Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL
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Council

Agenda

Date:
Wednesday 18 March 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 - 40)

   To approve the minutes of the last meetings held on 21 January 2026 and 18 February 2026.

5. **Minutes Silence Former Councillor Chris Coombs**
6. **Public Question Time** (Pages 41 - 50)
7. **Appointments to Committees for 2026/27** (Pages 51 - 54)
8. **Revisions to the Council's Constitution** (Pages 55 - 58)
9. **Motions to Council** (Pages 59 - 62)
10. **Members' Question Time** (Pages 63 - 72)
11. **Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement**

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

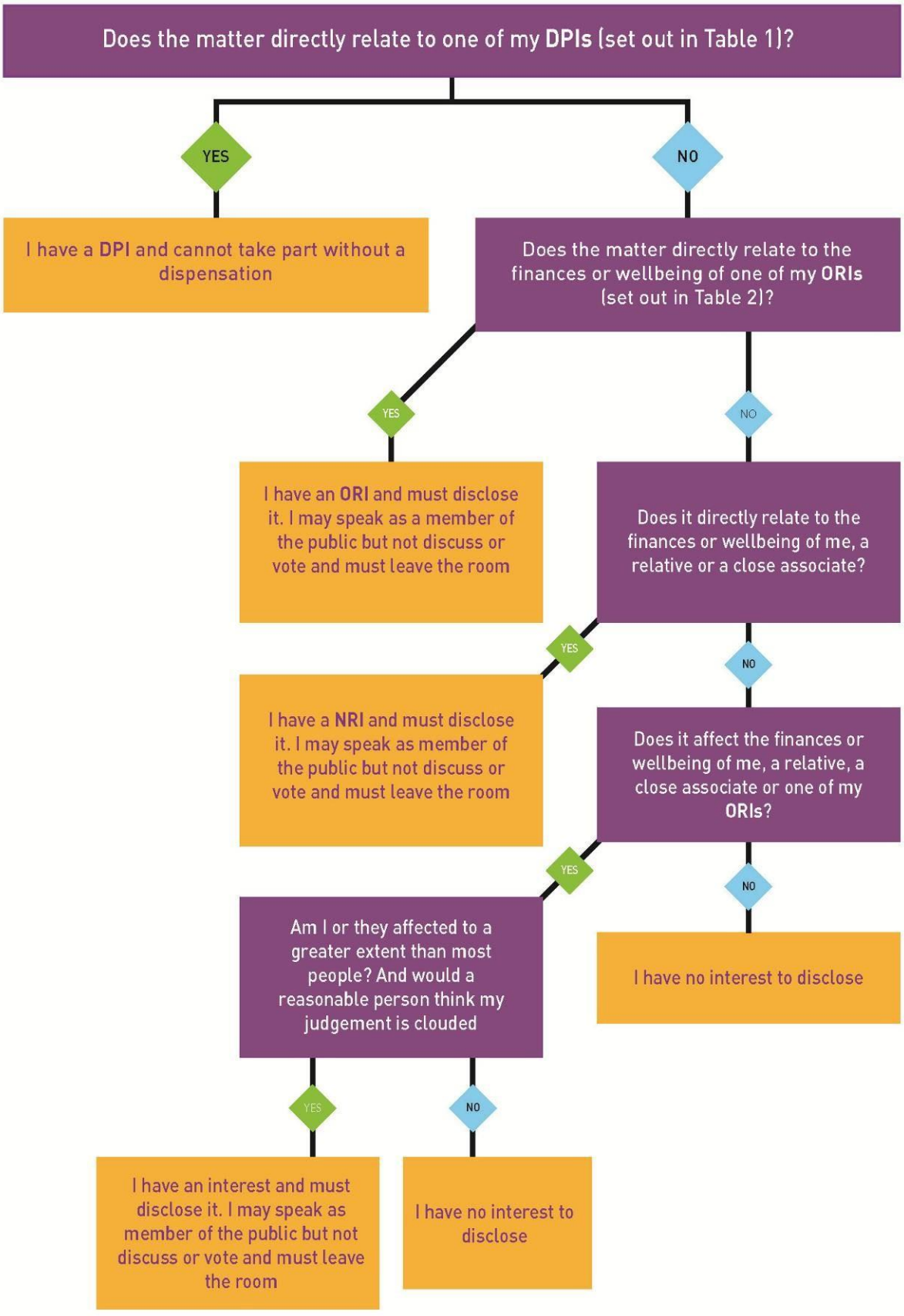

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Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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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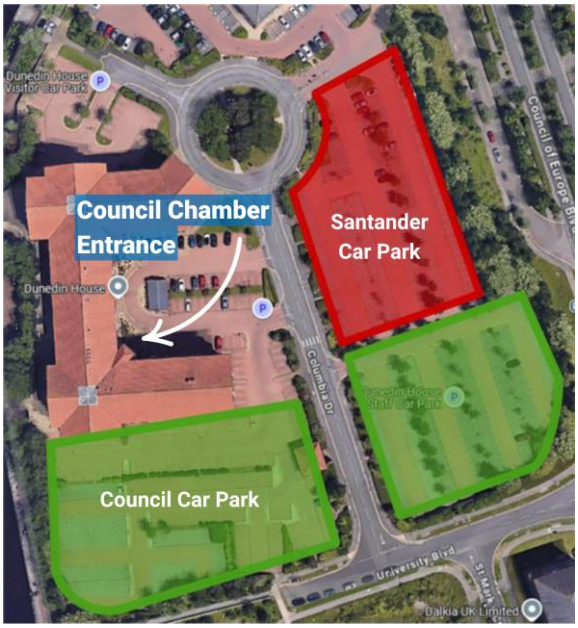
Council Chamber, Dunedin House
Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

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.

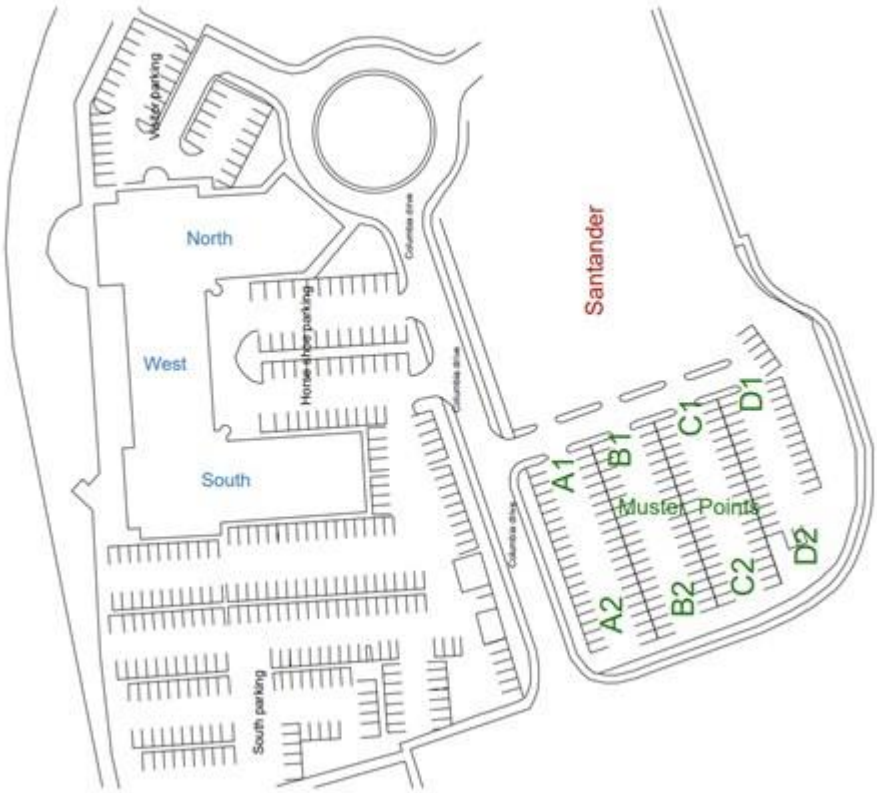
The emergency exits are located via the doors on either side of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber.

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 21st January 2026.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Stephen Richardson)
Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, 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 Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Katie Weston, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Mike Greene, Reuben Kench, Carolyn Nice, Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Laura Kelsey, Chris Renahan, Simon Grundy, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell, Sarah Whaley, John Devine and Junita Agyapong

Also in attendance: Press and Public

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Alan Watson and Cllr Sally Ann Watson

COU/68/25 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

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

COU/69/25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Kevin Faulks declared a non-prejudicial interest in item 10 as a member of CPAD Ingleby Barwick.

COU/70/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

COU/71/25 Public Question Time

The following question was 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?"

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the Leader of the Council (Councillor Lisa Evans) responded with:

"The Council coordinates many schemes aimed to improve energy efficiency measures in private homes. The schemes are all identified on a dedicated webpage: Energy saving schemes and advice - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. Schemes vary in terms of eligibility and measures; most schemes receive direct Government funding and the Council acts only to verify claims and to check the credibility of the installers.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council do not have a specific budget to improve insulation in poorly insulated homes, and we do not directly upgrade homes."

COU/72/25 Petition - Stop Further Housing Developments in Yarm

Consideration was given to a report presenting a petition calling for a stop to further housing development in Yarm.

The Lead Petitioner, Yvonne Wallace, presented the petition.

RESOLVED That the petition be referred to the appropriate body for further consideration.

COU/73/25 Appointments to Committees for 2026/27

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 recent by election.

RESOLVED That the changes set out below be approved:

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

COU/74/25 Article 4 Direction - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Consideration was given to a report highlighting the 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). This was in view of growing demands for small HMOs and the implications on the Borough's housing stock and community.

The report asked Council to delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member and the Planning Committee to produce a draft interim policy or Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to inform the determination of future applications for HMOs.

The report also asked Council to delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth to undertake all necessary associated consultation.

RESOLVED

1. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing and Planning Committee to produce a draft interim policy or Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to inform the determination of future applications for HMOs.

2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth to undertake all necessary consultation in association with resolution 1 above.

COU/75/25 Director of Public Health Report 2025

Consideration was given to the Director of Public Health Annual Report for 2025.

REOLVED That the report be noted.

COU/76/25 Members' Question Time

Question 1

The following question was 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?"

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

"We recognise the many well-being benefits that allotments provide for our residents, including enhanced physical health and social connection, as well as a space to engage with nature and develop new skills. I can happily confirm that the Council has

no plans to dispose of any allotment sites that are either managed directly by the Council or owned by the Council and managed by allotment associations."

Question 2

The following question was 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?"

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the Cabinet Member for Access Communities and Community Safety (Councillor Norma Stephenson) responded with:

"I share Councillor Riordan's frustrations with the state of this particular property and Officers are currently engaging with the owner regarding the need to take action.

The recent scrutiny review conducted by the Council's Place Select Committee identified the issue of empty homes as part of its review focused on the availability of affordable housing and explored potential strategies to increase supply within the borough. Empty homes not only represent a missed opportunity to address housing need, but also contribute to neighbourhood decline, anti-social behaviour, and public frustration. The Committee recognised that returning empty homes to use could be a valuable tool in increasing the supply of affordable housing for both sale and rent. However, current mechanisms for doing so are often lengthy, complex, and require substantial capital investment from partners, including the Council and Registered Providers. Like many local authorities, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has implemented the Empty Homes Premium, increasing council tax liability for properties that have been vacant for two years or more, in an effort to encourage owners to bring them back into use. We also have an established (cross authority) Empty Homes Working Group, which supports owners in returning properties to occupation and, where appropriate, utilises enforcement powers across housing, planning, and regulatory services. At the request of the Scrutiny committee officers have written to the secretary of state for Housing who has replied thus:

"As you note, local authorities have a number of powers and incentives to tackle empty homes. These include, for example, the discretionary powers you reference to charge additional council tax, which we want to continue empowering you to use. It is also encouraging to hear that you and neighbouring local authorities have established an Empty Homes Working Group to coordinate activity. We note the challenges you have highlighted around the use of formal enforcement levers to tackle empty homes. As we outlined in the English Devolution White Paper, we intend to strengthen the ability of local authorities to take over the management of empty homes. Further details will follow in due course. We are also pursuing reforms of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process and land compensation rules via measures in the

Planning and Infrastructure Bill. These reforms will ensure quicker decisions on CPOs can be made; that the administrative costs of undertaking the CPO process are reduced; and that the balance of fairness in the assessment of compensation between local authorities and landowners is fully considered."

We will keep the situation under review and take whatever actions are legally possible to resolve this issue with the landowner."

Councillor Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:

"Will the Cabinet Member agree with me on behalf of the many neglected residents, who are angry, scared and frustrated at the lack of action to protect them and their properties, in the South Road area, and many other places within the Borough, it is incumbent on this Council, when the circumstances allow, to utilise their powers under section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 79 Building Act 1984, and Section 29 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, to enforce the landlord into getting their property in order?"

The Cabinet Member for Access Communities and Community Safety (Councillor Norma Stephenson) responded with:

"I agree with the Member and there will many other similar properties across the Borough."

Question 3

The following question was 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 at a lower cost, what scope exists within the council's procurement framework to consider such options?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"The Council secures value for money from its suppliers through lawful procurement arrangements, delivered in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the relevant public procurement legislation. These requirements ensure transparency, proportionality and competition, so contracts are awarded on an objective and auditable basis.

Supplier costs and contracts are reviewed on an ongoing basis through proportionate contract management arrangements, reflecting the nature, risk, value and complexity

of the contract. In addition, when contracts are due for renewal the Council reviews performance and pricing, including benchmarking and market testing where appropriate, and may undertake market engagement to inform specifications and pricing structures.

Where Members or residents identify an alternative supplier offering equivalent quality at a lower cost, that information can be considered, but the Council cannot operate on the basis of "someone says they can do it cheaper". Public procurement must be carried out transparently and, where required, through open competition. That is not optional: it is the mechanism that prevents closed markets, inappropriate preference and poor value outcomes."

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:

"Many have the perception that suppliers to the Council are over charging. For example, the Ingleby Barwick Community Partnership purchased a Christmas Tree for £370 including delivery yet a few yards away Ingleby Barwick purchased a tree from the Council for £870. Was there a handling fee charged by the Council or are they charging exorbitant prices?"

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"We have to follow strict procurement procedures and I can supply these to you. We are also part of a wider joint procurement organisation to ensure that we are getting better value for money. If you have case studies, then please bring them forward as we are continuously monitoring the market to achieve best value for money."

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?"

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

"Question 1 Response

As of Friday, 9 January 2026, the Homelessness Service is actively working with 342 cases involving people who are either experiencing homelessness or are threatened with homelessness.

Rough Sleeper numbers fluctuate on a night-to-night basis. Since 2010, all local authorities across England have undertaken an official annual autumn rough sleeper count which provides a snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough on a single night. The Homelessness Service undertook a count in November 2025 and identified 9 people sleeping rough. This figure is based on a physical street count and intelligence from partner agencies.

On 9 January 2026, the Homelessness Service was aware of 4 individuals sleeping rough.

- All 4 individuals (noted above) were offered accommodation.
- It is not uncommon for offers of accommodation to be refused.
- The Homelessness service completes regular early morning ‘sweeps’ at known hot spots to identify rough sleeper (currently 2 sweeps per week). In addition, the service responds to reports of rough sleepers (made directly to the service or notifications received via Street Link StreetLink - Connecting people sleeping rough to local services).
- During adverse weather conditions, the Council will activate SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) which aims to protect people sleeping rough by offering (where possible) emergency, short-term accommodation. In these instances, all rough sleepers are offered accommodation, regardless of priority or intentionality.

Question 2 Response

Housing authorities have a duty to try and prevent or relieve homelessness for all applicants who are eligible for assistance and are homeless or threatened with homelessness, irrespective of whether or not they may have a priority need for accommodation. If a housing authority is unable to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless, or to help them to secure accommodation within the ‘relief’ stage, they are required to reach a decision as to whether the applicant has a priority need for accommodation. In determining whether an applicant has a priority need, the Council adheres to the MHCLG’s ‘Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities’.

Statutory Categories for Priority Need: Under Section 189(1) of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002, the following are automatically in priority need:

- Pregnant applicants or those living with a pregnant person
- Households with dependent children
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Vulnerable individuals due to old age, mental illness, learning or physical disability
- 16–17-year-olds (who aren't ‘relevant’ children under section 20 of Children Act 1989)
- Care leavers under 21 who were in care at ages 16–17
- People homeless due to an emergency (e.g. fires, floods)

In determining whether an applicant is in 'priority need' consideration is given to whether an individual is more at risk if they become homeless than most other people. Age will be considered within this assessment.

Question 3 Response

Safeguarding considerations are made in every assessment, regardless of age. Where safeguarding concerns arise, referrals are made into First Contact.

In all cases where eligibility and homeless have been investigated and confirmed, the individual will be issued with a Housing Plan. This will be personal to the individual, setting out steps for both the applicant and Council to take to prevent homelessness or secure accommodation. An advice pack with details for wider services and support agencies is also provided."

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:

"Can I ask the Cabinet Member to pass on my thanks to the Assistant Director and the Homelessness Team for their swift response in this matter. Homelessness is a blight on our country. Many rough sleepers start as sofa surfers and after becoming rough sleepers turn to shoplifting and substance abuse. Would the Council lobby the Secretary of State for Housing and Communities to introduce a cash incentive for residents to house homeless people similar to the policy that was adopted to house Ukrainian refugees?"

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

"I will ask officers to discuss this suggestion further with Councillor Strike."

Question 5

The following question was 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?"

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

"I thank Councillor Strike for raising an important issue regarding the provision and availability of defibrillators across the Borough, it is an issue this council has been proactive in for a number of years and one I know you have a personal interest in.

The Council's Defibrillator Policy provides residents and groups with information regarding purchasing, installing, and maintaining a community public access defibrillators (cPAD), should they wish to do so. The policy also explains how residents can locate their nearest 10 defibrillators to a given location, through DefibFinder. At present, the approach of the council is to support community access to cPADs in areas of the borough identified as having the greatest need, determined by data from the North East Ambulance Service.

The issue of defibrillators on major construction sites is a separate issue. On those sites, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the primary regulator responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation. Their role includes setting standards, carrying out inspections, and taking enforcement action where necessary. While the council promotes good practice and expects high standards from contractors, it is not the council's role to act as the health and safety regulator in that regard. Several of the Borough's larger construction sites have already provided defibrillators within their welfare facilities for staff, although we do not currently hold specific data on this provision. While this is not a statutory requirement under health and safety legislation, it is considered best practice and significantly enhances emergency preparedness on site.

The Council sets clear expectations for contractors on all commissioned projects which include a number of requirements around health & safety and officers would be happy to share or discuss these further with Councillor Strike should he so wish."

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:

"Would the Council agree that CPAD Ingleby Barwick to a fantastic job and ensure that they will do everything they can to support them in their work, including reducing the charge for installing defibrillators on lamp posts?"

The Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (Councillor Pauline Beall) responded with:

"We would have to look carefully at this in the current financial climate but will ask officers to enter into further discussions on this matter. The Council does encourage the use of defibrillators."

<u>Question 6</u>

The following question was 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?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Nigel Cooke) responded with:

“The figure of £1.65million referred to in the question is the agreed annual contribution set out in the lease agreement. This contribution is to the venue operator, Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG).

The contribution was £400,000 in 2021/2022, £350,000 in 2022/2023, and £300,000 for 2023/2024 and subsequent years. Taken over the 5 years, this totals £1.65m.

Stockton Council’s decision to bring the Globe back to life, rather than have a large, dilapidated and empty building in the heart of the town was driven by many factors, including pride in the place and impact on perceptions, which in turn affect economic growth potential.

The public and media coverage of the venue and the town generated by the Globe project has been sustained and positive. We should not overlook the fact that the media coverage of a collapsing listed building would have been sustained and negative. The Council’s contribution to the refurbishment and running of the Globe should be understood in terms of its overall impact over the long term.

The completion of the refurbishment and reopening of the venue was severely affected by the COVID pandemic. During the pandemic, a lot of international touring product, including music, comedy and theatre, was cancelled or postponed, and the post-covid recovery period affected audience behaviours as well as the availability of performances.

However, since opening, the venue has sold over 450,000 tickets, and whilst only a small portion of ticket income is retained by the venue, gross box office income has doubled over the period 2022 to 2025, from £1.5m in 2022, to over £4m last year.

Stocktons support has helped ATG establish the venue amongst the artists and promoters’ community. Since opening, Globe has attracted an impressive list of performers and big-name acts, with many, such as Kraftwerk, Queens of the Stone Age and Kaiser Chiefs, choosing Globe as their only north east tour date.

We wanted residents and visitors to be able to see big names without travelling (and spending their money) in places like Newcastle, Leeds and Manchester.

The list of those performances we’ve attracted is impressive, including music by:

- Royal Blood
- Queens of the Stone Age
- Morrisey
- Paul Weller
- Paul Heaton

- Bowling for Soup & Wheatus
- Robert Plant
- Ocean Colour Scene
- Paloma Faith
- Adam Ant
- Jools Holland
- James
- McFly

Top name comedians have entertained our audiences, including:
- Sarah Millican
- John Richardson
- Al Murrey
- John Bishop
- Jack Whitehall
- Michael Macintyre
- Katherine Ryan
- Phil Wang
- Harry Hill
- Kevin Bridges
- Frankie Boyle
- Russell Howard
- Harry Enfield
- Alan Carr

In addition, we've enjoyed musical theatre that we would not normally see in a town like Stockton including:
- SIX
- Bat out of Hell
- We Will Rock You
- Pretty Woman
- Kinky Boots
- Rocky Horror Show

And events including
- BBC – Sorry I haven't a Clue
- Derren Brown
- Brian Cox
- Strictly: The Professionals

That's not a comprehensive list, but if we asked ourselves when we made the original investment decisions, do we want to bring this sort of entertainment to Stockton's High Street, I think we would have definitely said yes."

Councillor Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

"I am sure the Cabinet Member, as part of their portfolio, will be keeping a close eye on this investment and that it is bringing in shows that attract visitors from the region to spend their money at the Globe Theatre, and in Stockton Town Centre to provide the flawed annual £18m economic uplift figure.

Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that there is something clearly wrong with oversight of this huge financial investment when shows such as Tina Turner, The

Ultimate Tribute, ‘What’s Love Got to do with It’, which I’m sure will be an excellent production, is being promoted at the Globe Theatre this year, with an average ticket price of £39.81 (parking costing extra), when the same show, without taxpayer financial support, is being shown at the Forum Theatre in Billingham, with a ticket price of £29.50 (and free parking)?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Nigel Cooke) responded with:

“I am a music fan and go to shows at the Globe and elsewhere. Ticket pricing is dynamic and based on demand. People have a choice to come to the Globe and tickets sell out quickly. Billingham Forum is a completely different environment and offer to the Globe.”

Question 7

The following question was 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?”

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Councillor Clare Besford) responded with:

“A full planning permission and listed building consent in respect of works to the main entrance, including the demolition of South Lodge building and the erection of a new structure, at Preston Park Museum and Grounds will be submitted by the end of January 2026.”

Councillor Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

“Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the £320k provided from levelling up funding by the previous government for the refused permission is still available in the council coffers (and has not been used elsewhere)?”

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Councillor Clare Besford) responded with:

“Yes.”

Question 8

The following question was 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?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"In the Council meeting of 20 November 2024 members approved prudential borrowing for a number of initiatives through the Powering our Futures programme. This included an allocation of £1m for resurfacing the car park at Wellington Square, with the borrowing repayments due to be paid through the new car parking revenue from the revised car parking charges. Members will be aware that, unless and until borrowing is actually incurred, there are no borrowing repayment charges. Council has authorised borrowing on the basis of the assumptions in place at the time, but no loan has been drawn down and the money has not been borrowed. There is therefore no repayment liability at this stage and no shortfall to be met.

Following the decision of Cabinet to change the car parking charges at its meeting in December 2025, it is now appropriate for Council to reconsider the previous prudential borrowing approval. The planned investment in resurfacing Wellington Square car park and proposed funding will therefore be presented to members as part of the Budget setting and Medium-Term Financial Plan Report at the Council meeting on 18th February. This will enable Council to reconsider the scheme and the revised funding assumptions and options available should Council wish to proceed."

Question 9

The following question was 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/ deputy leader advise members of the procedure if the recommendation and benefits to support prudential borrowing decisions change?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"As Members will know, Council approval is required for the capital programme and for the use of prudential borrowing within that programme, including the associated revenue implications and interest costs.

Where an individual capital proposal is approved on the basis of specific assumptions or anticipated benefits, and those assumptions subsequently change, the Council is not obliged to proceed with borrowing on the original basis. An approval to borrow is an authorisation, and borrowing is only incurred when borrowing is actually drawn down.

In those circumstances, the appropriate approach is for the scheme and its funding to be reviewed and, where necessary, reported back to Members through the usual

governance arrangements, including through Cabinet and Council as part of the budget setting process, the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the capital programme. This ensures that Members can consider the updated business case, affordability and prudential implications should any borrowing be undertaken.

This is consistent with prudent financial management and ensures that decisions remain based on the most up to date information available at the time."

Councillor Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:

"Can the Leader please advise members as to what authority, or element of the constitution did the Deputy Leader rely on when he moved away from the recommendation and benefits provided to Council to support the prudential borrowing (for the £1m to resurface Wellington Street car park) when he announced, and implemented, arbitrarily, in November 2025, that a 1-hour free parking would be introduced in Council Car parks from the end of that month, until the end of January 2026?

To assist, I am sure the Leader/Cabinet member will be aware that the recommendation (for this period) was in the report to Cabinet for their joint decision several weeks later, on the 11th of December."

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"A decision was taken in under the scheme of delegation for the pre-Christmas period. No borrowing was incurred; costs were met from revenue."

Question 10

The following question was 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?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"Despite recent comments, the Council commissioned a service from Stockton and District Advice and Information Service with a defined criteria, set out within the contract specification for the provision of advice and information. Contract monitoring was undertaken as part of regularly meetings between SDAIS and Council Officers. The Council did not provide core funding to SDAIS.

The contract came to an end on 31st December 2025. This was following a detailed transformation review of welfare support services, which highlighted the services commissioned are no longer required due to the introduction of a new more efficient and cost effect approach to welfare support. We continue to commission SDAIS to deliver the Warm Homes Healthy People scheme and have also offered a revised

contract valued at £60,000 incorporating signposting to self-support for able customers, referral to alternative support providers for those requiring assistance, and face-to-face appointments for vulnerable customers meeting defined criteria. This offer was declined.
The Council maintains committed to supporting residents whilst ensuring value for money in the services it provides and commissions.

The new approach maximises self-serve options which empowers individuals who are digitally enabled to be independent, over 30,000 council taxpayers now use digital means to manage their council tax accounts suggesting a significant proportion of households are digitally enabled. To address financial vulnerability at its core the new approach focuses on prevention with data-led targeted support. There are a range of services available to the Council at NIL cost, an example being Governments Money and Pension Advice Service which provides a free debt advice referral process which the Council makes use of; debt advice was part of the contract with SDAIS and just one example of the services that the Council no longer needs to commission."

Councillor Niall Innes asked the following supplementary question:

"Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that every penny of our tax-payer money must be accounted for and in this case this Labour Led Council has shown a lack of leadership and oversight, so can I ask him to provide to members, if not this evening, but within the next seven days a list, with the financial details, of all the funding arrangements to partner organisations, so that they (members) can understand what oversight and governance
arrangements are in place?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"If we can meet outside of this meeting to see what organisations you may in interested in, I can then discuss with officers what information can be shared. Council tax payers' money should be spent appropriately."

Question 11

The following question was 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?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"All the financial statements that have been published to date with regards to the Hotel have been prepared in accordance with the appropriate accounting standards. Namely those provisions applicable to companies who are subject to the small companies regime and in accordance with the provisions of Financial Reporting Standards (FRS) 102 Section 1A. These accounts have therefore been prepared and filed in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements.

For the first four years of operation the Council produced the accounts to be presented to Companies House. It also used an exemption under s479A of the Company's Act 2006 where a company is exempt from the requirements of the Act relating to audit of its individual accounts for a financial year if the company is included in the consolidated accounts drawn up for that year and the parent undertaking discloses in the notes to the consolidated accounts that the company is exempt from the requirements of the Act (which it was for Stockton) relating to the audit of individual accounts by virtue of s479A.

Due to delays in the audit of the Local Authority, group and pension fund accounts in previous years and for transparency the Board of Directors for Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited engaged an independent audit of both subsidiary companies, rather than utilise the exemption described above.

For the financial year 2022/23 a company called Tindles were contracted to undertake the specific task of producing the annual accounts and providing an audit opinion. There are some slight presentational differences in how the Council, Robson Laidler and Tindles present the information due to the accountancy software used, an example is the use of brackets and minus signs around figures, but fundamentally the accounts are presented according to the required accounting standards. The differences referred to are therefore presentational and reflect changes in preparation and audit arrangements over time, rather than any change in compliance.

It is also important to be clear that Stockton Hotels Company Limited is a separate legal entity. The company's directors, who acknowledge are also senior officers of the Council, act in their capacity as company directors and are responsible for the governance and statutory accounts of the company, taking appropriate professional advice, including from the external auditors, on the company's filings.

The Council's role is as shareholder, and accountability is exercised through the appropriate shareholder governance arrangements. The Council chamber is not a forum for the operational direction of the company and Members should avoid blurring roles in a way that could be interpreted as assuming shadow director responsibilities.

Separately, and in the public interest, the Council has agreed enhanced transparency arrangements in its capacity as shareholder, including the provision of additional financial information to the Council beyond what is required to be filed at Companies House."

Councillor Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:

"One of the statements that is not included in this year's accounts, but has been included previously, is under the title, Pension Costs and other Post Retirement Benefits, and goes on to say that the company operates a defined pension contribution scheme, and that contributions payable to the company's pension scheme are charged to profit and loss to which they relate.

Can the Cabinet Member please explain to members what the financial benefit from the Pension Scheme to the four persons associated with the company is?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"I will provide a response and circulate this also to all Members of Council."

Question 12

The following question was 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?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"We thank the 758 residents who took part in the survey. My answer is yes, we are confident in the detail provided in the consultation pages."

Councillor Lynn Hall asked the following supplementary question:

"The Leader of the Council will be aware of the introductory page of the consultation exercise which reads:

"Every year Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is required to set a budget to determine how we spend our money. The money we spend on supporting people in our communities must balance with the income we receive from Council Tax, Business Rates, Government grants, and income from fees and charges for our services."

Can the Leader of the Council please explain, following this introductory statement, why residents and businesses are being presented with an opaque current budget figure of £85m for Adult Social Healthcare, within the consultation exercise, when the same current budget figure was quoted as being £107m in the Executive Scrutiny Meeting just a few weeks ago?"

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport (Councillor Paul Rowling) responded with:

"The numbers quoted cover different financial years and include different services. The consultation numbers have set rules on which grants are included and excluded according to Government guidance."

COU/77/25 Motions to Council

Motion 1

It was moved by Cllr Niall Innes, and 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."

Following debate and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.65, it was requested that a recorded vote be taken on the motion, which was supported by at least a quarter of the Members present.

Members in favour of the motion:

Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vicker and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley.

Members against the motion:

Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Katie Weston, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

26 for the motion

21 against the motion

The motion was declared carried and it was

RESOLVED

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.

<u>Motion 2</u>

It was moved by Cllr Niall Innes, and 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."

Following debate and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.65, it was requested that a recorded vote be taken on the motion, which was supported by at least a quarter of the Members present.

Members in favour of the motion:

Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers and Cllr Marcus Vickers.

Members against the motion:

Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Katie Weston, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

21 for the motion

26 against the motion

The motion was declared not carried.

COU/78/25 Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

"Our last Full Council meeting took place on 19 November last year. Since then, Cabinet has met twice, on 11 December and 15 January, where we considered a

range of matters. The decision records for those meetings have been made available to Members.

Our next Cabinet meeting is scheduled for 9 February. At that meeting we will consider the budget proposals and the Medium-Term Financial Plan, leading to recommendations being brought to Full Council on 18 February.

The focus is simple: protect the most vulnerable, support our communities, and be honest about the pressures councils face nationally.

In addition, we are also due to consider reports on the Council's Tenancy Policy, Alternative Provision, the annual ISAG report, a report on Vulnerable Groups, the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan, and an update on the Children's Front Door proposals.

Before I finish, I want to mention something positive for the borough. Preston Park Museum welcomed the opening of 'Perfume' on 17 January — an immersive sound and light installation that is already attracting interest. It's a real credit to Preston Park Museum and the teams involved — and a reminder of the pride we can take in what Stockton on Tees has to offer.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank colleagues across the Council and our partners for the work that continues day in, day out, particularly over the winter period.

On a more solemn note, next Monday, 27 January, is Holocaust Memorial Day, marking the liberation of Auschwitz Birkenau in 1945. We will commemorate this with purple memorial lighting. Holocaust Memorial Day reminds us why remembrance matters — and why we must stand firmly against hatred and prejudice in all its forms.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you all here again at our next meeting, the budget setting Council on 18 February. Thank you."

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Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday 18th February 2026.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Stephen Richardson)
Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, 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 Tony Riordan, 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 Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Weston, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Barry Woodhouse and Cllr Stephen Dodds

Officers: Mike Greene, Reuben Kench, Carolyn Nice, Majella McCarthy, Clare Harper, Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell and John Devine

Also in attendance: Press and public

Apologies: Cllr Dan Fagan

COU/79/25 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

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

COU/80/25 Declarations of Interest

The Head of Legal Services advised the meeting that all Councillors present had been granted a dispensation to take part and vote on matters relating to the setting of the council tax, budget and precepts, setting the local council tax reduction scheme, members allowances, payments and indemnities.

No other declarations were made.

COU/81/25 Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy

Council considered a report which set out the final proposals for the Council's 2026/27 Budget and Council Tax, together with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position to 2029. The report also provided an update on the Council's financial performance for 2025/26. It outlined the proposed budget for 2026/27 and the

indicative MTFP for future years, reflecting the provisional finance settlement announced on 17 December 2025 and the final local government finance settlement issued on 9 February 2026.

The MTFP provided an indicative financial envelope to support sustainable decision-making and prioritisation over the planning period, and that it would continue to be reviewed annually to reflect updated demand, inflation, funding assumptions and delivery progress. Like many councils nationally, the Council had continued to experience increasing demand for services and significant cost pressures, leading to overspending against the approved budget. The greatest areas of pressure were Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Home to School Transport. As a consequence, reserves had been required to cushion the impact. The report therefore included a Reserves Policy setting out how reserves would be replenished to ensure the Council maintained financial resilience against future unforeseen pressures.

The report highlighted that demand and cost pressures were expected to continue across the MTFP period, outpacing the increase in funding available. This had resulted in a projected budget gap of £6.7m in 2026/27, rising to £13.8m in 2027/28 and £18.4m in 2028/29. In response, the Council had identified a renewed Phase 2 of the Powering Our Future programme, incorporating outcome-based reviews, council-wide initiatives and efficiency programmes. This phase built on the progress already achieved through Phase 1, which had identified £9.9m of savings by 2028/29. The Council also noted that residents' feedback from the Let's Talk Money consultation had informed areas identified for review.

The scale and pace of required savings—particularly in the later years of the plan—were acknowledged as representing a significant delivery challenge. While the Council had a strong track record in delivering change through Phase 1 of Powering Our Future, Phase 2 would require early validation of assumptions, strengthened governance through the established gateway process, and regular reporting to Members. The report emphasised that, given the current low level of reserves, timely corrective action would be needed where delivery risks emerged, including revising sequencing, scope or mitigations as necessary.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Rowling, seconded by Councillor Lisa Evans and

RESOLVED

1) That in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, Members note that the Section 151 Officer confirms that the following recommendations:

    a) represent a robust budget which has been prepared in line with best practice;
    b) provide adequate working balances;
    c) set out that reserves and provisions are adequate for their purpose.

General Fund Budget

2) Approve a 2026/27 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council of £134,206,810

3) Approve a 2026/27 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inclusive of Parish Precepts £135,318,668.

4) Approve the 2026/27 budget and indicative 2027/29 MTFP as outlined in paragraphs 54-129, the level of General Fund Balances and the release of reserves to balance the 2025/26 in year financial position as set out in paragraphs 13-43.

5) Note the outcome of the Let's Talk Money Budget Consultation as set out in paragraphs 44-46 and in Appendix A to the report.

6) Approve the reserves policy at Appendix B

7) Approve £1.428m of capital receipts to be applied to the capital programme, as set out in paragraphs 39-41, for the following interventions:

- Therapeutic Children's Home
- Xentrall ICT Network
- Accommodation
- Replacement Vehicle Ramps
- Parks Improvements Programme
- Foster Carer adaptations

8) This will allow £1.428m of Council resources previously earmarked for the above schemes to be transferred into the Transformation Reserve.

9) Approve prudential borrowing of £6.5m to fund vehicle replacement purchases over the next three years, with members noting the borrowing repayments will be variable each year reflective of annual spending requirements, described in paragraphs 61-69 and call on the MTFP outlined at paragraph 99.

10) Approve prudential borrowing of £1m to fund the resurfacing of Wellington Square Car Park with annual borrowing repayments of £80,000 per annum, provided for within the MTFP, and modify the pre-existing borrowing approvals accordingly.

Taxation

SBC

11) Approve the Council Tax for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council prior to Parish, Fire and Police Precepts be increased by 4.95%, which includes the Government Levy of 2% in respect of Social Care, i.e. to £2,139.91 at Band D (£1,426.61 at Band A).

Fire, Police & Parish

12) The Council note the Police & Crime Commissioner is proposing a precept of £20,867,528 which equates to a Council Tax of £332.73 at Band D (£221.82 at Band A).

13) The Council note the Fire Authority is proposing a precept of £6,237,743 which equates to a Council Tax of £99.46 at Band D (£66.31 at Band A).

14) The Council note the Parish precepts as set out in paragraph 143 of the budget report

Capital

15) Approve the Capital Programme attached at Appendix G & H.

Council Tax - Statutory Requirements

16) Members approve the statutory requirements for Council Tax as shown in Appendix I to the report.

17) The Council must set its Local Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme annually by 11 March of the preceding financial year. Cabinet therefore recommends to Council that the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is retained for the financial year 2026/27 incorporating the updates for the prescribed requirements in regulations and to reflect updated income figures in the table at Schedule 1. The scheme is available here www.stockton.gov.uk/CTR.

18) That the Chief Finance Officer be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport, to make further adjustments to the income table and/or disregard additional funds should the government issue revised publications with regards to these matters after 18 February, to ensure that Government's intentions for additional support is maintained.

Capital Strategy

19) Approve the Capital Strategy as set out at Appendix J to the report, including the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy.

Treasury Management/Prudential Code

20) Approve the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix K to the report.

Investment Strategy

21) Approve the Investment Strategy as set out at Appendix L to the report.
Organisational and HR.

22) Council approves the Pay Policy Statement including the pay and grading structure at Appendix M.

Members Allowances

23) Approve that Members allowances are frozen for 2026/27. This will mean that these allowances have been frozen since 2013/14.

Fees and Charges Policy

24) Council note the Fees and Charges Policy and associated estimates of income generation attached at Appendix C to the report.

In accordance with the Constitution, the vote was taken by means of a recorded vote and the voting was as follows:

Members in favour of the motion:

Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Katie Weston, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Members against the motion:

Cllr Diane Clarke OBE, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Jason French, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mohammed Mazi, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Alan Watson and Cllr Sally Ann Watson.

29 for the motion.

26 against the motion.

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COUNCIL – 18 MARCH 2026
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Public question:

“When is the disgraceful, inconsiderate, unsafe and illegal parking around Whitehouse Primary School going to be seriously addressed.

Residents are verbally abused and threatened and their lives blighted, made a misery and severely compromised.

Children's lives are put at risk up to three times every school day (I myself have observed many near misses) and is simply not acceptable.

Despite numerous complaints, NOTHING whatsoever has been done by SBC on Barlborough Avenue side of the school.”

Received 29 January 2026 11:14

QUESTION 2

Public Question submitted by Samuel Bradford:

“Over 30 objections have been submitted to planning application 25/0148/VARY, a Section 73 variation to permission 16/0195/VARY for a Billingham incinerator by Billingham Energy and China Power Engineering. As UK guidance says Section 73 cannot change a development’s description, does the shift from gasification to EfW and use of decade-old documents mean a new full application is required rather than a delegated decision?”

Received 9 February 2026 19:12

QUESTION 3

Public Question submitted by Samuel Bradford:

“Even without the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility, we have enough capacity to deal with the region’s residual waste, especially considering factors like a 30% gain in available capacity, once separate food waste collections kick in.

In the light of this, will the council make it a policy not to approve any more waste incinerator proposals that enter the planning system?”

Received 9 February 2026 19:12

QUESTION 4

Public Question submitted by Karlee Atkinson:

“Both myself, my councillor and others have reported on numerous occasions over the last 12 months about the illegal, dangerous and inconsiderate parking around Billingham South School. Particularly around Belasis Avenue and Bedale Avenue. Please can you tell me how many times that this area has been visited by enforcement and how many PCNs have been issued to vehicles in this area at school run times in that time?”

Received 11 February 2026 10:31

QUESTION 5

Public Question submitted by Christopher Lipthorpe:

“Will the council ban all contracts with Palantir?

I am concerned about Palantir's technology being used for social credit scoring and crime prediction in Teesside. This is a distopian system which can lead to self-censorship and a loss of individual autonomy.

Palantir is also developing AI-powered weapons systems for use in Israel's conflict with Palestinians in Gaza. This violates international humanitarian law, human rights and our basic privacy and freedoms.”

Received 13 February 2026 1:07

QUESTION 6

Public Question submitted by John McDermottroe:

“In regard to the MTFP Of the £6.7 million savings required in 2026/27, how much is currently supported by fully costed and approved proposals rather than assumptions within Phase 2 of transformation?”

Received 2 March 2026 16:20

QUESTION 7

Public Question submitted by John McDermottoe:

“Children’s Social Care is projected to require an additional £5 million next year, rising to £13 million by 2028/29. What structural changes are being implemented to reduce reliance on high-cost external placements?”

Received 2 March 2026 16:20

QUESTION 8

Public Question submitted by Geoffrey Mawson:

“I wish to bring to the council’s attention regarding the proliferation of illegal and dangerous parking in the Old Billingham area. This is most prevalent around the zebra crossings at Belasis Stores and Station Road with drivers regularly parking on the zig zags when collecting take away food. What can be done to prevent this and re-educate drivers? I have seen the enforcement teams in these areas and have witnessed them taking no action. I fear that this will lead to a serious accident.”

Received 8 March 2026 11:59

QUESTION 9

Public Question submitted by Jess Hobson:

“Thirteen, the non-profit social housing provider, have increased rents by 1% over inflation year-on-year for 5 years whilst increasing capital reserves to over £800 million. At the same time, social housing tenants face high levels of poverty and deprivation across Teesside which will be further embedded by increased rent. Given this, will the council write to Thirteen and urge them to implement a rent freeze?”

Received 8 March 2026 20:39

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Agenda Item 7

REPORT TO COUNCIL

18 MARCH 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Appointments to Committees for 2026/27

Summary

This report presents a change to a committee requested by a political group.

Recommended

That Council note and agree the change set out below.

Details

The Thornaby Independent Group has provided notification of the following change it wishes to make:

People Select Committee
Remove Cllr Ian Dalgarno, replace with Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

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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REPORT TO COUNCIL

18 MARCH 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Addendum to Item 7 - Appointments to Committees for 2026/27

Summary

This addendum presents a change to a committee requested by a political group received after the agenda had been issued

Recommended

That Council note and agree the change set out below.

Details

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

Planning Committee

Remove Cllr Dan Fagan, replace with Cllr Steve 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

18 MARCH 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Revisions to the Council's Constitution

Summary

This report asks Council to approve revisions to the Council's Constitution following consideration by Member' Advisory Panel and Cabinet.

Recommendations

That:

1) The wording within the Council's Constitution is amended to be clear and consistent that if there are over 1000 signatures on a petition, then referral to Council is automatic and that only final responses, not all correspondence, will be published.

2) The Council's Constitution specifies that electronic petitions are only accepted via the Modern.Gov platform to enable the Council to set the parameters of the petition (i.e. that the petition can only be signed by a person if they live, work or study in the Borough).

3) The Council's Constitution is amended to extend the composition of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee to include the Group Leader and Deputy Group Leader of each political party on the Council (where they are not already a member of the Forum in another role).

Detail

Petition Scheme

1. The petition scheme states that "Whenever possible we will also publish all correspondence relating to the petition (all personal details will be removed)." It is clearly not appropriate to publish all correspondence in relation to a petition. However, it would be in order to publish any final response and it is proposed that the wording within the Constitution is amended accordingly.

2. There is also some inconsistency around the use of the word "considered". The first page of the petition scheme states "If a petition has 1,000 signatures or more, it will be **considered for referral to a full Council meeting** for a full and proper debate. The petition scheme additional information then states "If your petition has received 1000 signatures or more, it will **automatically be referred to a meeting of full Council** for a full and proper debate". Page 5 of the petition scheme states "If a petition contains more than 1,000 signatures **it will be considered for debate by the full Council**. This

means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible, and consideration will then take place at the following meeting". Members' Advisory Panel proposed that the wording within the Constitution is amended to be clear and consistent that, if there are over 1000 signatures referral to full Council is automatic.

3. The Modern.Gov Committee administration system has e-petition functionality which allows the Council to be able to set the parameters of the petition before it goes live i.e. making it explicitly clear that persons should only sign the petition if they live, work or study in the Borough. Anyone signing a petition would tick a box saying which of these criteria they meet and then giving the address where they live, work or study which will ensure they are a valid signatory. It has proved problematic accepting them from Change.Org as we have been unable to ensure that the lead petitioner makes the public aware of the parameters that apply to the Council's petitions scheme i.e. live work or study in the Borough. Members' Advisory Panel therefore proposed that in future the Council should only accept electronic petitions submitted through the Modern.Gov platform.

4. The submission of hard copy petitions will still be permitted.

Composition of Scrutiny Liaison Forum

5. Under the Constitution, the role of Scrutiny Liaison Forum is to:

   a) meet annually to provide a Forum to foster and develop a closer, more constructive working relationship between the Cabinet Members, the Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Chairs and thereby assist in the efficient and effective working of scrutiny and the scrutiny work programme in order to deliver the Council's key priorities and secure added value and to consider the Scrutiny agenda for the forthcoming municipal year;

   b) receive briefings from Cabinet Members, Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Chairs on emerging policy development areas;

   c) consider the current scrutiny work programme position and progress in delivering its aims;

   d) consider and ensure support for the current scrutiny work programme and its delivery;

   e) consider any special issues which may require urgent policy development advice or scrutiny work; and

   f) undertake appropriate liaison with the Executive Scrutiny Committee on future policy development issues and review topics.

6. The membership of the Forum is comprised of Cabinet members, members of the Corporate Management Team, Executive Scrutiny Chair and Select Committee Chairs.

7. When the Forum was first established, there were opposition scrutiny chairs in place and the membership of the Forum therefore facilitated cross party informal discussions on the scrutiny work programme ahead of consideration by Executive Scrutiny Committee. Recognising that opposition chairs are not currently in place, Members' Advisory Panel proposed that the membership of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum be

extended to include the Group Leader and Deputy Group Leader of each political party on the Council (where they are not already a member of the Forum in another role).

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

8. None.

Corporate Parenting Implications

9. None.

Financial and Legal Implications

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

Risk Assessment

11. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors

12. Not ward specific

Background Papers

13. None

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COUNCIL – 18 MARCH 2026
MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

MOTION 1

Motion submitted by Cllr Ted Strike, to be seconded by Cllr Tony Riordan:-

"Council notes that:

Adult Social Care is a national statutory responsibility placed upon local authorities by Parliament, yet the current funding framework depends heavily on locally raised council tax, including the Adult Social Care precept. Because council tax bases vary significantly across England, residents in areas with lower property values are required to contribute proportionally more to raise the equivalent level of Adult Social Care funding as those in areas with stronger tax bases. This creates a structural and systemic inequity in the financing of what is, by law, a national service. Council further notes that, despite repeated commitments from successive governments to reform Adult Social Care funding, the present arrangements remain unchanged.

Council further notes that:

The continued reliance on local taxation to fund a national statutory service is both unsustainable and unfair. The responsibility for addressing this inequity, and for establishing a fair and resilient national funding model for Adult Social Care, rests squarely with Central Government.

Council therefore resolves:

(1) That the Chief Executive be instructed to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer

   a) seeking an immediate and definitive timetable for the introduction of a replacement national funding model for Adult Social Care; and
   b) calling upon the Government to introduce, without delay, an interim national equalisation mechanism for the Adult Social Care element of council tax, such that residents in equivalent council tax bands contribute on a consistent basis across England regardless of variations in local tax base.

(2) That the communication make clear that this Council considers the current funding model inequitable and in urgent need of reform.

(3) That any response received from the Chancellor of the Exchequer be reported to Full Council at the earliest available meeting.

Received 6 March 2026 8:31

MOTION 2

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

This Council Notes:

1. That the Labour Government's approach to public service funding, including the so-called "Fair Funding" arrangements and recent national settlements, has failed to deliver genuinely fair or needs-based funding for policing, fire and rescue services, or local government in areas such as Cleveland.

2. That Cleveland Police has publicly and repeatedly warned that current Government funding settlements are inadequate, unfair, and unsustainable, resulting in a projected funding shortfall of around £2.4 million, equivalent to approximately 40 frontline police officers, despite continued high levels of crime, vulnerability, and demand. Between 2024 2025, national police forces have seen a net decrease of 2,195 officers.

3. That Cleveland Police received the lowest percentage funding increase nationally, a settlement which its Labour Police and Crime Commissioner has described as deeply unfair and disconnected from operational reality, placing frontline policing at risk.

4. That since Labour came to power in 2024, police forces nationally have faced ongoing real-terms funding pressure, with forces such as Cleveland being forced to plan for reductions in officer numbers, fewer specialist roles, and reduced neighbourhood policing capacity, not because demand has fallen, but because Government funding has failed to keep pace with costs.

5. That Cleveland Fire Brigade remains one of the most financially constrained fire services in the country, with a structural funding gap projected at around £1.77 million, even after proposed council tax precept increases.

6. That Cleveland Fire Brigade has made clear that continued under-funding places frontline resilience at risk, forcing difficult decisions on staffing, appliances, and service delivery, and transferring the burden of national funding failures onto local residents.

7. That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has itself been negatively impacted by the Government's funding framework, including:

    - A worsening financial position driving poor fiscal planning.
    - Missing out entirely on any share of the additional £740 million announced in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement, despite significant local need.
    - Being excluded from multiple support grants purely because of headline Core Spending Power calculations that mask real-world pressures.

This Council Believes:

1. That the Government's "Fair Funding" approach is neither fair nor reflective of need and systematically disadvantages areas such as Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Cleveland area.

2. That current under-funding of police and fire services directly undermines public safety, increases risk to residents, and erodes confidence in essential public services.

3. That the Government's reliance on council tax precepts to prop up police and fire funding is regressive, unfairly shifting responsibility from the Exchequer to local households, many of whom are already under severe cost-of-living pressure.

This Council Resolves:

1. That the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, expressing this Council's deep concern and strong opposition to the impact of the Labour Government's funding policies on Police and Fire Services, particularly the consequences of the current Fair Funding approach.

2. That the correspondence explicitly highlights:

    - The severe and disproportionate impact of funding shortfalls on Cleveland Police, including the real risk of losing frontline officers and reduced community policing in Stockton-on-Tees.
    - The ongoing financial fragility of Cleveland Fire Brigade, and the unacceptable risks this creates for emergency response and public safety.
    - The failure of national funding decisions to recognise the needs of Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Cleveland area, despite unambiguous evidence of demand and need.

3. That the Council calls on the Chancellor to urgently review and reform current funding arrangements, to:

    - Deliver genuinely fair, needs-based funding for Police and Fire Services
    - Provide immediate redress for Forces and Brigades facing funding-driven reductions.
    - Ensure areas such as Cleveland Police and Cleveland Fire Brigade services are no longer penalised by flawed funding formulas.

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

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COUNCIL – 18 MARCH 2026
MEMBER QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

Member Question submitted by Cllr Nathan Gale:-

"Could the Cabinet Member outline what actions Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is currently taking—and plans to take—to increase the uptake of Supported Internships for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including how the Council is working with local employers, education providers and support organisations to expand opportunities and improve outcomes?"

Received 6 March 2026 16:00

QUESTION 2

Member Question submitted by Cllr Barbara Inman:-

“In light of the Government’s Best Start in Life Strategy which sets ambitious targets for all local authorities to significantly increase the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028, what are Stockton Council’s planned measures to improve GLD outcomes for children and how will these initiatives support early years settings, families and communities across the Borough?”

Received 6 March 2026 18:01

QUESTION 3

Member Question submitted by Cllr Sufi Mubeen:-

“The Home Office developed Clear, Hold, Build, as a framework for tackling serious and organised crime at a neighbourhood level, involving partners and the community in delivering and sustaining reductions in serious organised crime, related crime, and Anti-Social Behaviour.

In 2023 this Labour led council adopted this strategy in the Stockton Town Centre and Ropner Ward’s. Moving forward the strategy was headlined under the Project Harmony and Operation Nightfall banners.

Can the Cabinet Member please update members as to the progression of these initiatives?”

Received 8 March 2026 17:22

QUESTION 4

Member Question submitted by Cllr Marcus Vickers:-

“Many residents enjoy doing their part to recycle household waste; however, the current recycling system of bags and boxes is often cited as a point of frustration for a lot of residents, particularly our elderly folk who are sometimes physically challenged with the handling of them.

Given the decision to transition to fortnightly waste collections, will the Cabinet Member agree with me, and a great number of our residents, that a standard recycling wheelie bin, like the ones used by our Neighbouring Authorities, would remove the frustration and physical challenges for our residents and make it easier for them to take part in the recycling initiative?”

Received 8 March 2026 17:22

QUESTION 5

Member Question submitted by Cllr Jack Miller:-

“Given the council’s decision to move to fortnightly residual waste collections, what specific provisions will be put in place to support households that produce unavoidable sanitary and incontinence waste, particularly those with disabled or vulnerable children and adults, to ensure they are not disproportionately affected by the change?”

Received 8 March 2026 17:22

QUESTION 6

Member Question submitted by Cllr Barry Woodhouse:-

“As the Chair of the Audit Committee. I would like to ask the leader of the council about her ability to comment on the finances of the council?”

Received 8 March 2026 22:55

QUESTION 7

Member Question submitted by Cllr Carol Clark:-

“How many children benefited from the HAF scheme this half term?”

Received 8 March 2026 22:55

QUESTION 8

Member Question submitted by Cllr Marc Besford:-

“Why did the minister for innovation recently visit?

Received 8 March 2026 22:55

QUESTION 9

Member Question submitted by Cllr Eileen Johnson:-

“Can I ask Cllr Richard Eglington about the recent public consultation into the Yarm Levelling up funding?”

Received 8 March 2026 23:07

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