) which worked in collaboration with the SBC Reablement Service.
- 1.12 A significant majority of referrals into the SBC Reablement Service came directly from hospital (with the rest from the community). The service may be accessible if an individual has a temporary illness / accident, a crisis, a change in their (or their carers') circumstance, or to avoid unnecessary admission to hospital. Where a 'need' (not a 'want') had been identified, individuals would be referred following an assessment via a health or social care professional – any subsequent support could be tailored to the individual, and its duration was dependent upon their progress (i.e. this free service could be less than the maximum six-week period). For those not in hospital, it was not clear how the Council or its partners identified individuals who may benefit from the service.
- 1.13 In terms of public awareness and promotion of this type of provision, there were several references over the course of the review to the vagaries around the term 'reablement' itself. The Committee recognise that this is accepted health terminology, but there is clearly a need to fully explain and promote what reablement actually entails so the public have a better understanding of how these services can help them or a loved one. In addition, published NHS survey data suggests local Trusts have work to do in providing clarity around available options following discharge – this was reinforced by customer feedback presented to the Committee, as well as the Reablement Service staff who reported that the people they support were often unaware of local provision. Furthermore, Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) data showed that the proportion of older people (aged 65

or over) offered reablement services following discharge from hospital (measure 2D2) was consistently lower in the Borough compared to regional and national scores for every year since 2019-2020 – this is perhaps surprising given NTHFTs stated recognition that the Borough's reablement provision played a key role in the ongoing strong local performance around hospital discharge, much of which reflected the established partnership between NTHFT and SBC.

- 1.14 The Better Care Fund (BCF) was used as a mechanism to bring NHS services and Local Authorities together to tackle strains faced across the health and social care system, and to drive better outcomes for people. Reablement services were one of the Stockton-on-Tees BCF schemes to meet one of the two BCF core objectives, namely 'to enable people to stay well, safe and independent at home for longer'. The existing local offer was fully funded via the BCF, with the budget for 2024-2025 (£1.2m) increasing by around 20% (principally due to anticipated changes with the previous Discharge to Assess (D2A) arrangements) compared to the allocated funds for 2023-2024 – the vast majority of these financial resources covering staff salaries. Future funding levels (still to be clarified) will need to reflect the desired ambition to support a greater number of people leaving hospital or to prevent them from having to be admitted in the first place.
- 1.15 591 individuals were supported by the SBC Reablement Team between April 2023 and March 2024 (with no waiting list as of January 2025). The recent expansion of the local offer, with SBCs move to bring this fully in-house from autumn 2024 endorsed by the NENC ICB, meant that existing structures were deemed sufficient to deal with the Council's projections on the numbers requiring support (though issues would inevitably follow should these projections be exceeded, as would staff absences as a result of sickness / COVID). However, the expected 20%+ increase of those aged over 65 in the next 10 years will inevitably challenge the status quo.
- 1.16 Regarding impact and effectiveness, the Committee heard that just over 75% of the 591 people supported during 2023-2024 were independent on leaving the service. Local reablement performance had been consistently better than the regional and national averages over the past four years, with the 2023-2024 data ranking Stockton-on-Tees eighth in the country (top in the region) – this was reinforced by the numerous positive comments from service-users about their own experiences. In addition, the service had been shortlisted for the regional (North East and Scotland) Great British Care Awards in the categories of 'Team Award', 'Newcomer to Care', 'Co-ordinator', and 'Care Manager', and the CQCs last inspection in mid-2021 rated the service 'Good' overall (though this was now quite dated).
- 1.17 An understanding around the types of technology used as part of current reablement provision was not established, though the reported focus on increasing its use (e.g. pilot assessment of activity monitoring technology, implementation of OPTICA, etc.) demonstrates a recognition of the potential benefits and the continuing evolution of the existing offer. Examples of technology-related opportunities were highlighted to the Committee which should be further explored by SBC and its partners alongside the front-door proposals being considered by the Council in March 2025.
- 1.18 The Committee was informed that there were no specific reablement services currently being delivered by VCSE organisations, nor was there a large quantity of reablement-related activity happening across the Borough within this sector – this suggests there is an opportunity for greater utilisation of the VCSE sector in local reablement provision. The former Five Lamps 'Home from Hospital' service (which ended in March 2024) was a relevant offer in relation to this scrutiny topic, with Catalyst relaying the opinion from some that its cessation had meant there was now a gap within the community for such provision.

SBC has made the decision to expand its own reablement offer, but to meet projected future need, a role for the VCSE sector seems prudent and potentially necessary.

- 1.19 Information was received in relation to customer feedback and there appeared broad satisfaction with the level of service. As previously highlighted, an issue was frequently raised around a lack of awareness of the local offer and the lack of information provided about it within the hospital setting.
- 1.20 Views of SBC Reablement Service staff about existing provision were sought as part of the Committee's review. There was high praise for the current arrangements, working in conjunction with other professionals (physio, therapy team), communication (in-house and with clients / families), and support from management and office staff. In terms of improvements, suggestions included better provision of information about the service (within, and upon discharge from, hospital), more detailed information about an individual when a referral is received, the retention of input from physios / therapy team, ensuring continuity of care (as far as possible), and improved out-of-hours provision / staffing. It was also highlighted that individuals were sometimes willing to pay so they could continue to receive support beyond the six-week limit.
- 1.21 Reflecting upon the timing of this review, the Committee notes the challenges that have arisen when trying to examine a service which is rapidly evolving, with decisions on its future direction being made throughout the Committee's evidence-gathering phase. The Council's use of an external consultant (Peopletoo) to also review local provision during this time has identified a host of additional findings and potential options for future delivery. The Executive Summary of the report detailing the work undertaken by Peopletoo highlights the intention to improve performance monitoring as part of a phased enhancement of reablement and preventative services – the Committee welcomes this, particularly in light of the ongoing delays around SBC performance information being made available to the scrutiny function. Reference is also made on the Peopletoo website (see <https://peopletoo.co.uk/case-studies/adult-social-care/enhancing-independence-through-reablement-and-enablement/>) to significant financial benefits as a result of their work / proposals – the Committee look forward to seeing the extent to which this claim is borne out.
- 1.22 Continuing national coverage regarding pressures on hospitals, well-established benefits of people being at home, and the anticipated rise in the number of people aged 65 and over (the main demographic for reablement support) are all elements which emphasise the importance of services like reablement. Managing the flow of those leaving hospitals can be challenging enough given resource limitations, and widening this type of support to help avoid admittance to hospital in the first place will inevitably provide a further stress on the existing service. Whilst the true value of social care is clearly reflected in provision such as reablement, the ambition to widen access (potentially to a 24/7 model and including those with a mental health need, autism or learning disability) will require a significant commitment in terms of funding, and indeed staffing, to make the maximum amount of difference to the wider system and, even more importantly, the individuals and their families / carers whose lives are clearly enhanced by drawing on such services.



## **Recommendations**

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) **The NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB):**
  - a) **provides a summary on the gap analysis of the NHS England good practice guidance for ICBs (commissioners and providers) titled '*Intermediate care framework for rehabilitation, reablement and recovery following hospital discharge*' (2023), along with assurance on how it and its partners will be addressing any identified issues (e.g. a self-assessment by all relevant organisations within the health and care 'system').**
  - b) **more explicitly outlines the role and importance of reablement services (within the context of the overall health and care 'system') in future iterations of its overarching integrated care strategy.**
- 2) **North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) reviews its discharge processes to ensure that eligible individuals who are ready to leave hospital are made fully aware of local reablement provision and are referred to it upon discharge from hospital.**
- 3) **Principal links / contacts for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC), NTHFT and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in relation to local reablement provision are identified / confirmed and shared in order to improve communication between key partners.**
- 4) **SBC and NTHFT establish required person-centred information on an individual when a referral is made into the SBC Reablement Service.**
- 5) **Regarding the future local reablement offer, SBC:**
  - a) **provides a summary of any differences in the findings of the Peopletoo review and reablement-related commentary from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following its late-2024 inspection of SBC adult social care services.**
  - b) **confirms further planned changes to existing service delivery (structures, workforce) and the funding required to support this, and provides assurance on appropriate training uptake for new and existing staff.**
  - c) **explores whether any of its existing social care workforce outside the current SBC Reablement Service structure (e.g. Community Support Workers) can be utilised to increase staffing capacity for reablement provision.**
- 6) **SBC considers cost-effective options (and the communication of these) for individuals leaving the SBC Reablement Service to ensure a smooth transition from this initial support.**

*(continued overleaf...)*

**Recommendations (continued)**

The Committee recommend that:

- 7) To increase public understanding of the Borough's reablement offer:**
  - a) SBC and its partners assure themselves that they are adhering to the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) '*Supporting client and family engagement with reablement*' (2024) guidance, utilising this resource to effectively raise awareness and promote the Borough's reablement offer.**
  - b) SBC undertakes a joint communications campaign (repeated on a periodic basis) with NTHFT and the VCSE sector around local reablement services, making it clear what they involve, how they are accessed (including contact details), and the principal benefits.**
- 8) Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees be asked to consider facilitating a public survey in 2026 to establish the availability of information on the local reablement offer for those who had spent time in hospital and the experiences of those who had received support from the service.**

## Place Select Committee

# Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Services

## Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Place Select Committee's Scrutiny review of Muslim and Faith Burial provisions in Stockton-on-Tees Borough. The review aimed to assess the need from faith communities, the financial implications, and the operational requirements for the provision of burial chambers/vaults as an alternative to the standard grave plots. In addition, the review has considered the extension to the timing of burials.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory duty to provide suitable burial provision, and this is discharged through the provision of cemeteries in Billingham, Oxbridge, Durham Road, Thornaby and Egglescliffe. There are closed Jewish and Muslim sections within Oxbridge Cemetery, and two Muslim sections within Thornaby Cemetery with a 10-year capacity.
- 1.3 The 2021 Census showed that the 3.4% of the Borough's population identified as Muslim, and that while there were residents that identified as Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish and religions other than Christian, this was less than 2% of the population. In the Muslim and Jewish faith burials are custom. Cremation is preferred by Hindu Sikh and Buddhist faiths, while both burial and cremation are widely accepted practices within the Christian faith, which 51.1% of Borough's population identified as. Between January 2020 and December 2024 there had been:
  - 0 Jewish burials
  - 85 Muslim burials
  - 233 Roman Catholic burials
  - 380 Church of England Burials
  - 1,666 burials where faith was unknown
- 1.4 Requests can be made for burials to take place on the same day and on a weekend, and the team work with funeral directors to ensure this happens. While it is usually the Muslim community that request a same day burial, a person of any faith can make this request. Staff shifts are 8am – 4pm and they have other operational duties to maintain grounds during their shift. Burials take place between 9.30am – 2.45pm March to October and 9.30am – 2pm November to February, and the only days burials do not take place are Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. Paperwork needs to be received by 11am on a Saturday for same day burial and 5pm on a Saturday for a Sunday burial. Requests have been received for later funerals, and these are considered but dependent on staff accepting overtime to conduct the burial. To extend the timing for burials on a permanent basis will require an operational review to ensure it is feasible.
- 1.5 Issues with settlement of graves is universal across all sections of all cemeteries, and soil must be topped up on newly buried graves in every section. The water table is low in the

Borough and the climate and terrain means the burial team work up to the point of burial to ensure water is pumped out of plots but, once the grave is filled, water will find its way back. Investment has taken place in new sections of the Borough's cemeteries to improve drainage; however, as it cannot be carried out on established sections, the older Muslim section in Thornaby does not have the new drainage system.

- 1.6 The Committee received evidence from two local funeral directors that conduct burials for the Muslim Community within the Borough, along with faith leaders from several Mosques both within the Borough and neighbouring Middlesbrough. It is custom for burials to take place within 24 hours of the death, and the body touches the ground when buried. Family members will fill the burial plots themselves, and while there is no requirement in Islam for chambers/rings, these are a preference for some branches of the religion. Concerns were raised with both the use of chambers/rings creating problems with plots being filled with water and the extra cost being passed on to a family, putting extra pressure on them at a time they are experiencing grief. It is felt by some of the representatives who attended that there is not a demand in the community they serve for burial chambers/rings.
- 1.7 Members also heard opposing views that there is a demand for burial chambers and the preferred option of those advocating for chamber is concrete burials rings, which allows for the body to still touch the ground. Those proposing concrete burial rings believe the extra cost is affordable for families and that the wooden frames currently used are not fit for purpose as they have a tendency to collapse due to the water levels in the ground. It was added that it is their belief a burial ring is a way to uphold respect for the deceased which is a priority for burial in Islam.
- 1.8 Both funeral directors requested that the timing for burials be extended past 2.30pm to assist in arranging funerals on the same day.
- 1.9 As noted above, wooden frames are currently offered by the Council. These are low cost but lack durability. The purchase of Right of Burial costs is £1,030 plus £790 for the burial fee with the wooden frame provided in the fee. Other options include:
  - Concrete Vaults which can be pre-installed. These are durable but expensive, costing approximately £20,000 for 16 vaults, and have drainage issues with the likelihood of the chamber filling with water.
  - Concrete Burial Rings which have four sides and a lid but no bottom. They are the preferred option for those who are requesting burial chamber and are pre-installed. There are still drainage issues, with the water coming into the chamber from underneath the ring, however, they pose less of an issue for drainage than vaults. Burial rings are costly to install, with an estimated £21,280 for 16 rings or £14,740 for 10 rings.
  - Plastic Chambers, which are affordable at £450 a chamber but less resilient.
- 1.10 Costs for burial chambers and rings could increase burial fees significantly, with weekend surcharges further raising costs. The preferred option of concrete burial rings will increase the fee to an estimated £3,150 or £3,294 if buried on a weekend if 16 rings are installed, or an estimated £3,700-£3,844 if 10 rings are installed. They will need to be installed in rows with appropriate drainage and are not able to be fitted in any existing pre-paid plot. The rings will assist with settlement as the earth is only settling on a concrete slab lid, however it is not possible to make the plots watertight due to the low water table, climate and terrain.
- 1.11 Middlesbrough Borough Council (BC) installed burial chambers approximately 25 years ago but there had been no demand for these. Approximately three years ago they took the decision to use the burial chambers, at no extra cost for families, for weekend burials only with no option of a regular burial plot, to enable them to respond to requests quickly. In this time 12 of the 38 chambers have been used. Middlesbrough BC have faced issues with the chambers collecting water and have broken out the bottom of the chambers to change them to rings. They have also received comments that the chambers

are too close together and therefore have skipped chambers to create more space between burial plots. Middlesbrough BC have received requests to revert to using non-chamber burial plots.

- 1.12 The Council's CIPFA neighbours who also offer burial chambers in their cemeteries have been contacted to share their experience and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) responded. Both Councils have a larger Muslim community to SBC and therefore carry out more Muslim burials. Almost half of all Muslim graves in Rotherham MBC have used burial chambers, with only a minority of earthen graves being chosen. Tameside MBC have vaults available to install in any of their eight cemeteries, however only one vault has been installed in the last 12 months, on the family's request. Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC), who also have a larger Muslim population, has been contacted following community leaders raising them as an example. They have used a variety of chambers including breeze block vaults and concrete vaults/rings. Due to funding, they are now considering self-install shells. They also offer a wooden shoring option too.
- 1.13 The Committee, therefore, recognises the need for a balanced approach that respects cultural and religious practices while ensuring financial and operational sustainability. The recommendations focus on extending burial provision by offering a small number of burial rings as an optional service for those who prefer them, while maintaining traditional soil burials as the standard option. Rings are recommended rather than chambers as, although issues with drainage and settlement cannot be eliminated in the Borough's cemeteries, these possess less of an issue than chamber would. The Committee believe that further investigation into the feasibility and benefit that would be added by extending burial hours, as requested by contributors to the review, is required by officers.
- 1.14 By implementing this measure, the Council can enhance its burial services, demonstrating sensitivity to the Borough's diverse communities while maintaining financial and operational efficiency.

## Recommendations

- 1.15 The Committee recommends that:
1. To extend choice within the Borough's burial provision, a minimum of 10 concrete burial rings with the appropriate drainage are installed in the Muslim section of Thornaby cemetery. This should be an optional offer at an additional cost to those purchasing the plot. The number of burial rings installed may be extended if there is a greater demand for pre-purchasing these.
  2. Officers carry out a further review of the operational feasibility of extending burial hours.

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## REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 NOVEMBER 2025

## REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

# SCRUTINY OF CRUSTACEAN DEATHS

### Summary

The report presents the revised terms of reference for the joint scrutiny Crustaceans Working Group, which aims to monitor the implementation of the Groups final recommendations.

### Recommendations

Executive Scrutiny Committee are asked to indicate if they wish to continue to participate in Crustaceans Working Group and, if so, appoint a representative to attend meetings of the informal Group with appropriate officer support.

### Detail

1. At the Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council meeting held on the 14 July 2022, a motion was passed regarding the mass mortality crustacean event that occurred along the length of the Tees coastline. The motion was as follows:

*MOVED by Councillor Carl Quartermain and duly seconded by Councillor Thomson:-*

*“Redcar & Cleveland Council believes that much more needs to be done to investigate the reasons for the mass death of sea creatures found on our coast in the latter part of 2021 and more recently.*

*Redcar & Cleveland Council also believes much more support should be given to our local fishing industry which has been adversely affected by the consequent radical reduction in fishing stock.*

*Since October last year dead crustaceans have been found on our beaches along with, the possibly associated, deaths of seal pups and porpoises.*

*The report of the Government Joint agency investigation into Teesside and Yorkshire Coast Crab and Lobster mortalities was published in May 2022 and concluded that as healthy crabs and lobsters were now being found the investigation was closed.*

*Redcar & Cleveland Council believes:*

1. *The decision to close the investigation was premature and demands that the Government re-open it as a matter of urgency to consider why the crustacean deaths.*

2. *The Tees Valley local authorities should work together in expressing concern to central government and commission a new independent report in the light of the inconclusive evidence. In addition, the ongoing situation should be monitored by a special Scrutiny Committee from each local authority.*
  3. *That the Government proposal to give support to the local fishing industry via the existing Seafood Fund is inadequate and calls on them to provide proper compensation for the lost income and livelihoods caused by this crisis.*
  4. *That the possibility of creating a coastal hatchery to replenish crustacean stocks should be investigated.”*
2. At meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee on 15 November 2022 it was agreed to appoint a representative to the informal Working Group to support Tees Valley colleagues. The Chair of Place Select Committee was appointed as the most appropriate Member to represent Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
  3. The Working Group concluded their investigation and agreed their final report in June 2025. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the causes, impacts, and responses to the incidents in 2021/2022. While there is no definitive conclusion for the incident, the Working Group have established that there are a significant variety of factors working both independently and also collectively which influence water quality, be it sea or river. Nine recommendations were agreed for relevant organisations and agencies aimed at improving environmental monitoring, supporting affected industries, and strengthening collaboration among stakeholders.
  4. The Working Group met informally in July 2025 to discuss promotion of the report and the future of the Group. Several representatives expressed their wish to continue the work of the Group and therefore the terms of reference have been revised, attached at **appendix 1**. The Groups new remit is to monitor the implementation of the recommendations, liaising with key stakeholders and lobbying relevant decision makers, for a period of 12 months.

### **Financial and Legal Implications (optional)**

5. No financial and legal implications are identified at this stage.

### **Risk Assessment (optional)**

6. This report 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**

7. Not ward specific

### **Background Papers**

8. None

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## Monitoring Working Group –Terms of Reference

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Monitoring Working Group is for the partner Councils to work collaboratively to monitor implementation of recommendations contained in the report of the Crustacean Deaths Working Group.

### 2. Aims of the Monitoring Working Group

- 2.1 The key aims of the Group are as follows:

- To liaise with key stakeholders To understand how the recommendations outlined in the report of the Crustacean Deaths Working Group are being implemented

- 2.2 The key activities and deliverables are likely to include, but are not limited to:

- To proactively monitor progress with the implementation of the portfolio of recommendations made by the Crustacean Deaths Working Group; key milestones, risks, slippage or other potential issues. This will include liaising with relevant stakeholders to request updates on progress against the recommendations.
- Lobbying of relevant decision makers.

### 3. Working Group Administration Arrangements

- 3.1 The Chair and Vice Chair shall be agreed at the first meeting of the monitoring working group.

- 3.3 The organisation and facilitation of the working group meetings will be carried out by the Democratic Services Section of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. This will include providing secretariat support to the working group in terms of meeting organisation, minute taking, and recording and monitoring issues through the working group issues logs.

- 3.4 Meetings to be held virtually and in person, at the discretion of the Chair and Vice-Chair and dependant on the focus and function of the meeting. The dates and times of meetings to be determined by the working group

- 3.5 Meetings to be held in public, with the group reserving the right to meet in private where a witness or the work demands.

- 3.6 The working group can invite partners from external organisations to share information.

#### 4. Timescales

- 4.1 The work of the monitoring group will be limited to 12 months with quarterly meetings taking place between September 2025 and September 2026.

#### 5. Membership

- 5.1 Each Council can nominate up to four Members to attend the working group plus one officer. Other officers or external parties can be invited to join, with the approval of the working group.

#### 6. Conflict of Interest

- 6.1 Any member of the working group shall declare any conflict of interest which might arise at the start of the meeting and shall then withdraw and take no part in the relevant discussion and/or any decision relating to it.

**Statutory Forward Plan**

**Key Decisions**

**31 October 2025 - 30 June 2026**

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
<b>Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy</b> The report to Council to set the Council's budget and Council tax for 2026/27 and approve the Medium Term Financial Plan.  Key Para No	Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance	Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport	Council	18 Feb 2026	All Members of the Council.	Members briefings and meetings will be held with Councillors.	clare.harper@stoc kton.gov.uk  clare.harper@stoc kton.gov.uk		

## 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 the Children and Young People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of HAF (Executive Summary for information)	Judy Trainer
	Final Report of the 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	Call in Outdoor Play Provision	
	Call in Children's Residential Homes	
	Scrutiny – Overview and Performance	Geraldine Brown
16 December	MTFP Quarter 2	Clare Harper
	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Public Report	Ged Morton
	Crustaceans Death Working Group – Monitoring Group Terms of Reference	Jonathan Nertney
	Final Report of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Reablement Service (Executive Summary for Information)	Gary Woods
	Final Report of the Place Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Muslim and Faith Burial Provision (Executive Summary for information)	Michelle Gunn

20 January	Final Report of the People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working in Early Help (Executive Summary for Information)	Michelle Gunn
17 March	Scrutiny Work Programme 2026/27 – Selection of In-Depth Scrutiny Reviews  Final Report of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Adult Carers Support Service (Executive Summary for Information)	Jonathan Nertney  Gary Woods

**Regular Reports**

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