Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL
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Council

Agenda

Date:
Wednesday 21 January 2026 at 6.00 pm

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

Agenda

1. **Welcome and Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 10)
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes** (Pages 11 - 24)

   To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 19 November 2026.
5. **Public Question Time** (Pages 25 - 26)
6. **Petition - Stop Further Housing Developments in Yarm** (Pages 27 - 32)
7. **Appointments to Committees for 2026/27** (Pages 33 - 34)
8. **Article 4 Direction - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)** (Pages 35 - 42)
9. **Director of Public Health Report 2025** (Pages 43 - 62)
10. **Members' Question Time** (Pages 63 - 74)
11. **Motions to Council** (Pages 75 - 84)
12. **Forward Plan and Leader's Statement**

Jonathan Nertney
Head of Democratic Services
Tuesday 13 January 2026

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

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Key – Declarable interests are :-

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

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

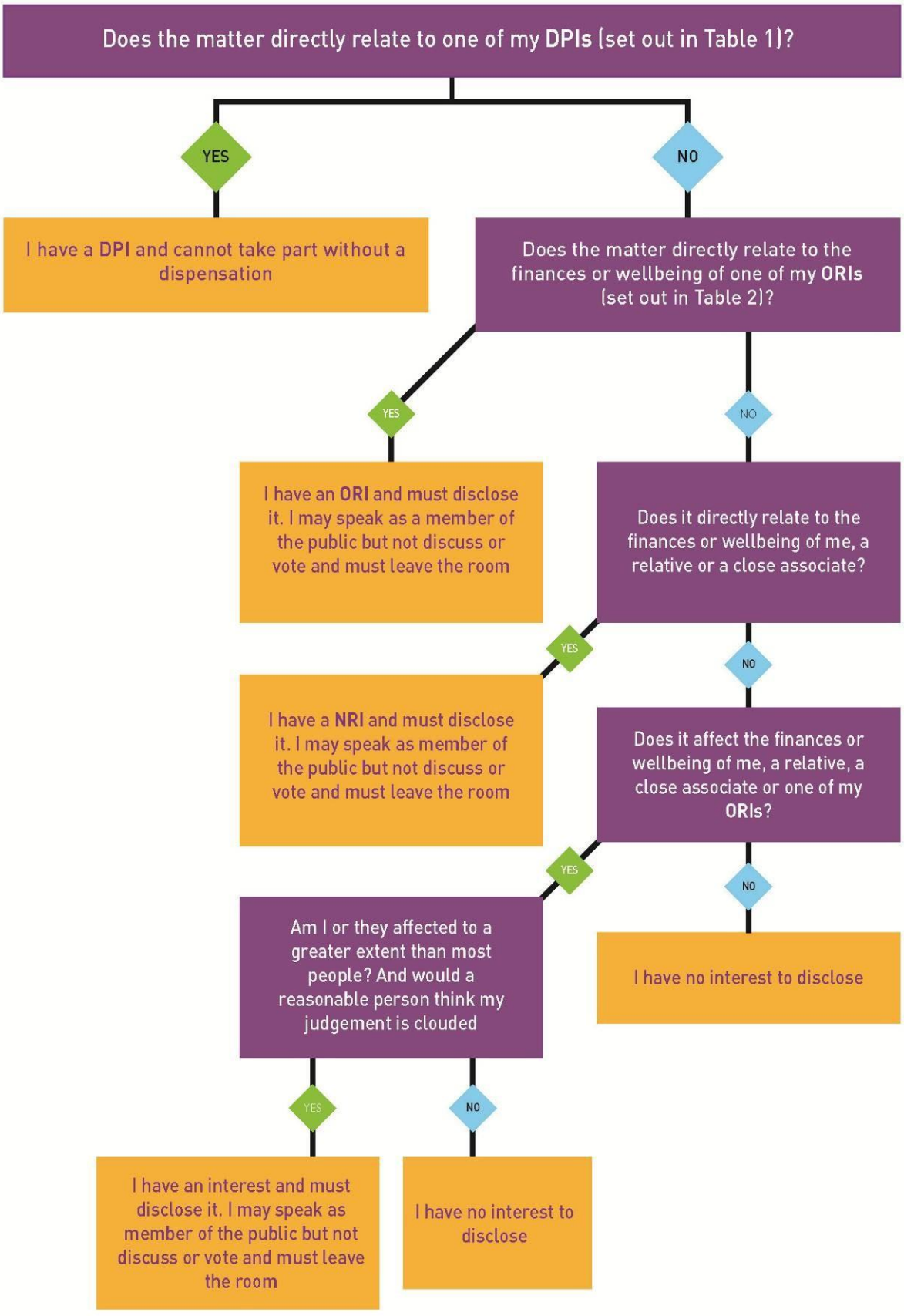

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Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

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

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

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Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

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

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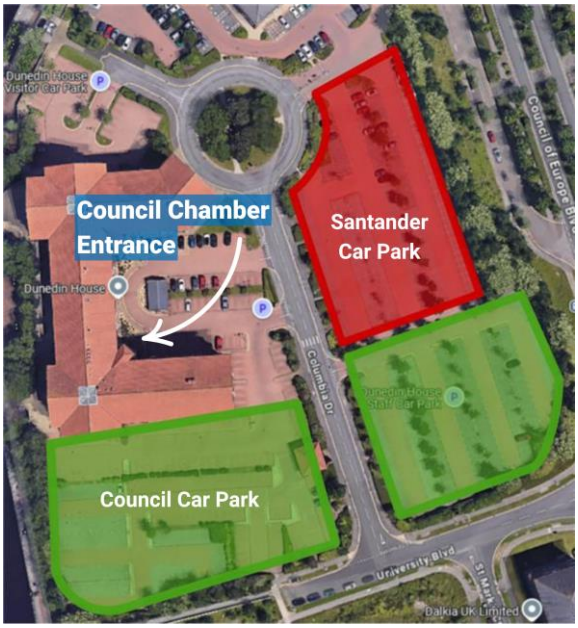
Council Chamber, Dunedin House
Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

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.

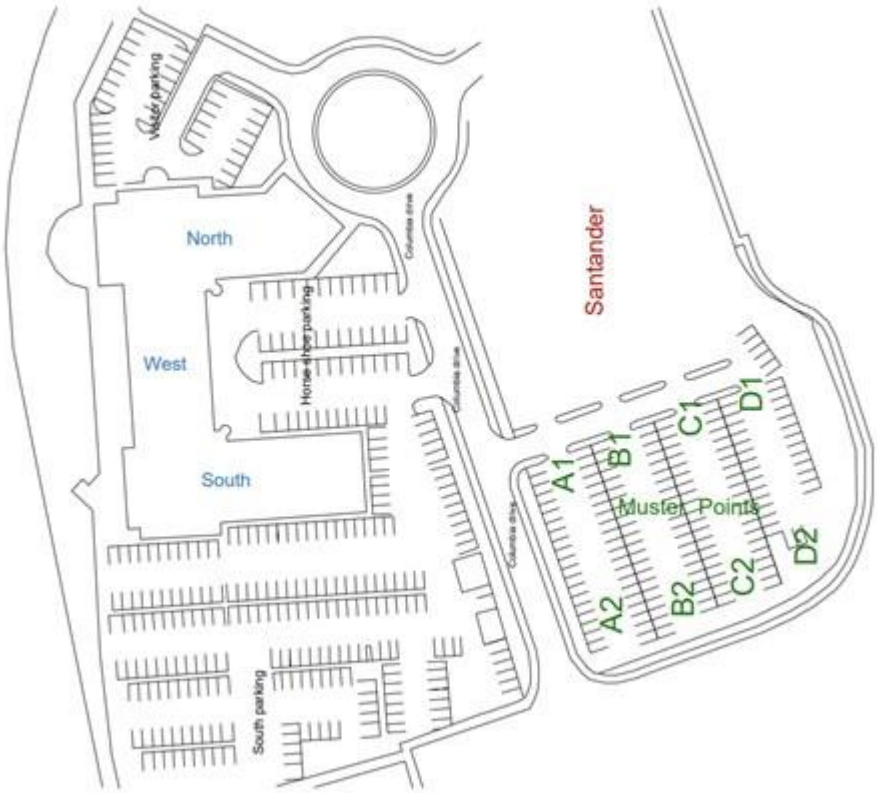
The emergency exits are located via the doors on either side of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber.

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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Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday 19th November 2025.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Stephen Richardson)
Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Weston, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Mike Greene, Majella McCarthy, Carolyn Nice, Marc Stephenson, Tracey Carter, Clare Harper, Roisin McKenzie, Aishah Waithe, Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Kirsty Grundy, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell, Sarah Whaley, John Devine and Junita Agyapong

Also in attendance: Press and Public

Apologies: Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Jason French, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Tony Riordan and Cllr Jim Taylor

COU/56/25 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone and outlined the arrangements for the meeting.

COU/57/25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shakeel Hussain declared an Other Registerable Interest in item 6 as Chair of Eid Fusion Committee and withdrew from the meeting for that item, taking no part in the discussion and voting.

Councillor Ted Strike declared an Other Registerable Interest in item 6 as Chairman and Founder of Ingleby Barwick Community Partnership and withdrew from the meeting for that item taking no part in the discussion and voting.

Councillors Michelle Benedelow, Clare Besford, Marc Besford, Ann McCoy and Mick Stoker declared an Other Registerable Interest in item 6 as Members of Billingham Town Council and withdrew from the meeting for that item taking no part in the discussion and voting.

Councillor Richard Eglington declared an Other Registerable Interest in item 6 as a Member of Thornaby Town Council and withdrew from the meeting for that item taking no part in the discussion or voting.

Councillors Sylvia Walmsley, Ray Godwin, Ian Dalgarno and Mick Moore declared a non-prejudicial interest in item 6 as Members of Thornaby Town Council.

COU/58/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

COU/59/25 Public Question Time

Question 1

A Public Question had been submitted by Robert Bussey and subsequently withdrawn.

Question 2

A Public Question had been submitted by Alan Snead. However, Mr Snead was not present at the meeting therefore it was advised that a written reply would be sent to him.

Question 3

The following question was submitted by John McDermottroe:

“What due diligence, if any was carried out before purchasing Debenhams on the high street? Was a survey carried out? Was an appraisal of refurb costs done? Was a GDV sought from a suitable professional? Is this building to become yet another money pit for the Tax payers of the Borough of Stockton?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“The High Street portion of the former Debenhams store (150-152 High Street) was made available for acquisition through auction in 2023, with a limited information pack on the building issued by the seller at the time. Whilst the building was acquired outside of an auction process, the timescales involved in securing the building and approach taken by the seller meant that there wasn’t opportunity to undertake any surveys of the building prior to acquisition, beyond the information offered by the seller at the time. The power, intruder alarm and fire alarm controls for the entire building are located in the front half of the former Debenhams meaning that control of the front portion of the building was critical for any occupation and indeed safe access to the rear portion.

Since acquisition the Council has undertaken measured surveys of the entire building, Mechanical and Electrical Surveys and an Asbestos Survey.
Cabinet have agreed funds to develop long term options for the future use of Debenhams which will explore the potential for Debenhams to once again play an important role in the high street. Ideas are being developed that will realise the potential for Debenhams to play a crucial role at the heart of the health pathfinder and Pride in Place trailblazer which will breathe new life into Stockton Town Centre. When these proposals have been fully developed, they will be considered by the Council."

John McDermottroe asked the following supplementary question:

"Given that rules of property investment have not been carried out, will the Council take advice from professionals in the future?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

"Due diligence was carried out as far as we could."

COU/60/25 Consent Street Trading - Petition - Exemption of Local and Community Markets

Consideration was given to a petition calling for exemptions from the requirement to apply for a street trading consent.

It was moved by Councillor Norma Stephenson, seconded by Councillor Naill Innes and

RESOLVED

That the petition be referred to General Licensing Committee for further consideration.

COU/61/25 Appointments to Council Committees/ Panels

Consideration was given to a report asking the Council to approve the appointments to Committees which remained with the Conservative Group's entitlement following the resignation of a Council member. The report also highlighted a vacancy on Place Select Committee. The Ingleby Barwick Independents Society were entitled to the seat but would not be taking up their entitlement at the present time.

RESOLVED

1) That Council confirms the following appointments to vacancies as nominated by the Conservative Group:

    - Executive Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Hugo Stratton
    - Audit and Governance Committee – Councillor Niall Innes
    - Members' Advisory Panel – Councillor Niall Innes

2) That Councillor Ted Strike be appointed to the vacancy on Place Select Committee.

COU/62/25 Appointment of Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer)

Consideration was given to a report asking Council to make a permanent designation to the statutory officer responsible for the proper administration of the authority's financial affairs.

RESOLVED that Council:

1) Note that interim arrangements were approved by Council on 21 May 2025, designating Clare Harper as Acting Section 151 Officer.

2) Approve the permanent designation of Clare Harper as the officer responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

3) Confirm that the post shall be styled Chief Finance Officer and that the role shall continue to report directly to the Chief Executive, with access to the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

4) Authorise the Chief Executive to make any consequential amendments to the Council's officer structure, constitution and published organisational charts to reflect this appointment.

COU/63/25 Anti Racism Charter

Consideration was given to a report recommending the adoption of the Anti-Racism Charter and inviting the Mayor, Leader and Chief Executive to sign the Charter on behalf of the Council, together with the Lead of the Employee Race Equality Network and Trade Union representatives signing on behalf of employees.

An addendum to the report was circulated to Members with an additional recommendation from Cabinet proposing that all Members complete Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training at least once every two years, or more frequently if required under the Council's mandatory training policy for Members.

RESOLVED that Council:

1) Adopt the Anti-Racism Charter (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) as a statement of the Council's corporate commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

2) Authorise the Mayor, Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to sign the Charter on behalf of the Council at the meeting of Full Council, alongside the Lead of the Employee Race Equality Network and Trade Union representatives signing on behalf of employees.

3) Note that implementation of the Charter will be overseen through the officer led Colleagues Powering Our Futures Board, with progress reported to Cabinet after twelve months.

4) Ensure that all Members of the Council complete Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training at least once every two years, or more frequently if required under the Council's mandatory training policy for Members.

COU/64/25 Corporate Parenting Pledge

Consideration was given to a report seeking Council approval to reaffirm its collective commitment to the Stockton-on-Tees Corporate Parenting Pledge – "Our Promise to You". The Pledge outlined the promises made by the Council to children in our care and to care leavers, reflecting the Council's shared responsibilities as corporate parents.

The Leader joined the Mayor in the signing of the Pledge and all Members would be invited to sign the Pledge following the meeting.

RESOLVED

That Council re-endorses the Stockton-on-Tees Corporate Parenting Pledge (Our Promise to You) and confirms its ongoing collective commitment to the promises made to children in our care and to care leavers.

COU/65/25 Motions to Council

It was moved by Councillor Ted Strike and seconded by Councillor Niall Innes:

"Council notes that the former Debenhams building was acquired at auction as part of the town-centre regeneration programme, and that essential mechanical, electrical, and asbestos-related works have been identified following structural surveys.

Council further notes that the total cost of refurbishment will depend on the nature of future occupiers and intended uses for the building. Cabinet has authorised from the allocation of £6.5 million from the Powering Our Future regeneration fund approval to create an enabling budget to develop options and engage the market in opportunities to bring the former Debenhams building back into occupation.

In addition, whilst Council notes that decisions regarding expenditure and redevelopment of the building fall within the remit of executive functions given the building's prominence and the scale of potential investment, Council believes that Members and residents should be provided with clear, timely information about the financial implications and associated risks as these proposals progress.

Council recalls the experience of the Globe Theatre project, where costs escalated significantly over time, and emphasises the importance of applying lessons learned, particularly around cost control, transparency, and governance to the Debenhams scheme.

Council also notes that the relevant Place Select Committee will be undertaking a review of Capital Programme Governance. Council believes this review presents a valuable opportunity for constructive challenge, assurance, and learning in relation to the management of major capital projects.

Council therefore resolves to request that Cabinet:

1) Give full consideration to the findings and recommendations of the Place Select Committee's review before making any final decisions on significant capital investment in the former Debenhams building;

2) Provide a formal public update to Full Council outlining emerging options, indicative costs, and associated risks once feasibility work has progressed;

3) Ensure that Members' views expressed in Full Council are actively considered in the development and delivery of the project, and that progress updates are brought back to Full Council at key milestones, enabling further debate and scrutiny by elected Members;

4) Recognise that Full Council sets the Council's overall budget, and that understanding how that budget is being deployed, particularly in relation to major regeneration schemes, is a vital part of democratic oversight and accountability.

Council further resolves to request that:

5) The Place Select Committee be invited to undertake a focused review of the financial implications and governance arrangements for the Debenhams project and report its findings to Cabinet and Full Council to inform future decision-making."

On being put to the vote, the motion was not passed.

COU/66/25 Members' Question Time

Question 1

The following question was submitted by Councillor Carol Clark:

"Does the Leader agree with me that the several national awards the council has been nominated for this year is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:

"Thank you for your question Cllr Clark.

Whether it is national award recognition, our Stars Awards or our Annual Council Awards, we need to celebrate our staff achievements. Our staff are our greatest asset. They do an excellent job and their commitment, passion and dedication to our residents cannot go unnoticed.

This year we were lucky to be shortlisted for three national awards as Council of the Year. This gave us national recognition and an opportunity to thank our staff. We have then had individual members shortlisted and where our staff or services are nominated for awards, we do support their attendance.

The costs are modest but the benefits are significant both in recognising the contribution of the workforce and also supporting recruitment and retention in a very challenging market.

Ultimately it is an opportunity for us to demonstrate our appreciation and pride in our staff."

Councillor Carol Clark asked the following supplementary question:

“Does the Leader agree that with the considerable workload and pressures on our staff, the awards provide an opportunity for us to show our staff how valued they are?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“It is important to show our appreciation and thanks to staff as often as we can. This week I have spent time with staff individually and every time that I am in the office, I go out of my way to walk through the different neighbourhoods to ensure that our staff see me on a regular basis. We need to show our appreciation for what they do every day in these difficult and challenging times.”

Question 2

The following question was submitted by Councillor Barbara Inman:

“Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the regeneration scheme in Yarm following the announcement that it will be paused for further consultation?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“Consultation on the proposed works will be undertaken to establish a final position on local views of the scheme. This will commence on the 24 November and run for a month. Residents will be able to express their views using online paper and in person consultation. Once complete, the results will be considered by Cabinet before any decision is made on delivery.

I want to confirm that local views will be listened to and I reiterate the commitment made previously that works will not proceed if this is something that local people do not want.”

Question 3

The following question was submitted by Councillor Marc Besford:

“Following the publication of the CQC Report rating this council’s adult services as ‘Good’, will the cabinet member join me in commending the hard work of all our staff which has been recognised in the report?”

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care responded with:

“Thank you for your question.

I am delighted that the Care Quality Commission Inspectors recognised amongst other factors in their report the dedication of our Adult Social Care staff, and what is being done well to support residents across the Borough.

As you are aware our Adult Social Care Service provides a range of support to residents and carers whose needs arise from, or are related to, a physical or mental impairment or illness which makes them unable to manage daily life and is likely to impact on their wellbeing.

To have our Adult Care assessment services recognised as being good is indeed testament to the hard work of all our staff the leadership team and partners to ensure people are well supported and kept safe. The report acknowledged the staff's dedication and commitment, alongside a clear vision through Powering our Future, strong and visible leadership and strong partnership working together for the people of Stockton on Tees.

We are immensely proud of this official recognition, but we, and this includes the staff, are not complacent. We knew there were areas where we needed to do more work and had already, in some cases instigated by members of staff, introduced plans to address these. We are moving on quickly in our continuous journey of improvement, taking into account comments in the report.

In summary, I am exceptionally proud of our staff, the comments in the report and gladly join you in commending their hard work. There is much to celebrate and be proud of including the many external awards staff get nominated for whilst ensuring they continue the hard work, they do to deliver good outcomes for local people when they need it most."

Question 4

The following question was submitted by Councillor Nathan Gale:

"Can the cabinet member update the council on the ongoing review into car parking in Stockton and Yarm?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

"Thank you for your question.

One of the strengths of our Borough is the unique towns that make it up. As an administration, we are committed to ensuring that every penny of taxpayers' money is spent wisely, whilst doing all that we can play our part in promoting and supporting local businesses. This is why we have invested in our town centres in recent years and continue to do so.

Stockton High Street and Yarm High Street both have a proud history and continue to provide a unique offer today. In Yarm there are many unique small shops alongside many great food and beverage outlets. In Stockton you can find outstanding micropubs, several fantastic entertainment venues and businesses that offer a range of goods and services. As we approach the opening of the Riverside Urban Park, this nationally recognised trailblazing scheme will offer something new.

Many visitors of Yarm and Stockton travel there by car therefore it is vital that we provide a competitive car parking offer. As Members will be aware, car parking in Yarm and Stockton was reviewed last year as part of the Council's transformation programme. A series of reviews needed to deal with 14 years of cuts by the previous Conservative government that resulted in a loss of over £1 billion of funding in real terms.

Parking charges were changed in Stockton and Yarm to £1.50 for 3 hours, a competitive price when compared to other High Streets and equivalent locations. At the time of the decision, the then Cabinet agreed that the decision would be reviewed within 12 months. Earlier this year, following the instruction of the Leader of the Council, Cabinet brought this forward and agreed to a wide-ranging review of the impact.

A widely publicised public consultation was carried out over the summer and winter. In total we received 5,169 responses. Of the respondents, 18% visited just Stockton, 29% just Yarm and 51% both. The responses to the consultation came from both users of the high streets, and the businesses that trade there. The Leader and I have met with a range of stakeholders including visitors, business owners, leisure groups, residents and local ward councillors in both wards impacted.

In addition to the public consultation, other information has been collected including footfall, dwell time and ticket sales. All of which has been included in the review. The information collected is currently under discussion and we are working towards recommendations. As things stand, we are on track to bring a report to Cabinet next month.

Can I also take the opportunity to remind all Members and the public that a free one-hour parking period has been reintroduced for the Christmas period beginning next week until the end of January giving support to businesses in Stockton and Yarm throughout the busiest trading period of the year."

Councillor Nathan Gale asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you for the update on car parking charges, however, this is just one piece of the puzzle. Can the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member confirm that the Council will continue to invest in our Town Centres?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport responded with:

"We are committed to investing in our Town Centres and have created a dedicated budget to achieve this."

Question 5

The following question was submitted by Councillor Eileen Johnson:

"Recently I read a post from the management of the Hampton by Hilton Hotel in Stockton that they have just had their busiest September since opening with over a 90% occupancy rate. Does the cabinet member agree with me that the hotel is a fantastic asset for the town, and one that keeps going from strength to strength?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

"Thank you for your question and, yes, I completely agree that the Hampton by Hilton Hotel is a fantastic asset for our Borough and indeed the wider Tees Valley. As we set out to achieve when we first made the decision to make such bold investment in Stockton Town Centre, the hotel has filled a huge gap that existed in the market. The

business community have been consistent in their positive feedback of the hotel and the standard of service received and that is reflected in those impressive occupancy figures. In addition, the hotel's impact on the Town Centre both economically and in support of the events programme and cultural offering is equally pleasing to see."

Question 6

The following question was submitted by Councillor Ann McCoy:

"Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the progress being made in Stockton Town Centre, particularly in relation to the transformation programme, recent community safety initiatives, and the positive feedback received from residents, businesses and partners?"

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety responded with:

"Thank you for your question.

I am pleased to provide an update on the progress being made to ensure Stockton Town Centre is a safe and welcoming place both to visit and to do business.

The regeneration of Stockton Town Centre remains a key priority for the Council. Significant progress has been achieved under the Powering Our Future transformation programme, which is focused on creating a vibrant, welcoming environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. Recent work has included improvements to public spaces, enhanced accessibility, and preparations for the delivery of the new Urban Park, scheduled to open in Spring 2026. This project will provide a high-quality, inclusive space that supports community activity and economic growth.

Alongside the opening of the urban park, we recognise that the key to the success of this development will be ensuring those visiting and using the space feel safe. Our Community Safety Team along with our partners already undertake a significant amount of work in this area, as is the case across all of our communities. A key development has been Operation Shield (Op. Shield)—a multi-agency initiative designed to co-ordinate town centre safety in Stockton-on-Tees. Over the first six months of Op. Shield, we have achieved a reduction in reported crime and anti-social behaviour along with a 18% reduction in shop theft, contributing to a safer and more welcoming environment for visitors and local businesses.

Under Op. Shield, the 'Reducing the Strength' scheme was also launched to tackle alcohol-related harm and anti-social behaviour. This voluntary initiative asks retailers to stop selling high-strength beers, lagers, and ciders (above 6.5% ABV). To date, nine premises initially signed up, including major retailers such as Iceland, B&M Stores, Heron Foods, and local convenience stores, with additional businesses joining since launch. This strong level of participation demonstrates the commitment of local businesses to improving public safety.

While most businesses have embraced the scheme, we have taken robust enforcement action against those failing to align with licensing principles of public safety, ensuring compliance and protecting our residents.

Our Civic Enforcement Service continues to work closely with partners through a harm-reduction model, balancing enforcement with support for individuals facing complex needs, including substance misuse. This integrated approach is supported by outreach services and multi-agency collaboration.

So far feedback from residents and local businesses has been encouraging although we recognise that there is always more to do. Community engagement sessions and social listening indicate strong support for measures that improve safety and enhance the town centre experience. Initiatives such as CCTV deployment, improved cleansing, and community-led events have been well received, helping to build confidence and create a more welcoming environment. Partners have also expressed their commitment to working with us to deliver these improvements and ensure the town centre remains a thriving hub for all.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders to deliver on our shared vision for Stockton Town Centre to be a safe, inclusive, and vibrant space that reflects the needs and aspirations of our communities.

We are currently reviewing the PSPO's for Stockton Town Centre and Norton. We are currently briefing partners on the proposals and will be briefing all Members in the near future."

Question 7

The following question was submitted by Councillor Ted Strike:

"At the last council meeting a motion regarding the Shambles was passed unanimously asking the cabinet to consider future investment in the building, including refurbishment of the toilets. I appreciate that this motion will come back to cabinet in due course Could the Cabinet Member confirm that the motion will be taken into account at the appropriate point, and offer an indication, if possible of when cabinet will consider the Shambles so that the Council's resolution is not overlooked?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

"I can confirm that this motion is currently being considered. The Council's recently approved Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) sets the strategic direction for the management of the Council's land and property assets which includes both future maintenance and investment. I'm sure members will agree with me that the Shambles is a key part of the Town Centre offer and therefore needs to be considered alongside other assets. This Council has a long history of supporting local independent businesses in the Town Centre including through the funding Cabinet recently made available to provide smaller retail units and the on-going support for Fountains Shopping Mall featuring the Enterprise Arcade. In that context, future investment in the Shambles building, including the provision of the toilets, will be considered in due course by Cabinet alongside other appropriate measures."

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:

"The businesses in the Shambles received a bombshell letter a month ago. Since then the situation has changed dramatically. Have the Council informed them that their businesses are now safe?

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:

“Both the Leader and Deputy Leader phoned each business individually. Further dialogue and support will continue to be offered.”

Question 8

Councillor Jim Taylor had submitted a question but as he was absent from the meeting, under the Constitution, the question would be referred to the next Council meeting.

Question 9

Councillor Tony Riordan had submitted a question but as he was absent from the meeting, under the Constitution, the question would be referred to the next Council meeting.

Question 10

The following question was submitted by Councillor Shakeel Hussain:

“Between September 2024 and June 2025 almost 40,00 prisoners have been released early from their sentences under the present governments scheme. Further, in the year to March 2025, 262 prisoners have been released by mistake.

Can the Cabinet Member inform me how many of those prisoners, who were convicted of sex related offences, are now living in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees?”

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety responded with:

Councillor Shakeel Hussain asked the following supplementary question:

“Do we have measures in place to ensure that prisoners are not housed next door to vulnerable residents.”

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety responded with:

“That is the responsibility of the Probation Service. We do not have access to that information.”

Question 11

The following question was submitted by Councillor Niall Innes:

“Does the Leader agree that it is the residents and Council Taxpayers of Stockton who are the true judge of this Councils performance?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“Thank you for the question.

I absolutely agree that the residents and council taxpayers of Stockton are the ultimate judges of how well the Council performs. Their experience of our services, and the outcomes we deliver for the borough, are what matter most.

In forming that judgement, it is important that residents have access to a full and balanced picture. Commentary on social media or in political debate can sometimes give only a partial view. Independent assessment therefore plays a huge role in helping the public understand how their Council is actually performing.

External validation can come in different forms. Sometimes it is through national or professional awards, where the Council, its services or its staff are shortlisted or recognised for good practice. On other occasions it is through formal accreditation or inspection by regulatory bodies – for example, the Care Quality Commission independently assessing the quality of our adult social care practice.

Whether it is award recognition or regulatory endorsement, these are not promotional exercises. They provide objective evidence about the standard of work the Council is delivering, and they help residents form an informed view of performance.

Where staff or services are nominated for awards, we do support their attendance. The costs are modest, but the benefits are significant: recognising the contribution of our workforce, supporting recruitment and retention in a very challenging labour market, and showing that the work undertaken on behalf of residents meets high professional standards.

Ultimately, independent validation complements – but does not replace – the views of residents, who are and remain the most important judges of this Council’s performance.”

Councillor Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

“The cost of attending award ceremonies of £7,000 is not a modest amount. We see from the award ceremonies that officers on the ground are barely recognised. How can you justify attending?

The Leader of the Council responded with:

“Attendance is worth every penny. The feedback that I receive from our valued staff about attendance at awards is incredible. I hope that I demonstrate my appreciation every day but this is a special opportunity for them and, as Leader, I act on behalf of all Members in representing them. As mentioned before, the benefits are considerable and I would hope that if you ever lead this Council, you would give them the same courtesy of the same praise and commitment that I have. Many of our staff and their families are also our residents.

We have significantly reduced the costs of attending these events by getting our proud partners from across the Borough to sponsor tables. We have even travelled on a very

early train and come back on a very late train to reduce costs – a very long but rewarding day."

COU/67/25 Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

"Colleagues, thank you for attending Council tonight.

Our next Cabinet meeting is on 11 December, where the central item will be the Medium Term Financial Plan. Like councils across the country, we are awaiting the Government's settlement and further detail on the fair funding formula. We welcome the continued move towards a fairer and more transparent approach, but we are also realistic: it will not remove every pressure. We will still need to cut our cloth according to our means, manage costs responsibly, and protect the services our residents value most.

Those pressures are particularly acute in children's services and SEND, where demand continues to rise and where councils nationally are facing unprecedented challenges. We will continue to make the case for the resources our young people need and deserve.

At the same time, there is important good news. The CQC has assessed our adult services as Good overall — a significant achievement under a demanding inspection framework. It reflects the dedication and professionalism of our officers, our partners, and the Members who support and scrutinise this work. It is something the Borough can be proud of.

It is also good, on evenings like this, that we come together to reaffirm our collective commitment to our young people. The signing of the Corporate Parenting Pledge is a clear demonstration of that commitment — especially to those young people to whom we owe a particular duty as their corporate parent.

I also want to update Members on the work to live-stream our meetings. Full Council has already resolved to support live-streaming, Cabinet has endorsed that direction of travel, and we have now referred the proposals to the cross-party Members Advisory Panel. MAP will work through the remaining implementation details, particularly how we ensure compliance with the legal duties we hold — including the requirement to make our meetings accessible to all. I look forward to seeing this in place in the near future.

I am also looking forward to attending and presenting an award at the North East Culture Awards next week. This fabulous event showcases the infrastructure and diversity of our proud region. The awards are presented in partnership with the TVCA and I am delighted that these prestigious awards are being held in the equally prestigious Globe Theatre in Stockton which will showcase our fabulous venue to people from across the North East.

Finally, Stockton Sparkles begins on 27 November from 5pm, with the Christmas lights switch-on at around 6.30pm. I hope many of you will be able to experience the wonderful events we have on offer, as we begin the festive season together."

COUNCIL – 21 JANUARY 2026
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Public Question submitted by Eesa Din:

"What is the council's current plan, budget timeline, to improve insulation in poorly insulated homes, especially in deprived areas? How many homes does the council expect to upgrade per year, and what funding sources are being used?"

Received 25 November 2025 13:54

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Agenda Item 6

REPORT TO COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Petition - Stop further housing developments in Yarm

Summary

This report presents a petition calling to stop further housing development in Yarm. The purpose of this report is to provide background information and outline the appropriate options available to Council in responding to the petition, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and governance framework

Recommendations

That Council receives the petition and determines one of the following courses of action:

1. Note the petition and take no further action.
2. Refer the petition to the appropriate body for further consideration.

Detail

1. Receipt and Validation of the Petition

1.1 A petition titled "Stop further housing development in Yarm" was submitted to the Council by Yvonne Wallace, who is the lead petitioner. Following validation on 26th November 2025, in line with the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition was confirmed to contain approximately 2000 valid signatures, exceeding the 1,000-signature threshold set out in paragraph 5 of the Scheme for referral to a meeting of full Council.

1.2 The petition reads:

"Having lived in Yarm for the last 40 years, I've witnessed firsthand how the overdevelopment of our beloved town has strained its resources to breaking point. From the heart of a passionate resident and advocate for Yarm's sustainable future, I urge you to join me in calling for a halt to the construction of any more housing estates in our town.

For more than two decades, Yarm has been overwhelmed by numerous new housing developments. These projects, while intended to provide homes for growing populations, have inadvertently placed immense pressure on our local infrastructure. Schools are becoming overcrowded, and access to healthcare services has become

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increasingly difficult, with residents sometimes waiting weeks for a simple doctor's appointment.

Our roads, once tranquil, are now a constant source of frustration, infested with traffic congestion. Peak hours have become a ordeal, with gridlocks prompting exasperation among commuters and causing disruptions to daily life. The charm of our town is slowly eroding under the weight of overpopulation, and the very characteristics that make Yarm unique and desirable are under threat.

The local council and Stockton Borough Council must recognise that Yarm cannot sustain further housing expansions without significant and immediate investment in infrastructure. We need a comprehensive evaluation of what Yarm realistically can handle, taking into account the capacity of our schools, medical facilities, and transportation networks.

Let us protect what makes Yarm special. It's time for our voice to be heard before it's too late. We must advocate responsible development that honors the town's capacity and prioritises the welfare of its current residents.

Please sign this petition if you, too, want to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for Yarm without further unnecessary housing developments."

1.3 In accordance with the Petition Scheme, the petition organiser (or their representative) will be given five minutes to present the petition at the Council meeting. The petition may then be debated by councillors for a maximum of 30 minutes, following which Council will determine how to respond.

2. Background

Policy

2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 enshrine the duty of all Local Authorities to develop spatial plans (Local Plans) for their administrative area and to determine applications for development or change of use across that area, in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations, such as the nationally set National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) indicate otherwise.

3. Local Plan

3.1 The Stockton on Tees Local Plan 2019 -32 was agreed by full council in January 2019. The Local Plan sets out the Council's policies and proposals to guide planning decisions and establishes the framework for the sustainable growth and development of the Borough up to 2032. It covers a range of matters including the number of new homes that are needed and where they should be located; the amount and proposed location of new employment land; protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment; provision of new infrastructure and improvement of town centres and community facilities in the Borough.

3.2 As with any long-term plan, certainty is greater in the early years of a plan and to reflect this, the local plan was reviewed in 2024 establishing that a new Local Plan is required. However, intervening amendments to the NPPF have made a number of changes to the Local Planning regime, changes to the process for submission and agreement, the introduction of mandatory housing targets and the forthcoming establishment of a range of national policies that will need to be taken into account in the setting of a new plan. The council are still awaiting the detailed guidance to define these policies before commencing the new local plan.

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3.3 Once gateway one is commenced the planning process is expected to take at least 30 months before a new plan is formally adopted by Full Council. It must comply with national policy and be agreed by the Secretary of State for planning. The process includes extensive public consultation, and a public inspection on site allocations and on all matters of local policy.

3.4 Due to the introduction of mandatory targets for additional housing growth across the country, the existing Local Plan cannot currently evidence the availability of a deliverable 5 year land supply. This weakens the applicability of the Local Plan when Planning committee are determining residential planning applications, until a 5 year supply is demonstrated. This may lead to applications being given planning permission even though they are not identified as sites in the Local Plan. These decisions will be considered by Planning Committee but may also be referred to appeal and determined by the Planning Inspector.

Decision Making

3.5 The determination of planning applications is by either Planning Committee or delegated to Officers in accordance with our Scheme of Delegation. Generally, decisions regarding major planning applications are taken by the Planning Committee, which is composed of a representative group of elected Councillors. Smaller applications such as change of use or residential extensions or small developments are generally delegated to the professional planning officers of the Council. There is an appeals process to the Planning Inspectorate if an application is refused.

Housing growth in Yarm

4. Table 1 below details the percentage of gross housing completions across the borough between 2015 and 2024. As detailed below the greatest percentage of completions across this period occurred within the Core Area, Stockton, and Ingleby Barwick

Table 1: Gross Delivery by location 2015/16 to 2023/24

Location	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Total (%)
Billingham	10.6	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	4.0	0.2	0.0	1.2
Core Area*	6.5	33.8	16.6	27.1	30.2	22.0	19.3	8.3	13.8	21.7
Eaglescliffe	3.3	4.6	11.2	6.4	3.2	1.9	0.6	11.9	16.2	6.5
Ingleby Barwick	24.3	16.7	19.8	14.2	12.6	17.0	20.2	7.7	12.1	15.7
Rural	2.4	2.0	4.9	8.3	3.9	8.7	6.2	22.8	10.3	7.2
Stockton	35.1	16.7	9.7	10.8	21.1	15.3	23.3	28.7	28.6	19.8
Thornaby	7.7	11.9	0.1	4.3	5.3	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.1
Wynyard	0.0	4.6	9.6	11.2	9.0	15.9	11.1	14.0	11.4	9.5
Yarm	10.1	9.6	28.2	17.5	14.3	16.5	15.3	6.4	7.6	14.2

* Regenerated River Tees Corridor from Local Plan

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Petition Scheme

4.1 The Council's Petition Scheme provides that:
"The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. Where the issue is one on which Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision."

4.2 The issue raised by the petition, is the perceived over development around Yarm and the impact this has on local amenities and infrastructure. This is exactly the purview of the local plan making process which will recommence in 2026.

4.3 Accordingly, Council may:
- Debate the matter;
- Request further investigation (e.g. through the Local Plan Working Group); or
- Take no further action.

4.4 This framework ensures that petitioners are heard, and their concerns considered, while preserving the Council's constitutional and statutory decision-making structure.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

5. None

Corporate Parenting Implications

6. None

Financial Implications

7. None

Legal Implications

8. The Local Planning Authority cannot fetter its discretion by introducing a policy against development of a specific class without following the Local Plan procedure. Each application must be considered on its planning merits in accordance with the legislation.

Risk Assessment

9. None

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

10. The petition relates solely to the ward of Yarm but the impact of not building houses in Yarm would result in increases in house building targets across all other wards

Background Papers

Stockton on Tees Local Plan 2019-2032

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Petition Scheme

Constitution – Part 3 (Council Procedure Rules)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Appointments to Committees for 2026/27

Summary

This report presents changes to committees requested by a political group.

Recommended

That Council note and agree the changes set out below.

Details

The Conservative Group has provided notification of the following changes it wishes to make:

Children and Young People's Select Committee

Remove Cllr David Reynard, replace with Cllr Mubeen

Executive Scrutiny Committee

Remove Cllr Hugo Stratton, replace with Cllr Dodds

Audit and Governance Committee

Remove Cllrs Emily Tate and Niall Innes, replace with Cllrs Marcus Vickers and David Reynard

Place Select Committee

Remove Cllrs Hilary Vickers and Stefan Houghton, replace with Cllrs Tony Riordan and Dodds

Legal Implications

Certain seats must be allocated to political groups, as prescribed by the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

Consultation with Ward/Councillors

Consultation has taken place with political group leaders.

Background Papers

None

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Agenda Item 8

REPORT TO COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Article 4 Direction – Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's)

Summary

In view of growing demands for small HMOs, implications on the boroughs housing stock and our communities, there is a need to consider the introduction of measures to restrict the use of permitted development rights for change of use from dwelling houses (Class C3) to small HMOs (Class C4).

In view of all the associated considerations, it is therefore recommended that the introduction of a borough wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights that allow of the change from a residential dwelling (use class C3) to small House of Multiple Occupation (Use class C4) to pursued, along with associated guidance in line with the recommendations set out below.

At its meeting on 15 January 2026, Cabinet is being recommended to:

1. Agree that the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that it is expedient to make the article 4 Direction and the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to make a Borough wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights allowing conversion from a dwelling to small HMO.
2. That the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to undertake all necessary notifications and consultation in association with Schedule 3 of the General Permitted Development Order, 2015.
3. That the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be authorised to consider all representations made during the consultation period and, subject to remaining satisfied that it remains expedient to make the Direction after considering the representations, to confirm the Article 4 Direction and take all necessary action following the confirmation

Cabinet is also being asked to recommend to Council:

4. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth and Cabinet Member, in consultation with the Planning Committee to produce a draft interim policy or Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to inform the determination of future applications for HMOs
5. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth to undertake all necessary consultation in association with recommendation 4 above.

Background

1. In recent years Officers have seen an increasing number of concerns being raised by neighbouring residents and Elected Members on a Borough-wide basis about the presence of HMOs across the Borough.
2. Particular focus has been given to HMOs providing poor-quality housing which is not managed effectively. Consequently, it is seen as attracting persons experiencing social and/or economic instability and those living a more transient lifestyle. Complaints also often include reference to crime and anti-social behaviour.
3. The Housing Act (2004) defines a 'House in Multiple Occupation' (HMO) as living accommodation occupied by persons who do not form a single household and share one or more basic amenities.
4. The Planning system currently categorises HMOs as either;
    - Use class C4 for between three and six persons with basic shared facilities.
    - Sui Generis classification (meaning a 'class of its own') for seven or more residents.
5. The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) allows certain forms of development to take place without the need for planning permission, which is known as 'permitted development'.
6. Residential dwellings (Use class C3) have permitted development rights to change use to small Houses in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4). Where a change to Sui Generis classification, automatically requires planning permission.
7. For clarity, the introduction of an Article 4 direction would affect only those elements which currently do not require planning permission, i.e class HMOs falling in use class C4 and mean that planning permission would be required as they are for larger HMO's.

Article 4 direction

8. An Article 4 direction provides a mechanism for removing permitted development rights. Planning guidance states that these should be based on robust evidence and apply to the smallest geographical area possible in order to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area.
9. The associated statutory process for introducing an Article 4 direction is laid out within Schedule 3 of the General Permitted Development Order, 2015.
10. Article 4 directions can be made either as a 'Directions without immediate effect' or 'Directions with immediate effect'. With the regulations setting out a definitive process which includes justification for the direction and notice/consultation. Once confirmed the Council must give notice in a similar manner to the steps taken when the direction was originally made.
11. The Secretary of State also has the power to amend and withdraw an Article 4 direction, it is therefore important to produce evidence to justify any Article 4 Direction. The introduction of an Article 4 direction may also be subject to judicial review.

12. The Council may be liable for compensation over a 12-month period if an article 4 direction is introduced immediately and development is refused or conditioned due to the Direction. Compensation can be claimed for

    a) abortive expenditure or

    b) other loss or damage directly attributable to the withdrawal of permitted development rights.

13. However, no compensation is payable if the Direction was made after a 12-month notification period.

Considerations

14. In recent years Officers have seen an increasing number of concerns being raised in relation to HMOs and the impact they are having in the community. The situation is not unique to Stockton and many authorities across the north-east have either implemented or indicated an intention to introduce Article 4 direction's to try to combat the rise of uncontrolled small HMOs within their areas.
15. Planning guidance (paragraph 54 of the NPPF) states that Article 4 directions should be based on robust evidence and apply to the smallest geographical area possible in order to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area.
16. Whilst acknowledging the perception HMOs have in relation to crime and antisocial behaviour, small HMOs also provide an important housing need for some residents of the Borough preventing homelessness and offer an important short term housing solution.
17. The associated evidence highlights that the main issues which can be considered through the planning system in relation to all HMOs relate to;

    a) Over concentration and subsequent implications on the wider amenity and cohesion of our communities

    b) The quality of accommodation offered.

18. Any restrictions on small HMOs through an Article 4 direction is therefore not solely justified through the location of this housing product but is about the available evidence on the quality of the accommodation provided. Ensuring that residents of HMOs benefit from acceptable levels of amenity.
19. Evidence suggests that the conversion of properties often poses many problems with the associated accommodation often suffering from small room sizes, particularly for single occupants which fall below those outlined in the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS). Also the internal layouts are often unsatisfactory with bedrooms being situated in close proximity to areas which may generate noise and disturbance such as kitchens and bathrooms, again affecting levels of amenity.
20. Older housing stock which are most commonly converted into HMOs often lack energy efficiency in comparison to modern housing having implications for affordable warmth and energy consumption.

Scope

21. Paragraph 54 of the NPPF states that Article 4 directions should apply to the smallest geographical area, and as detailed above current evidence shows that the central core around Stockton Town Centre is the primary focus for new small HMOs, whilst in other areas of the Borough small HMOs are present, currently the harm arising from them may be more limited.
22. The introduction of a more central ward-based Article 4 Direction is considered to have unintended consequence of HMOs creeping into other adjacent wards across the Borough, particularly where low property prices make conversion attractive. However, issues over quality of accommodation could remain across the Borough.
23. The introduction of a Borough wide approach to an Article 4 direction would be both 'proactive' at addressing implications arising from small HMOs and be the simplest approach to administer. Importantly it would also ensure a consistent approach for all areas of our communities ensuring residents amenity and community implications are assessed through the planning application process.

Policy Approach

24. The current Local Plan has policies which control and influence development, with Policies SD8 and H4 being those most relevant to applications for HMOs and some of the concerns which are raised in relation to them. Policy SD8 (criterion 1, 2 &3) relate to amenity considerations, place creation and public safety/crime. While Policy H4 (criterion 1) considers housing mix with aim of achieving sustainable residential communities.
25. Requiring planning permission for small HMOs allows for increased control as it goes through the decision-making process which will consider relevant planning policies and other associated material planning considerations.
26. The new Local Plan will provide the most robust approach to achieving a coherent, strong and positive approach to trying to address the issues surrounding all HMOs. In the short term the introduction of an Article 4 direction alongside an interim policy or supplementary planning document (SPD) offers a similar basis and would be a material planning consideration in any such application.
27. It is considered that an interim policy or SPD would assist in providing advice to those looking to convert properties to HMOs so they are aware of the Council's expectations and have a positive policy approach to addressing such matters. As above Policies SD8 and H4 being those most relevant to applications for all HMOs and would apply to such guidance allowing for sufficient weight to be attributed in the decision-making process.
28. This also offers a more balanced approach to positively influence future proposals and offers an opportunities to look introduce a variety of considerations which may include (subject to evidence and consultation) measures such as;

- Concentration and overall proximity of HMOs to one another.
- The standard of accommodation to improve the living conditions for those requiring this type of housing provision
- Requirement to meet (as a minimum) Nationally Described Space Standards
- Measures to improve energy efficiency

Resource implications

29. There are resource implications in making and taking forward an Article 4 Direction and introducing the accompanying policy/SPD requiring staff resources in both the planning and legal teams. There is a statutory process to follow with regards to making an Article 4 directions which must be followed. However, it is considered that existing resources and budgets can adequately cover these matters.
30. Once in force, the requirement for planning permission, has the potential to increase the number of applications received and any defence of appeals could add to the workload for Development Management Officers. However, following changes to the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, following the removal of permitted development rights, applicants are required to pay the require planning application fee for its determination.
31. During the implementation stage there is likely to some breaches of planning control which will require investigation. Although this may continue, it is anticipated that this may be greatest in the initial stages of the Article 4 direction being introduced.
32. Nevertheless, any additional workload pressures will be monitored and addressed through current budgets wherever possible

Risks

33. The introduction of an immediate Article 4 direction will come with increased risk for compensation claims. Unfortunately, there is no evidence currently available to quantify or estimate what the extent of any such claims, such claims would also have no current budget allocation.
34. In addition to any claims for compensation, planning applicants can make claims for an award of costs to the Planning Inspectorate for unreasonable behaviour. Any such claims can be met from existing budgets and be minimised through the additional policy/guidance being recommended.
35. With the introduction of any non-immediate Article 4 direction, there is always an element of risk as to whether property owners will seek to make investment decisions / property alterations before the direction comes into force. However, property owners would need to ensure that all works are completed with the 12 month period and in line with any other regulatory controls. Commencement of works would not be sufficient to

avoid the requirement for planning permission after the date of the Article 4 direction taking effect.

36. For the avoidance of any doubt, the removal of permitted development rights through an Article 4 direction do not apply retrospectively, meaning those already in situ will not be required to apply for permission. They would however have the opportunity to seek a certificate of lawful use, to establish their lawful position.

37. Colleagues in Housing Services may well continue to experience challenges in relation to the lack of single person accommodation. The risk of homelessness and rough sleeping may well therefore increase financial pressures in securing temporary accommodation in specific circumstances although at this stage the full implications remain unknown.

38. As above (para 9) the Secretary of State has the power to amend or remove an Article 4 Direction, should that occur there is a risk of abortive work being undertaken.

Conclusions

39. Whilst there is a clearer case for a smaller geographical area to restrict small HMOs, given the current circumstances and matters considered above, it is considered that there is sufficient merit in introducing a Borough wide Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of dwelling houses to small HMOs in order to protect the amenity and cohesion of our communities.

40. In recognising that HMOs do play an important role in providing a source of affordable housing, particularly those in acute housing need, the aspiration of future planning policies and associated guidance should therefore look to ensure that small HMOs are of the right quality, the right need and in the right area, to ensure our Borough maintains balanced, inclusive and cohesive communities.

41. The introduction a non-immediate Article 4 direction allows for time to manage any associated risks arising from legal challenge and compensation. Crucially it would also enable the development of an interim policy/SPD, ensuring decisions on HMO applications are based on a robust framework and giving the greatest chance of success in defending any associated appeals.

42. In view of all the associated considerations, it is therefore recommended that the introduction of a borough wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for small HMOs be introduced along with interim policy/SPD, in line with the recommendations set out earlier within this report.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

43. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and due regard has been given to Section 149 of the Equality Act.

Corporate Parenting Implications

44. The report does not contain any corporate parenting implications.

Financial Implications

45. The production of a non-immediate Article 4 direction and associated policy guidance can be met from existing budgets. This recommendation mitigates the financial risk of potential claims for compensation that could come with an immediate introduction of an Article 4 direction.

Legal Implications

46. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 currently grants deemed planning permission for residential properties to be converted to small HMO's without the need for an application. The introduction of an Article 4 Direction will remove this right and all such proposed conversions after the date the Direction will come into force will require a planning application to be submitted, with an associated fee. This affects the property rights of owners of residential properties which needs to be justified and proportionate.

47. Applicants whose applications are subsequently refused have the right to appeal against that decision.

48. An Article 4 Direction can only be made if the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that it is expedient to make it. It is subject to a 21 day consultation period and must then be confirmed by the LPA before it comes into force.

    The making of the Article 4 Direction is subject to challenge by way of Judicial Review. The Secretary of State must be notified of the making of the Direction and has the power to cancel it before or after its confirmation.

49. The interim policy or SPD will provide guidance on how applications will be considered or the conditions that HMO's must comply with to be approved. That guidance should be followed or risk a costs award against the authority.

50. The making of an interim planning policy or SPD is subject to a statutory procedure and also open to challenge.

Risk Assessment

51. The introduction of an Article 4 direction 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

52. As detailed in the report, the Article 4 direction has the potential to affect all wards in the Borough

Background Papers

- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- General Permitted Development Order 2015
- Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS)

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Agenda Item 9

REPORT TO COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Director of Public Health Report 2025

Summary

The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2025 is brought to Council for consideration.

Recommendation

It is recommended the report is noted.

Detail

1. Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012), the Director of Public Health has a duty to prepare an independent annual report. The report was considered by Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2025.
2. People are the heart of our local places across the borough. The Director of Public Health Report 2025 aims to set out a community-centred public health approach that can be used to bring together work with communities and work on developing healthy places. The report sets out examples of work already underway and proposes further actions. The approach and next steps set out in the report support delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Stockton-on-Tees Plan.
3. The report also sets out progress against the actions set in the last Director of Public Health Report.
4. The report is being considered by Cabinet on 15 January 2026 – through discussion with the communications team, this will be uploaded to form a web-based report following consideration at Cabinet. The web-based content will be developed in-line with accessibility requirements and with web links to references. As in previous years, hard copies of the report will also be available in libraries across the borough; additional hard copies will also be available on request.

Consultation and engagement

5. The report describes some of the work underway across the borough, which has been developed and delivered in partnership with partners and communities. The work supports delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which was also developed in partnership with Elected Members and partners. Both the Strategy and examples of local work have been developed based on information and intelligence from local communities through engagement, conversations and service user feedback.

Next Steps

6. Council is asked to receive the report. Progress against the proposed actions, embedding learning and monitoring of activity in the report will continue to be overseen and reported through the Lead Member, Corporate Management Team and Health and Wellbeing Board as part of core business.

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Building Healthy Communities – connecting people and place
Director of Public Health Report 2025

Key messages

- Communities are the heart of places – both geographic places and the places where people feel 'at home' with others they identify themselves with (which can be many things)
- If we start with communities and build flexible approaches and systems, we are more likely to have meaningful partnerships with communities, understand what is important to them, develop joint solution to meet people's needs and get better outcomes for all our communities (addressing inequality)
- How do we do this? Through a framework that builds collective aims, enablers and resourced plans, that links working with communities, to developing local places and neighbourhood approaches
- This needs to be about more than our 'service offer', rather it needs to use a system-wide approach, building on evidence, intelligence and partnerships and maximising the opportunity for health creation
- There are examples of local work that we can build on to help us with our approach; and a self-assessment tool to support us with where to start
- The report identifies suggested actions to take the work forward. It also reviews progress on the actions identified in last year's report

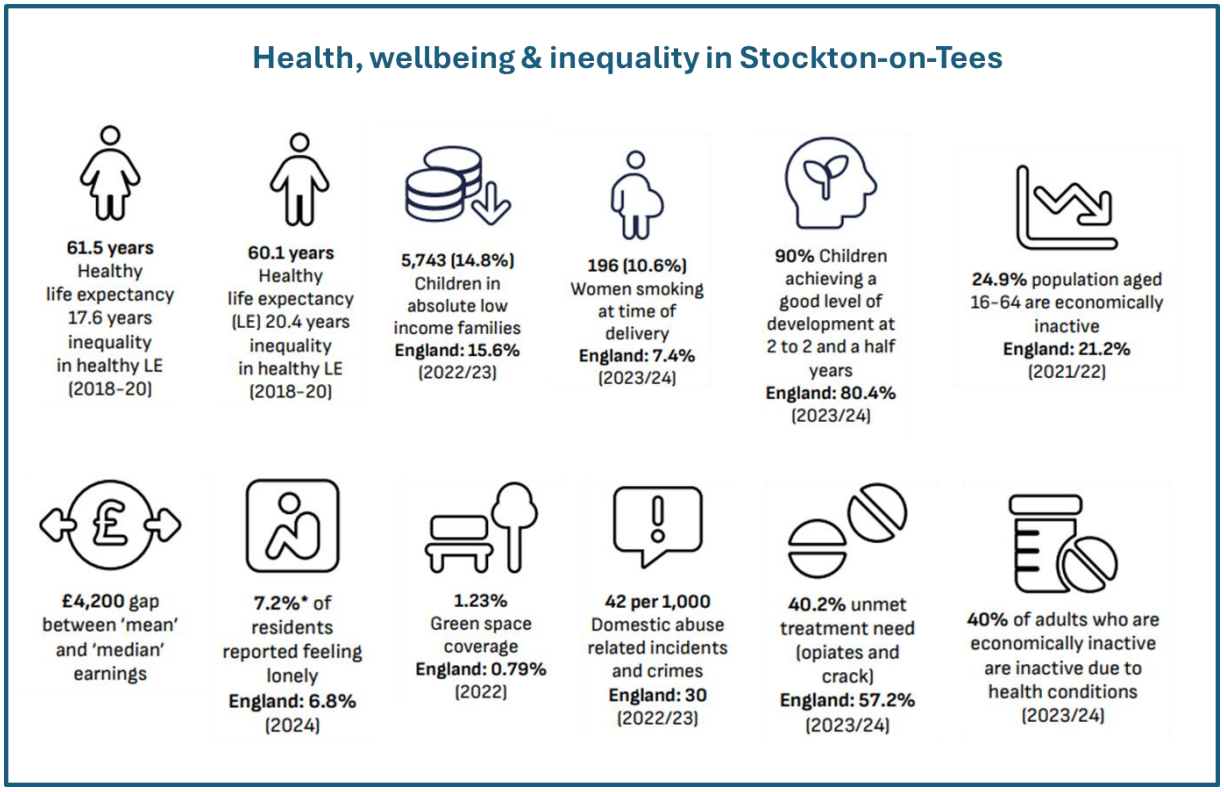
Introduction

This year's report looks at how we put working with local communities at the heart of work to shape healthy places, to help local people to thrive.

It is clear that people's experience of health and wellbeing is affected by both the physical places and neighbourhoods they live in and the relationships and communities the identify with. In fact, places are shaped by communities – how people interact, how they use the space around them, the agency and ownership they feel about where they live, work and play. As we will know from our own lives, people often do not just identify themselves as part of a community in their neighbourhood – they may feel more part of communities (often more than one) that are not based on geography. For example, other parents with children of the same age, other people who share the same faith, or others who experience disability. This means that communities are central to how we develop and regenerate physical places (neighbourhoods, parks, housing). Community-centred development helps ensure improved health and wellbeing outcomes through responding to local views and needs, greater community ownership and make the best use of local facilities and assets. More than that, as the Council implements ambitious plans for the borough together with local people and partners, there is an opportunity to focus on health creation – proactively creating the conditions, wherever we can, to enable people to have the best health and wellbeing, rather than mitigating the impact of poor health.

This report sets out some recommended actions to help connect people and place to improve health and wellbeing, building on some of the great existing strengths in the borough. I hope you find it useful.

1. Progressing work on health inequalities



Last year's Director of Public Health Annual Report[1] proposed a systematic approach to addressing health inequalities and actions to put this in place. This approach was adopted by the Council and discussed with wider partners (***Appendix 1***). It sets out proposed action across services, the community and civic bodies. Much work is underway and progress against the report's recommendations is captured in ***Appendix 2***, which we will continue to focus on as set out in the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy[2] and Stockton-on-Tees Plan[3].

2. Community-centred places

Health and wellbeing is created and driven by a range of linked factors that link people, the communities they identify with and the place they live. These factors range from the homes people live in and the access they have to good, stable work; to the air they breathe, the opportunity they have for education, the impact of trauma and family relationships on their lives and the impact of smoking, alcohol, diet, exercise and genetic influences[4].

We know that the diverse communities in Stockton-on-Tees experience these factors unequally – inequity (unfair differences) persist which lead to differences in health and wellbeing outcomes across communities in the borough. This is true across the country, however we know inequality is particularly stark in Stockton-on-Tees. The interface between people and the places and communities they live in, is key to understanding and helping to address this (***Appendix 3***).

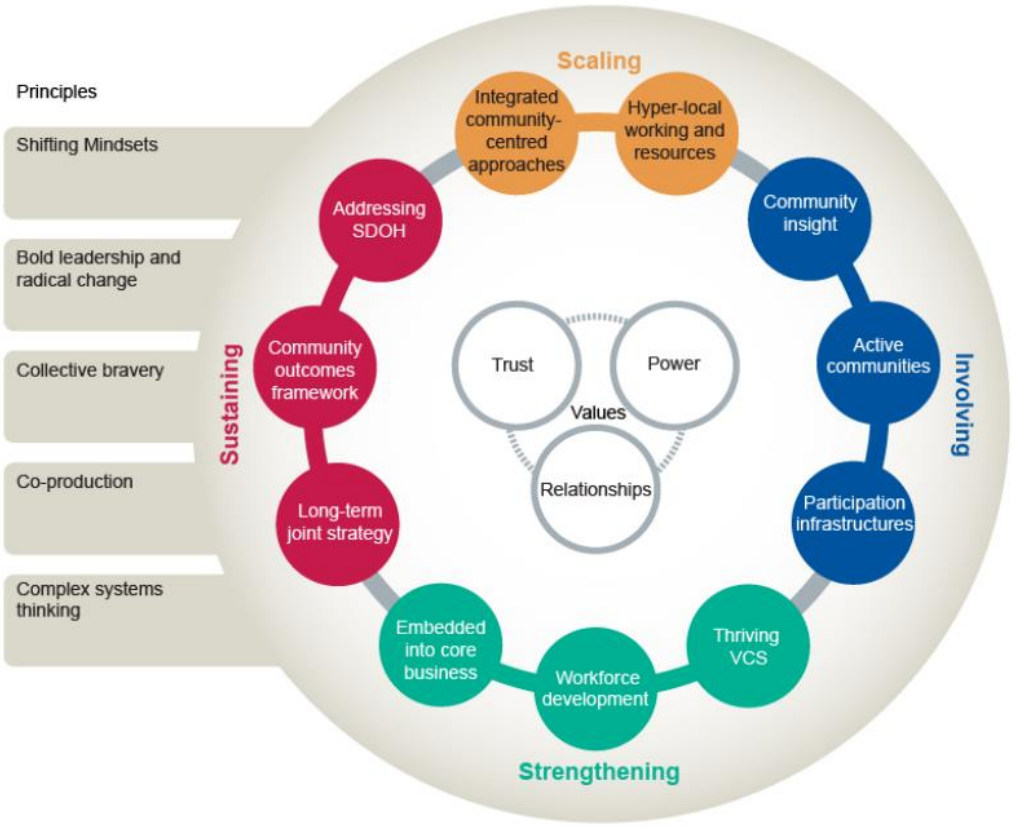
As a health and wellbeing system, we will need to develop our strategy, approach and plans based on what our diverse communities tell us and maximise their strengths – this will look different in different parts of our borough and communities are often not associated with a geographical place or location. While it often makes sense to start with a geographical area or neighbourhood, it is then important to layer on the other factors that influence how communities identify and define themselves – and of course no community or individual is defined by one thing. These factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, cultural influences and more, are the things that combine to shape (and sometimes limit) the opportunity local people have to be healthy and happy.

In the context of the health challenges and inequality faced by local people, it feels even more important to make a meaningful shift to proactively *design in* opportunities for better health and wellbeing as far as possible when local places are shaped, as well as adapting existing local places to maximise health and wellbeing and mitigate poor health outcomes.

Through the Council's Powering our Future transformation programme, national implementation or pilot programmes and other work across partners in the health and wellbeing system, we are already progressing some of this work. This report shines a light on some examples of work to build on. It also describes some of the approaches that are helpful in understanding and bringing together community and place, to improve health and wellbeing for all our diverse communities, focusing on a community-centred public health approach.

3. A community-centred public health approach – examples in Stockton-on-Tees

A community-centred public health approach across partners and communities can help bring together and embed work across healthy and sustainable places and communities, to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequity across local communities. This community-centred public health approach recognises the important role of trust, relationships and power across communities and partners, to work well together and bring about change (Public Health England, 2020)[6]:



SDOH = social determinants of health

A community-centred public health approach will help deliver on the priorities in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy[2] and the Stockton-on-Tees Plan[3]. It will also help us collectively put into practice the five core principles the Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out for working together effectively to improve health and wellbeing and address inequalities:

Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Principles for working together

1. Health is everybody's business
2. Communities at the centre
3. Commit to prevention and early intervention
4. Levelling the playing field
5. Place-based approach

We already have many good examples of using a public health community-centred approach in Stockton-on-Tees, to put these principles into practice:

Health is everybody's business – work and health

We are working closely with small and micro businesses across the borough to support them with workplace health and wellbeing. In 2024/25, 41% of the working age population (16-64yrs) in the borough were economically inactive due to long term sickness. Recent research[7] has shown that inequality in health and ability to work will persist to 2024 based on the current trends, so it is important we continue to focus action the issues that drive this including deprivation, COPD and obesity-related disease. 87% of registered businesses in the borough employ less than 10 people, so it is important we closely in partnership to support local people to be healthy for work; and to enable businesses to support their employees to be healthy. This is particularly relevant to smaller businesses, where sickness absence rates can have such an impact on business continuity. We have worked with partners to undertake insights work with these businesses, to understand what is important to them and what help they need, to shape support to them.

Local small businesses insights – feedback session

Better Health at Work Award celebration event with local businesses

Communities at the centre – Active Stockton Partnership & community wellbeing champions

In some of our areas of greatest deprivation, 35% of adults are physically inactive[8]. This year the Council's public health and sport and active life teams have worked in close partnership with local community representatives, Tees Valley Sport and Sport England to carry out insights work to understand more about the perspective of local people. The conversations focused on 5 areas of the borough and particularly focused on hearing from specific communities e.g. people with disabilities, people from different ethnic backgrounds, and young people with support in place who are moving into adulthood (transitions).

The insights highlighted issues far beyond specifically physical activity and covered wide-ranging factors that impact on wellbeing, from access to green space to perceptions of safety. A range of participating partners and Council colleagues, including the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, gathered to hear the findings which will be used to inform the next steps of work with Sport England, but will also inform wider work including on neighbourhood health and the Pride in Place neighbourhood trailblazer recently announced in the borough. There is the opportunity to embed learning from the work in the Council's and partners' approaches to working with communities - particularly the importance of spending time and building trust, listening and responding to what is important from the communities' perspectives and often not approaching discussions from the perspective of statutory organisations.

Community insights feedback session, Summer 2025

The concept of health creation also fits with a community-centred public health approach to healthy communities and healthy place, empowering communities and 'designing in' opportunities to improve health and wellbeing. Health creation is the improvement to health and wellbeing when 'individuals and communities achieve a sense of purpose, hope, mastery and control over their own lives and

immediate environment' (The Health Creation Alliance, 2017[8]). This sense of health creation is also linked to the NHS 10 Year Plan, and is based on: listening and responding, truth-telling, strengths-focus, self-organising and power-shifting (***Appendix 4***).

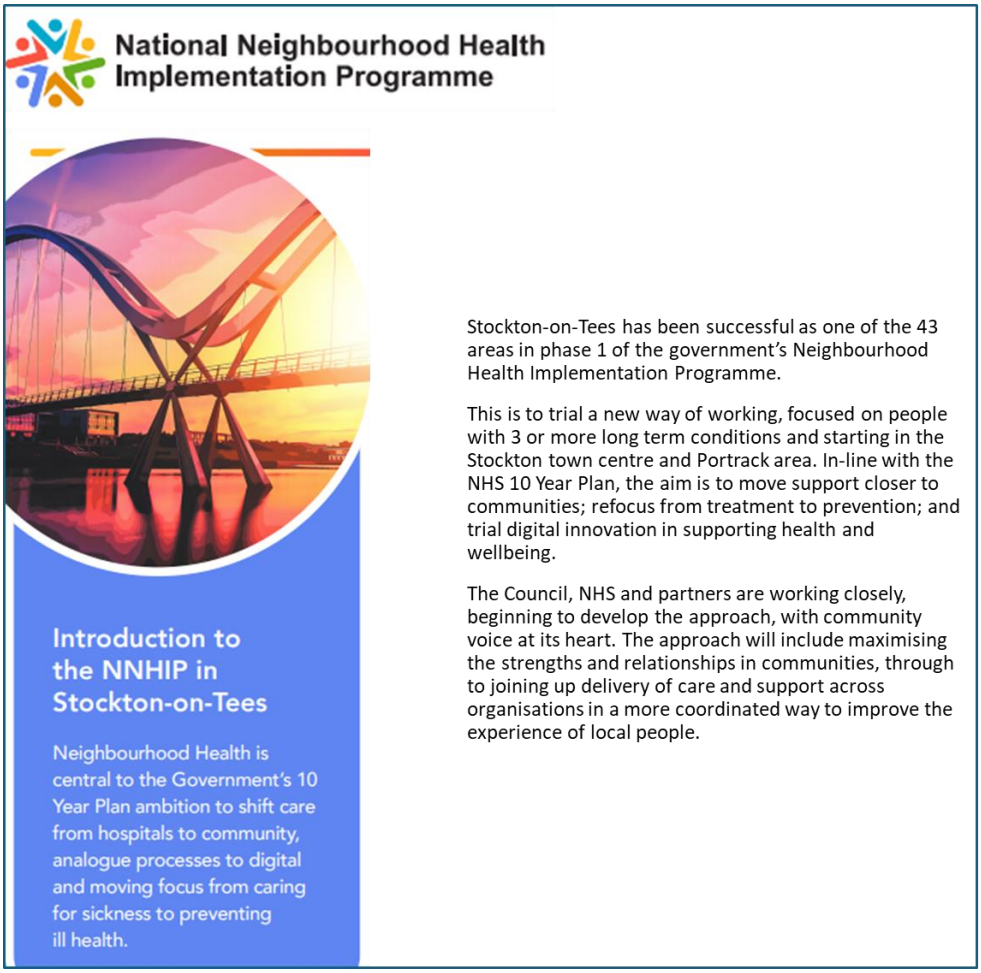
Existing local work with grassroots community groups and community representatives forms a good foundation for creating health, one example being the local community wellbeing champions – a network of 138 individuals and organisations across the borough working to improve health and wellbeing and working in partnership with public health (who commission Pioneering Care Partnership as the coordinating organisation).

Warm food, warm hands, warm hearts (Wellington Sq. shopping centre, March 2025): Different organisations came together supported by the champions and Catalyst, giving out free essentials, serving hot drinks and having a chat with different communities around Stockton town centre.

Prevention and early intervention – National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme

This national pilot programme is an exciting opportunity to work across partners and local people to design different ways of providing care and support – more focused on prevention, and closer to communities. Communities in our area of focus have the highest rates if economic inactivity in the borough. Chronic disease and risk are also higher in this neighbourhood than in England as a whole. For example, 3.65% experience coronary heart disease (3.04% in England); 15.53% have hypertension (14.63% in England); and 14.32% are obese (11.55% in England). The area also has some great strengths, including many voluntary and community sector organisations and grassroots community groups who understand and work closely with local people; and the Community Wellbeing Hub in Wellington Square which provides a range of one-stop shop support including on housing, mental wellbeing, employment and domestic abuse.

As learning emerges from the first phase of the neighbourhood health pilot work, it will help inform how we work together in and with other neighbourhoods and communities across the borough.



Levelling the playing field – peer advocacy

Some individuals in the borough experience severe and multiple disadvantage that affects their health, wellbeing, housing, ability to work, relationships, etc. – they can also find it difficult to access support. Often these complexities stem from previous trauma or difficult family relationships and the research points to an approach that centres on building relationship, trust and is consistent. Public health commissioned Recovery Connections (funded through Integrated Care Board inequalities money) to trial a peer advocacy approach, based on evidence and with evaluation by Teesside University built in. Peer advocates with lived experience meet with individuals identified by the adults safeguarding team and work with individuals to understand what is important to them – for example seeing their children, being able to work, or restarting a hobby or interest they previously enjoyed. The individuals developed goals as a result and began working towards these with the support of the peer advocate. In 2024/25, 27 individuals engaged fully with a peer advocate; 44% co-produced goals and 83% are in regular contact with their peer advocate following this. Good outcomes are emerging and the initiative is underpinning the Council-wide work on complex lives and will inform the approach to neighbourhood health.

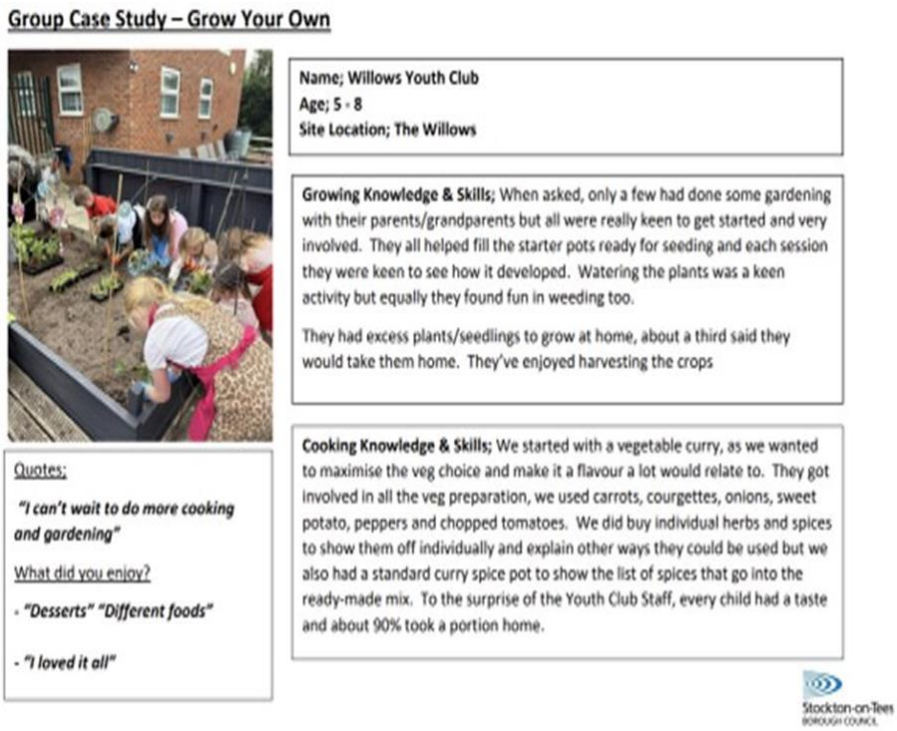
Outcomes to-date include:

- Improved wellbeing (self-reported)
- Engaging with support and treatment (medical, dental etc.) available
- Reduction in / abstinence from substances
- Supported to gain and maintain tenancy
- Undertaking volunteering

Place-based approach – planning and food

Recognising the impact of the built and natural environment on health and wellbeing, public health explored how health could be better embedded into Council planning processes, based on research evidence and case studies from other councils. As a result, a Health Impact Assessment (HIAs) tool was developed and implemented, to be completed by developers and aiming to ensure that health and wellbeing are considered early in decision-making and inform actions to address any potential negative impacts of development. HIAs are especially valuable for assessing impacts on vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. The first HIAs have recently been submitted by developers for consideration. A focus on health is also being built into the new Local Plan as it is developed, which sets out a framework for how places are shaped in the borough including housing, road networks and green space.

Recognising the importance of access to healthy affordable food for health, the Health and Wellbeing Board will be undertaking a deep dive in the coming months, to understand how to maximise the impact of access to healthy food and the food environment. This builds on existing good work across the Council, voluntary and community sector and learning from regional public health and wider partners including the Good Food Local initiative. Once such example is the Grow Your Own initiative, combining access to fresh food with the mental and physical health benefits for local communities, of gardening and growing food.



The Grow Your Own initiative (delivered by Groundwork, funded by public health)

4. Next steps - supporting community-centred healthy places

Stockton-on-Tees has some strong foundations for developing community-centred healthy places. As we build on this, it is important to acknowledge the impact community cohesion can have on our work together. Community cohesion can be defined as communities or places that[12]:

- offer a common vision and a sense of belonging for all
- positively value diversity
- provide equal opportunities to people from different backgrounds and
- provide an environment where strong and positive relationships can be developed between people from different backgrounds (in the workplace, schools and neighbourhoods)

Research evidence shows that community cohesion is important for population health and wellbeing, affecting issues such as trust; perception of crime and safety; using outside spaces to be active; social isolation and loneliness and mental wellbeing; reduced violence; greater civic participation, and greater community resilience in preparation for emergencies.[12]

Currently, there are challenges to social and community cohesion internationally and nationally and in public discourse. We are fortunate to have a wealth of community organisations and assets across the borough. There is the opportunity to explore whether specific approaches to supporting community cohesion would be helpful, working across communities and partners and potentially neighbouring local authority areas, for example through restorative community work[13] and / or inter-generational work[14].

A community-centred public health approach can be used to help bring together developing health places and healthy communities, in a way that proactively promotes and builds in good health and wellbeing. Some principles can help to take this forward, bringing together communities and places[6] including building trusting relationships with communities; co-producing solutions with communities based on new conversations about health and place; and identifying and promoting protective factors that help keep communities healthy.

Public Health England also proposed some first steps to help adopt the approach, including developing community insights and strengthening local partnerships (***Appendix 5***). A diagnostic checklist is also available to help areas determine how well they are enabling communities to take part in place-based approaches to reducing health inequalities[10].

The following actions are proposed, fitting with the commitments and principles in the local Health and Wellbeing Strategy:

Actions

- Move towards a 'health creation' approach, identifying proactive approaches to building or designing in good health and wellbeing wherever possible – in policy, practice and commissioning
- Use the community-centred public health approach to inform thinking and next steps on working with communities, neighbourhoods and places – including ensuring common principles are shared across partners help take this forward with communities
- Review our position against the recommendations in the LGA's guide: *Empowering healthy places: Unveiling the powers and practices of local councils in fostering healthy neighbourhoods*[16]. To support, consider completing the Public Health England diagnostic checklist together with partners to determine how well we are collectively enabling communities to take part in place-based approaches to reducing health inequalities
- Run LGA-facilitated Health in All Policies sessions for Council officers, Members and potentially wider system partners, to inform adopting this approach
- Build in improving health and addressing inequality as a core primary objective of the new Local Plan
- Identify key actions and issues arising from health impact assessment tool for developers and evaluate its implementation to inform future practice
- Health and Wellbeing Board to undertake a deep dive specifically on the food environment, in the context of the factors that shape places, to understand how levers can be maximised
- Build on existing insights work with communities e.g. Sport England and the learning from this approach
- Feed community insights into organisation / system-wide bank of information, to be used for a range of purposes. Proactively identify key pieces of work to use the insights e/g. trailblazer Pride in Place and neighbourhood health implementation programme
- Respond to issues communities raise through simple, quick actions and potentially small pots of seed-funding, supporting and empowering community groups to take action
- The Council as a convenor (where appropriate) and enabler - Build or support development of a community partnership / forum, led by the community, with the purpose of connecting community connectors as a network, supporting community capacity building

- Develop a network of community connectors further by enabling conversations at places where people meet, led by those within the community
- Consider infrastructure support needed to facilitate the network of community connectors lead by the community (systems, venues, funding)
- Create a small, shared funding pot across the health and wellbeing system, to support community activity on an agreed set of key issues identified and owned by the community. Connect the action on these priorities, into the activity across the Council and wider system to maximise their impact
- Trial community ownership of spaces e.g. parks, neighbourhood assets
- Work with the community and VCSE on a framework for community collaboration, to enable VCSE / community grassroots organisations to work together, to deliver on key issues and priorities (in place of a traditional commissioning approach) e.g. Community Tool Box framework[15].
- Consider further actions that build and cement relationships across the system to integrate the community sector as equal partners e.g. Devon ICS has a mentoring programme that pairs leaders in statutory organisations with leaders in the VCSE.
- Explore potential opportunity for restorative and / or intergenerational approaches to support community cohesion and learning from other areas on this; and explore the role of the Council and other partners in this approach

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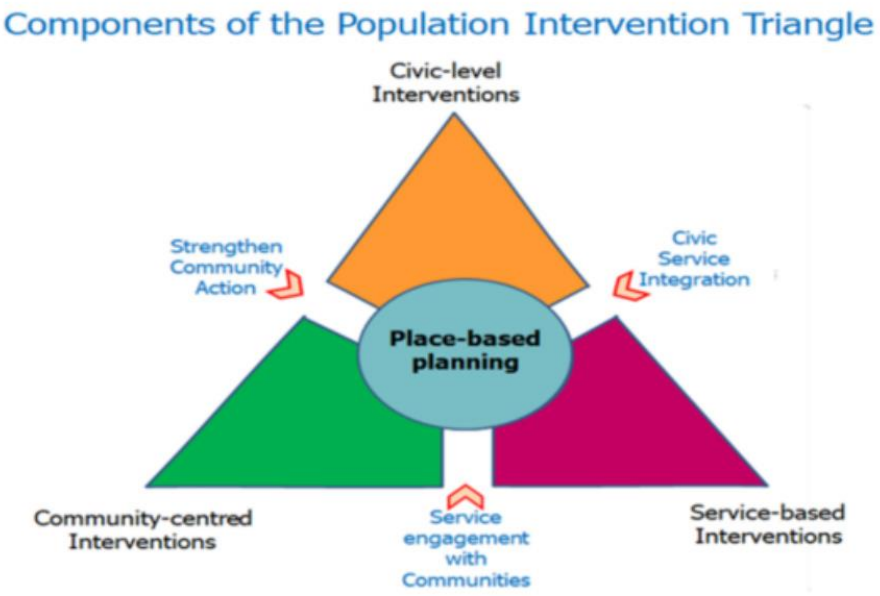
Appendices

Appendix 1: Population Intervention Triangle



Appendix 2: Progress against 2023/4 DPH Report recommendations

The following summary captures progress against the recommendations set out in last year's Director of Public Health Report (2023/4) through Public Health actions working across the Council and with partners.

The actions and progress align with delivering all focus areas of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-30 focus areas:

1. All children and families have the best start in life
2. Everyone has a healthy standard of living
3. Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities
4. Everyone lives long and healthy lives

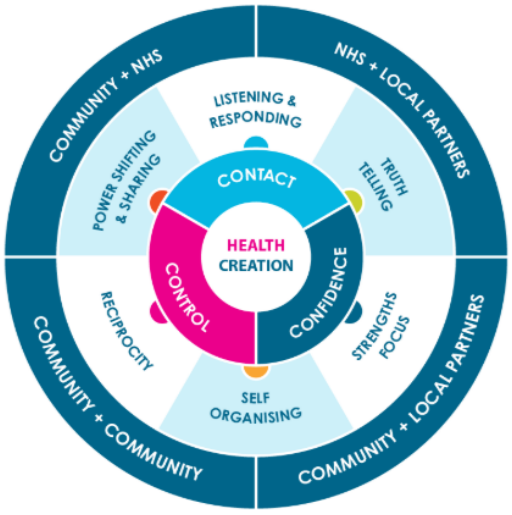
We said:	We did:
1. Adopt Population Intervention Triangle (PIT) approach	- Adopted by SBC Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) - Shared at Team Stockton
2. Support Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework through focus on wider determinants of health and overlaying inter-related drivers of inequality	- New Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWS) has a focus on wider determinants - HWB development has renewed focus on wider determinants as part of deep dive programme - Significant ongoing work re: work & health, food environment, planning & health
3. Co-produce self-assessment against PIT model	- Position / progress against assessed and actions progressed throughout the year, to be developed further e.g. system leadership (HWB), development of Local Plan, work & health programme, monitoring & progress against Powering our Future Communities work, mapping communities assets and networks - Updated Joint Strategic Needs Assessment approach implemented and initial priorities agreed - Work ongoing to embed links HWS and other strategies e.g. Local Plan, Community Safety Plan
4. Consider 'Marmot place' approach locally	- Considered with strategic partners and agreed to adopt local approach at this time, based on learning from 'Marmot places' approach - Local approach being developed and implemented through Powering our Future Communities mission (e.g. targeted work, community insights); HWB focus on wider determinants (e.g. food environment); shared population picture being developed and shared across the Council and system (e.g. re: complex lives) - To be developed further through the recommendations in DPH Report 2024/5 e.g. Health in All Policies discussions
5. Explore LGA support to address inequality	- LGA support secured and implemented on programme of development for HWB, producing a revised Terms of Reference, refined focus and

	increased emphasis on wider determinants of health and drivers of inequality and inequity - LGA Health in All Policies support secured, to be delivered in 2025/6
6. Adopt an Equity Impact Assessment across the Council	- Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment adopted – aspects of addressing health inequality included - Work ongoing to embed learning from wider national / regional work on health equity impact assessment, in local approaches - Health impact assessment tool designed and implemented across public health and planning teams
7. Adopt sustainable approaches to creating conditions for maximising health and wellbeing and addressing inequalities	- HWB deep dive sessions implemented e.g. loneliness & social isolation, enabling strategic discussion & agreement - Embedding health and wellbeing and addressing health inequalities as key issues in strategic plans e.g. Local Plan - HWB governance review underway to ensure the right forums are in place to agree and monitor strategic approaches to key issues / wider determinants - Joint strategic planning on new opportunities to test and learn on wider determinants e.g. national neighbourhood health implementation programme pilot, embedding research and evaluation with academic partners
8. Support community-building, focusing on assets and strengths And 9. Embed working with the community in policy	- Continuing to work with and strengthen community wellbeing champions' network, working with diverse communities to understand health and wellbeing issues, support community-lead activity, and co-design interventions and messaging - Proposal to consider community connector network, with joint strategic support from senior leaders across partners (Team Stockton) - Commencing work on a different approach to commissioning community activity, working with the VCSE - Public health commissioned a peer advocacy approach working with individuals with complex needs – yielding positive outcomes (re: treatment, healthcare, volunteering etc.)
10. Adopt Making Every Contact Count (MECC) across collective workforce	- Workforce training embedded re: advice, support and brief intervention on e.g. domestic abuse, smoking - Embedding MECC to be part of neighbourhood health approach as it evolves
11. Embed PIT model in Council's transformation agenda (Powering our Future)	- Early intervention and prevention agreed as a priority area, work ongoing to embed a public health approach - Progress as set out in this table
12. Identify and address gaps in our understanding of local communities	- As described in Actions 3 and 8 above - Working with communities embedded as a pillar of the Neighbourhood Health pilot and the new Pride in Place programme in Central Stockton and Portrack

13. Capture impact on inequalities, in monitoring frameworks	- HWS impact monitoring approach in development, with addressing inequality at its heart; this dovetails with Council plan monitoring framework - Public health and wider Council work underway on approach to evaluation, particularly qualitative information from communities, with academic partners
14. Embed the PIT approach in a logic model to monitor the HWS	- See Action 13

Appendix 3: Spatial planning for local healthy places (Association of Directors of Public Health, 2025)[5]

Appendix 4: Model for health creation[4] (https://thehealthcreationalliance.org/health-creation/)



The Framework can be used to drive:

– Community health creation
– Culture change
– Leadership development
– Whole system change
– Redesign of frontline practices/services
– Integrated team development

Embedding Health Creation in systems, services, organization will support:

– Coproduction
– Prevention
– Tackling health inequalities / health inequity
– Trauma-informed approaches
– Anti-discriminatory practices

10 Recommendations for health creation are included in the New NHS Alliance manifesto 2017[4].

Appendix 5: Implementing a community-centred public health approach - Where to start?[9]

- undertaking insight work with communities, especially with those who are seldom heard – this helps provide a strong understanding of people's health and wellbeing, as well as their priorities and solutions
- recognising and building on what is already going on, using methods such as local asset mapping
- strengthening local partnerships at a strategic level to build a shared vision
- producing a clear and compelling case for change linked to improving community health outcomes
- gaining senior buy-in and identifying champions to drive that change
- accepting that re-orienting how things are done is a messy, complex process that takes time and requires flexible approaches
- taking small steps and using small amounts of funding to get going and develop trusting relationships with communities

COUNCIL – 21 JANUARY 2026
MEMBER QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1 – Deferred from November Council Meeting

Member Question submitted by Cllr Jim Taylor:

"Many proud residents within our Borough, who do not have access to their own gardens, rely heavily on the allotment provision by Stockton Borough Council to grow precious fruit and vegetables to supplement their ever-increasing grocery bills.

Will the Cabinet Member agree with me, that in August of this year, when the then Labour Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, gave the green light for eight cash strapped councils to sell off their allotments, resulting in a direct kick in the teeth to those residents who had cherished and cultivated their own small piece of England, was a disastrous mistake?"

Received Sunday 9 November 2025 18:26

QUESTION 2 – Deferred from November Council Meeting

Member Question submitted by Cllr Tony Riordan:

“Hopefully, the Cabinet Member will be aware of the dilapidated and dangerous property at 18 South Road Norton.

Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that the long standing and intolerable situation faced by residents and neighbouring properties of 18 South Road, who complain of rampaging feral gangs of youths armed with baseball bats transiting and damaging their properties to gain access to 18 South Road, who defecate and urinate in and around their properties, who threaten and intimidate them in their own homes if they dare to intervene, have been badly let down by this council and other agencies for far too long?”

Received Sunday 9 November 2025 18:26

QUESTION 3

Member Question submitted by Cllr Ted Strike:

“Councillor Paul Rowling was recently reported as asking for residents’ views on “How to spend its money, and where it should save to fill a £11.3m budget gap?”

What assurance can the council provide that it is achieving value for money from its suppliers?

How frequently are supplier costs and contracts reviewed as part of the council’s procurement and contract management arrangements, including the use of market testing or competitive quotations where appropriate?

Finally, where elected members or members of the public identify alternative suppliers offering equivalent quality a lower cost, what scope exists within the council’s procurement framework to consider such options?”

Received 2 January 2026 13:32

QUESTION 4

Member Question submitted by Cllr Ted Strike:

"I recently met an elderly homeless man whilst shopping. During my conversation with him I asked if he had contacted the council, he advised me he is known by SBC homeless team and they regularly check on him. He also told me he has been advised he is not a high enough priority.

My question to the cabinet member is:

1) How many people are currently recorded as homeless in the Borough of Stockton on Tees, and how many are rough sleepers?

2) What criteria are used by the council to determine priority need under its homelessness duties, and how does age feature, and which groups are a higher priority than the elderly?

3) What support and safeguards are in place for older people who are homeless but who may not meet the statuary definition of priority need?"

Received 2 January 2026 16:14

QUESTION 5

Member Question submitted by Cllr Ted Strike:

House building sites are all over our borough and in a very short period of time houses become occupied and we then have a mixture of occupied houses alongside a building site which has its own dangers. Ingleby Barwick are extremely fortunate in that we have Community Public accessible defibrillators at a maximum of 500 metres away from any given point thanks to the amazing work of CPAD IB. When building sites are being constructed there are no way of volunteer groups for placing Defibs in those areas unless individual building sites agree. This means residents living in those areas and the workforce are not covered by these life saving devices.

Can the Cabinet Member advise:

1) How the council promotes good practice around workforce health and safety on major construction sites, including the provision of defibrillators?

2) What expectations the council sets for contractors on projects it commissions?

3) Given the limits of planning and regulatory powers in this area, whether the council would consider taking a leadership role by encouraging developers voluntarily, and by lobbying Government and MPs for changes in National Law to require defibrillator provision on major construction and regeneration sites?

Received 8 January 2026 10:28

QUESTION 6

Member Question submitted by Cllr Niall Innes:

The taxpayers of this borough were burdened with an eye watering bill of £1.65m to support the Ambassador Theatre Group with audience development and the attraction of artists in years one to five for the Globe Theatre.

Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the audience development along with the attraction of artists, and if the £1.65m has proved an astute investment?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

QUESTION 7

Member Question submitted by Cllr Niall Innes:

On the 4 June 2025, the Planning Committee declined permission for an application to demolish the South Lodge at Preston Park and replace it with the erection of a metal structure, artwork, hard and soft landscaping, and other associated works.

Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update as to whether the mooted plans for a revised application for South Lodge will be coming forward, and if so when?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

QUESTION 8

Member Question submitted by Cllr Tony Riordan:

In the Council meeting of 20 November 2024 the Cabinet presented their report to members recommending prudential borrowing of £1m to resurface the top deck (only) of Wellington Square Car Park, with the annual borrowing repayments of £80k generated from the new car parking charges commencing in February 2025. The Council voted in favour of the recommendation and financial numbers presented to them by the Cabinet.

Can the Cabinet Member inform members of what the financial impact, following their U Turn in December 2025, will be on the lost revenue and how they intend to make up the shortfall to pay off the repayment charges for the prudential borrowing following that decision?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

QUESTION 9

Member Question submitted by Cllr Tony Riordan:

Council approval is required for all new capital schemes, acquisitions, or developments which require the use of prudential borrowing that is outside the budget. Can the leader advise members of the procedure if the recommendation and benefits to support prudential borrowing decisions change?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

QUESTION 10

Member Question submitted by Cllr Niall Innes:

Following the decision by the Labour Led Council to not extend their contract with Stockton & District Advice and Information Service for the provision of advice and information.

Can I ask the Cabinet Member to explain to members why this Labour Led Council, as highlighted by the CEO of Stockton & District Advice Service, provided that organisation with a contract, which last year amounted to £230k of unrestricted funding with no spending criteria attached?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

QUESTION 11

Member Question submitted by Cllr Tony Riordan:

Stockton Hotels Company Limited, set up by this Labour led council to run the Hilton Hotel, submit their accounts to Companies House each year as required.

Can the Cabinet Member explain to members why those accounts are presented in a different format, with varying information, each year that they have been submitted?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

QUESTION 12

Member Question submitted by Cllr Lynn Hall:

This labour Led Council, has recently begun a consultation exercise with residents and businesses of the Borough. It is entitled ‘Let’s Talk Money’ and seeks their views on how the Council should prioritise its spending.

Is the Leader of the Council confident in the detail provided to residents and businesses within the consultation pages?

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

COUNCIL – 21 JANUARY 2026
MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

MOTION 1

Motion submitted by Cllr Niall Innes, to be seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan:-

"Council notes that:

The Labour Government's recent Budget has introduced policies that have significantly increased the financial burden on businesses, including higher employment costs, increased taxation, and a failure to adequately support our high streets.

Small businesses, independent shops, pubs, cafés, restaurants and hospitality venues are the beating heart of our communities in the borough of Stockton, providing employment, social value, and vital gathering spaces on our high streets and in our neighbourhoods.

Many of these businesses are already operating on tight margins and facing rising costs are now being further crippled by the Labour Governments policies that show little understanding of the realities facing local employers.

Labour promised a fundamental reform of business rates, yet this reform has failed to materialise. Instead, as a result of the Budget and the forthcoming revaluation, businesses are facing substantial and unaffordable increases in business rates.

Industry estimates indicate that over the next three years, Labour Government policies will result in average increases in business rates of 76% for pubs with many other small businesses facing similarly steep rises that threaten their long-term viability. This figure comes from analysis undertaken by UK Hospitality: https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/hospitality-business-rates-reform-unravelling-with-urgent-action-needed/

Under previous Conservative Governments, businesses received meaningful and targeted support, which helped protect jobs and keep high streets alive during unprecedented economic challenges.

Council believes that:

The Labour Government's failure to deliver on its promises to reform business rates, combined with its broader fiscal policies, risks causing widespread business closures, job losses, and long-term damage to high streets across the country and those in our borough.

Local authorities have a responsibility to speak up when national government decisions are actively harming local businesses, workers, and communities.

Council resolves:

That the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing this Council's deep concern about the impact of the Labour Government's Budget and business rates policies on small businesses and the hospitality sector.

That the correspondence urges the Chancellor to honour Labour's commitment to fundamental business rates reform and to reverse policies that are placing unsustainable pressure on pubs, restaurants, and small businesses.

That the correspondence highlights the severe impact on businesses in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees and call for urgent, targeted support to protect jobs, sustain local enterprise, and safeguard the beating heart of our communities.

That the letter be issued on behalf of the Council by the Chief Executive."

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

MOTION 2

Motion submitted by Cllr Niall Innes, to be seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan:-

"Council notes that:

Recent major decisions taken by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council — including the purchase of Debenhams, proposals affecting The Shambles, and the introduction of parking charges in Stockton and Yarm town centres have generated significant concern among elected councillors, residents and local businesses.

These decisions have been taken within the framework set out in the Council's Constitution but in a way that nevertheless raising concerns about transparency and engagement on matters with significant financial and community impact. Many elected councillors and local communities being left excluded from matters with significant financial, economic and community impact.

As a result, this Council has attempted to progress projects that could have led to the eviction of local businesses, harmed high streets and damaged trust in the Council's decision-making processes.

Only because Conservative councillors stood up for residents and businesses across the borough has this Council been forced into a series of U-turns on these deeply unpopular proposals — a situation which should never have arisen had adequate engagement taken place from the outset.

Council believes that:

The Constitution of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council sets out how decisions are to be made and ensures they are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people, including through its Cabinet Procedure Rules and requirements around Key Decisions and the Forward Plan.

A Key Decision, as set out in the Constitution, is a decision that will be taken by the Cabinet or under executive arrangements and should be included on the published Forward Plan so that all councillors and the public are notified in advance of decisions likely to have significant financial or community impact.

Major projects which involve large expenditure, the acquisition or disposal of assets, or significant community impact benefit from appropriate opportunities for elected member engagement, even where the final decision rests with the Executive.

Council resolves that:

1. For the purposes of this motion, a "Major Project" shall be understood as any proposal or programme that meets one or more of the following criteria:

    a. Involves capital or revenue expenditure, commitment or liability of £250,000 or more
    b. Constitutes or is likely to constitute a Key Decision under the Council's Constitution and executive arrangements
    c. Involves the acquisition, disposal or long-term lease of land or buildings

d. Proposes significant changes to town centres, high streets, parking arrangements or public spaces
e. Has a material impact on local businesses, residents or the use of community assets

2. In accordance with the Cabinet Procedure Rules and the Forward Plan requirements within the Constitution, all Major Projects, should, where they meet the definition of a Key Decision, be included on the Forward Plan sufficiently in advance of any decision being taken and circulated to all councillors in accordance with constitutional requirements.

3. Prior to any final decision being taken on a Major Project, the Leader, relevant Cabinet Members and officers are encouraged to:

    a. ensure appropriate information is made available through existing governance arrangements, including financial implications, impact assessments and any consultation carried out;
    b. consider the use of member briefings, overview and scrutiny, or other appropriate engagement mechanisms including voluntary referral to Full Council or an agreed Committee forum for pre-decision advice; and
    c. have regard to relevant feedback received through those mechanisms.

4. Officers and members must continue to ensure that all Major Project proposals comply with the provisions of the Constitution relating to access to information, notices of Key Decisions and publication of the Forward Plan, so that decisions are made in a transparent and accountable manner.

This motion supports the constitutional decision-making framework, promotes democratic accountability and asks that major decisions affecting Stockton-on-Tees are taken transparently, with meaningful involvement of all elected members and adequate scrutiny."

Received 11 January 2026 12:57

Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL

My Ref: MG/AB/4184
Your Ref:

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

Tel: 01642 527000
Email: mike.greene@stockton.gov.uk
Date: 25 February 2026

Dear Chancellor

Council Motion – Business Rates

I am writing to inform you that, at its meeting on 21 January 2026, the Full Council of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council passed a motion concerning business rates and the impact of recent national policy changes on small businesses and the hospitality sector within the Borough.

In accordance with that resolution, I enclose the full text of the motion as approved by Members.

The Council has requested that the matters raised within the motion be brought to your attention and given due consideration.

Any response you may wish to provide will be shared with Members of the Council and published alongside the relevant minutes of the meeting, in accordance with the Council's usual practice.

Yours sincerely

Mike Greene
Chief Executive

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Sent by email to
public.enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk
rachel.reeves.mp@parliament.uk

COUNCIL – 21 JANUARY 2026
MOTIONS TO COUNCIL MOTION

Council notes that:

The Labour Government's recent Budget has introduced policies that have significantly increased the financial burden on businesses, including higher employment costs, increased taxation, and a failure to adequately support our high streets.

Small businesses, independent shops, pubs, cafés, restaurants and hospitality venues are the beating heart of our communities in the borough of Stockton, providing employment, social value, and vital gathering spaces on our high streets and in our neighbourhoods.

Many of these businesses are already operating on tight margins and facing rising costs are now being further crippled by the Labour Governments policies that show little understanding of the realities facing local employers.

Labour promised a fundamental reform of business rates, yet this reform has failed to materialise. Instead, as a result of the Budget and the forthcoming revaluation, businesses are facing substantial and unaffordable increases in business rates.

Industry estimates indicate that over the next three years, Labour Government policies will result in average increases in business rates of 76% for pubs with many other small businesses facing similarly steep rises that threaten their long-term viability. This figure comes from analysis undertaken by UK Hospitality: https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/hospitality-business-rates-reformunravelling-with-urgent-action-needed/

Under previous Conservative Governments, businesses received meaningful and targeted support, which helped protect jobs and keep high streets alive during unprecedented economic challenges.

Council believes that:

The Labour Government's failure to deliver on its promises to reform business rates, combined with its broader fiscal policies, risks causing widespread business closures, job losses, and long-term damage to high streets across the country and those in our borough. Local authorities have a responsibility to speak up when national government decisions are actively harming local businesses, workers, and communities.

Council resolves:

That the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing this Council's deep concern about the impact of the Labour Government's Budget and business rates policies on small businesses and the hospitality sector

That the correspondence urges the Chancellor to honour Labour's commitment to fundamental business rates reform and to reverse policies that are placing unsustainable pressure on pubs, restaurants, and small businesses.

That the correspondence highlights the severe impact on businesses in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees and call for urgent, targeted support to protect jobs, sustain local enterprise, and safeguard the beating heart of our communities.

That the letter be issued on behalf of the Council by the Chief Executive

POA2026/04471

HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Mike Greene
Chief Executive
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Dunedin House
Columbia Drive
Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6BJ

Your ref: MG/AB/4184
22 June 2026

Dear Mr Greene,

Thank you for your letter of 25 February to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about business rates. I am replying as Minister responsible for the UK tax system. I am sorry for the delayed response.

At the Budget, the Valuation Office (VO) announced updated property values from the 2026 revaluation. This revaluation is the first since the pandemic, which has led to significant increases in rateable values for some properties.

The Government has also been unwinding the temporary business rates relief for the retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) sectors since the pandemic.

In recognition of the impact of the revaluation on bills, the Government has introduced a support package worth £4.3 billion, to protect against ratepayers seeing large overnight increases in bills. As a result, over half of ratepayers see no bill increases in 2026/27, including 23 per cent whose bills go down. This also means most properties seeing increases have them capped at 15 per cent or less in 2026/27, or £800 for the smallest.

The support package includes:

· A redesigned transitional relief scheme which caps bill increases over the next 3 years. Compared to the 2023 transitional relief scheme, the redesigned scheme provides generous support for larger properties, including airports, hotels and key Industrial Strategy properties, who are facing large increases and are important for growth in the UK.

· A supporting small business scheme capping bill increases for the smallest businesses losing some or all of their small business rates relief or rural rate relief. The Government has gone further, by calculating the relief from a baseline that

includes the effect of the RHL relief. This means that many of those who received RHL relief now benefit from Support Small Businesses relief, as they transition to permanently lower multipliers.

The Government has already started the work of reforming our business rates system by introducing new permanently lower multipliers for eligible RHL properties. These new multipliers are worth nearly £1 billion per year and benefit over 750,000 properties.

The Government is paying for this through a high-value multiplier on the top one per cent of most expensive properties. This includes many large distribution warehouses, such as those used by online giants. The high-value multiplier is 33 per cent more than the multiplier for small RHL properties.

The new RHL multipliers replace the temporary RHL relief that had been winding down since the pandemic. Unlike RHL relief, the new multipliers are permanent, giving businesses certainty and stability, and there is no cap, meaning all qualifying properties on high streets across England benefit.

Supporting Small Business (SSB) supports businesses who lost some or all eligibility for Small Business or Rural Rate Relief (SBRR or RRR) at the revaluation, by capping bill increases.

At the 2026 revaluation the Government has continued the SSB scheme, applying different caps and expanding eligibility.

· The 2026 scheme caps eligible ratepayers' bill increases by the higher of £800 or the transitional relief (TR) percentage caps.

· The Government has also expanded eligibility for SSB for ratepayers who previously were in receipt of Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief.

· For 2026/27 only, the Government is rolling over for the 2023 SSB scheme, applying the caps of the higher of £800 or the TR caps.

All the above support is applied before reliefs and supplements.

SSB is providing over £500 million of support for over 80,000 of the smallest businesses. In addition, there is further support through the SSB scheme for over 200,00 RHL properties, including independent pubs or family-owned grocers, offering additional support as they transition to permanently lower multipliers.

Eligibility for the Supporting Small Business scheme is set out in guidance for local authorities, which was published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and can be found at:

http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-relief-2023-supporting-small-business-relief-local-authority-guidance/business-rates-relief-2023-supporting-small-business-relief-local-authority-guidance

The SSB relief is applied automatically to bills for eligible ratepayers.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you again for taking the time to make me aware of your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

DANIEL TOMLINSON MP
EXCHEQUER SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY

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