

**Date:**

Monday 15 June 2026 at 4.00 pm

**Venue:**

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

**Cllr Jim Beall (Chair)**

**Cllr Steve Nelson (Vice-Chair)**

Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

## **Agenda**

### **1. Livestreaming**

This meeting will be filmed for live and / or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items, and the footage will be on the website for 12 months. A copy of it will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy.

If you attend and make a representation to the meeting, you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. When admitted to the Council Chamber you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for livestreaming and / or training purposes. If you do not wish to have your image captured, please contact Democratic Services prior to attending the meeting.

If there are any technical difficulties with the livestreaming, the meeting will still proceed.

### **2. Evacuation Procedure (Pages 7 - 10)**

### **3. Apologies for Absence**

### **4. Declarations of Interest**

### **5. Minutes (Pages 11 - 14)**

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 May 2026

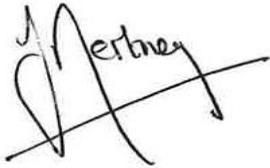
### **6. Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects (Pages 15 - 20)**

To consider the Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations

### **7. Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets (Pages 21 - 38)**

**8. Chairs Update and Work Programme 2026-2027**

(Pages 39 - 40)



Jonathan Nertney  
Head of Democratic Services  
Friday 5 June 2026

## **Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting**

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

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

Contact: Scrutiny Officer, Michelle Gunn on email [michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk)

**Key – Declarable interests are :-**

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

**Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance**



**Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

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

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

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

## Table 2 – Other 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

## 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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## Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday 18th May 2026.

**Present:** Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

**Officers:** Jane Edmend, Marc Stephenson, Stephen Donaghy (Adult, Health and Wellbeing), Michelle Gunn (Corporate Services)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Norma Stephenson

**Apologies:**

### **PLA/7/26 Evacuation Procedure**

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedures.

### **PLA/8/26 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **PLA/9/26 Minutes**

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **PLA/10/26 Progress Update of Previously Agreed Recommendations - Affordable Housing**

Consideration was given to assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Committee's previously completed review of Affordable Housing. This was the second update following the Committee's agreement of the action plan in June 2025 and two of the outstanding recommendations had been fully achieved.

Recommendation 2, regarding investigation of a hybrid model to address the borough's affordable housing need, was assessed as on track due to the impact being long term. The model of delivery would be considered as each site opportunity became available, ensuring that the most effective model would be utilised. Discussion took place regarding direct delivery. It was noted this did not always mean the Council building new homes, but could also be buying properties, including the possibility of buying properties that could be suitable for conversion.

A further progress update on the impact of the outstanding recommendation was requested in six months.

AGREED that the progress update be noted and the assessment of progress be confirmed and a further update presented in six months.

### **PLA/11/26 Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and the Protection of Pets**

The Committee considered the draft scope and project plan for the Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and the Protection of Pets. The aim of the review was to address the challenges to the long-term sustainability and cost of services and thereby continue to provide excellent care for animals and ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

Members received a background presentation setting out the context of the review. The key points of the presentation highlighted were:

- The Council provided essential welfare services to protect both animals and public safety, which included both statutory functions and discretionary duties. Statutory functions were mainly focused on stray dogs, but the service also dealt with the handling of neglected and dangerous animals.
- The service operated 365 days a year, receiving an average of 1,300 requests. The team consisted of four members of staff and a manager. The service was providing a high standard of care and had been receiving the RSPCA's Gold and Platinum Awards for approximately 20 years.
- There had been an increase in stray dogs since 2022/23, e.g. a dog that had escaped from a property or off the lead when out and were on the street, however the return to owner rate was exceptionally high due to the hard work carried out by the team. When stray dogs couldn't be reunited or when owners gave up their dog as they couldn't afford to keep them, they were given a second chance via rehoming. A very low number of dogs were put to sleep, and this was only done if they failed to meet two assessment and/or had a poor quality of life.
- The Team worked collaboratively with a mix of partner agencies and organisations.
- The service was under increasing pressure from rising demand, cost, and more complex cases, driven by wider trends in pet ownership. There were also pressures due to reduced rehoming capacity/kennelling capacity, with the number of kennelling providers decreasing. Providers that were still in operation tended to be smaller and some were moving into the day care market.

Discussions took place regarding the Council's responsibilities and support provided for people unable to take care of their pets. It was noted that Adult Social Care held responsibility to intercede when an individual was unable to look after their estate and Licensing held responsibility regarding kennelling and breeder standards. It was noted that if the Animal Welfare service provided the minimum statutory service only it would not be able to achieve the RSPCA's Gold award. At minimum statutory service level the service may receive a lower award or possibly not receive any recognition. Responsible pet ownership campaigns were also raised and these would be welcomed as they would assist with the pressure on the service.

Members highlighted the following to be included in the scope and project plan:

- The support given to help vulnerable/homeless individuals to care for their pets be added as a key line of enquiry and PDSA invited to give evidence
- Licensing be invited to give evidence regarding how they supported and ensured high standards of animal welfare
- Adult Social Care be invited to give evidence regarding the support for individuals with pets going into hospital or care

AGREED that the presentation be noted and the scope and project plan be approved with the amendments outlined.

**PLA/12/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The Chair noted that the Committee's Final Report for the Scrutiny Review of Capital Projects was presented to Cabinet on 14 May, where they accepted the recommendations and had thanked the Committee for their work. An action plan outlining how the recommendations would be implemented would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting and added to the work programme.

AGREED the work programme be noted.

Chair: .....

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Place Select Committee

15 June 2026

## Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations – Review of Governance of Capital Projects

### Summary

Members are asked to consider the Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the Review of Governance of Capital Projects will be implemented and target dates for completion.

### Detail

1. The Committee's final report of the Review of Governance of Capital Projects was considered by Cabinet in May 2026. Cabinet accepted the recommendations contained within.
2. These are now subject to the procedure for monitoring the implementation of agreed recommendations. An Action Plan has been drawn up and is attached at **Appendix 1**. This sets out how the relevant departments will be taking forward the agreed recommendations and includes target dates for completion.
3. Members should consider and agree the Action Plan. The Committee will receive a detailed progress update on the implementation of recommendations approximately 12 months after the Action Plan has been agreed

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**ACTION PLAN: Review of Governance of Capital Projects**

Page 17

No	Recommendation	Proposed Actions / Progress	Success Measures	Responsibility	Date
1	The level of financial delegation given to officers in relation to capital projects is reviewed and any potential changes be taken through Cabinet and Council.	A review will be undertaken of the operation of the Council's existing financial delegations in relation to capital projects. This will include consideration of approval thresholds, consultation requirements, escalation arrangements and decision making responsibilities to ensure that the current framework remains proportionate and appropriate having regard to the scale, complexity and funding profile of the Council's capital programme. Any proposed amendments arising from the review will be reported through the Council's constitutional governance processes for consideration by Cabinet and Council.	Completion of the review and implementation of any approved constitutional amendments.	Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.	October 2026
2	When making a decision Cabinet receive information that addresses the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• option appraisal</li> <li>• public and stakeholder consultation and engagement</li> <li>• benefit identification</li> <li>• risk management</li> <li>• financial delegations</li> <li>• lessons learned from previous projects where appropriate</li> </ul>	Existing Cabinet report guidance and report templates will be reviewed to ensure that reports relating to significant capital projects provide members with proportionate and relevant information regarding option appraisal, stakeholder engagement, intended project outcomes and benefits, key project risks, governance arrangements, proposed onward decision making arrangements and, where appropriate, lessons learned from comparable projects. The revised guidance will be reinforced through officer briefing and existing report quality assurance arrangements.	Revised guidance issued and evidence of consistent consideration of these matters within future Cabinet reports relating to significant capital projects.	Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth and Director of Corporate Services.	December 2026
3	Member information for and engagement of the capital programme is strengthened by:	A more structured approach to member engagement in relation to the capital programme will be developed. This will include periodic programme updates for	Regular member briefing arrangements established, capital programme governance incorporated into	Directors, Assistant Directors, Project Leads, Democratic Services and the	Ongoing

**ACTION PLAN: Review of Governance of Capital Projects**Page  
18

No	Recommendation	Proposed Actions / Progress	Success Measures	Responsibility	Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing regular and consistent updates to members via Cabinet/Member briefings showing progress against approved programme</li> <li>Including training for members on capital programme governance and funding frameworks within the Member Induction</li> <li>Refreshing the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Councillors to include the flow of information on the progress of capital projects particularly to relevant Ward Members</li> </ul>	<p>members, targeted briefings on significant projects and the incorporation of capital programme governance and funding arrangements within member development and induction programmes. In addition, the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Councillors will be reviewed and refreshed to ensure that expectations regarding communication and engagement on significant capital projects remain clear, consistent and up to date, particularly in relation to relevant Ward Members.</p> <p>Ongoing reporting to Cabinet/Portfolio holders and Members on progress and emerging issues across the capital programme.</p>	member development activity and an updated Concordat approved and implemented.	Programme Management Office.	
4	Consideration be given within the ongoing development of the Council's People Plan of the need to ensure sufficient workforce capacity and skills to support the capital programme	As part of the ongoing development and implementation of the Council's People Plan, consideration will be given to the workforce capacity, professional skills and organisational capability required to support the successful delivery of the capital programme. Particular regard will be had to project management, commercial, procurement, engineering, design, financial and programme assurance disciplines, together with succession planning and organisational resilience. Any identified development actions will be incorporated within existing workforce planning arrangements.	Workforce review completed and identified actions incorporated within People Plan delivery arrangements.	Director of Corporate Services, Assistant Director People & OD and Corporate Management Team.	March 2027
5	Officers provide a report on the effectiveness of the governance	The Programme Management Office will undertake a formal review of the	Review completed and reported to Place Select	Link officers and Programme	January 2027

**ACTION PLAN: Review of Governance of Capital Projects**

No	Recommendation	Proposed Actions / Progress	Success Measures	Responsibility	Date
	structure to the Select Committee in January 2027, when further projects have been through the process	effectiveness of the capital governance framework following a sufficient period of operation and once an appropriate number of projects have progressed through the full governance lifecycle. The review will consider compliance with governance requirements, the effectiveness of gateway arrangements, programme assurance processes, lessons learned and opportunities for further continuous improvement. The findings will be reported to Place Select Committee.	Committee together with any recommendations for further improvement.	Management Office	

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## REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

15 June 2026

# Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets

## Summary

The first evidence session for the Committee's review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets will consider evidence from key Council Services that support animal welfare, Licensing and Adult Social Care.

## Detail

1. As part of the scoping process, the Committee identified Licensing as a key contributor to the review. Officers from Licensing have therefore been invited to give evidence regarding their role in supporting and ensuring high standards of animal welfare in the Borough and a report is attached.
2. The Committee also identified Adult Social Care as a key contributor to give evidence regarding the support given to look after/rehome pets of individuals going into hospital or care. Officers from Adults Health and Wellbeing have also been invited to the meeting and a report is attached.
3. The Environmental Health Service Manager will be in attendance to give further information regarding the Animal Welfare Service to build on the presentation given at the May meeting.
4. A copy of the agreed scope and project plan for the review is attached for information.

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# Licensing Service Contribution to Animal Welfare

## Overview of the Licensing Function

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Licensing Service plays a key regulatory role in supporting and promoting high standards of animal welfare through the administration and enforcement of statutory licensing regimes.
2. The service is responsible for licensing a range of activities involving animals under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018
3. These are:
  - Dog breeding
  - Selling Animals as Pets
  - Animal boarding (including kennels and catteries)
  - Day care for dogs
  - Hiring out of horses
  - Keeping or training animals for exhibition
4. Through these functions, the Licensing Service ensures that businesses operating within the Borough meet national welfare standards and are subject to ongoing inspection and compliance monitoring, data is available at Appendix 1.

## Regulatory Approach and Enforcement

5. The Licensing Service adopts the Council's enforcement policy and statutory guidance to ensure fair and proportionate enforcement. This includes:
  - Pre-application advice and visits to assess suitability, competence, and compliance
  - Star rating issued at grant, reflecting both risk and welfare standards
  - Statutory interim and routine inspections of premises
  - Investigation of complaints relating to licensed and unlicensed premises including unannounced compliance inspections
  - Use of formal enforcement powers where necessary, including:
    - Licence refusal, suspension or revocation

- Formal warnings and improvement notices
  - Reduction of star rating (see Appendix 2)
  - Prosecution for serious breaches and illegal activity
6. The service works closely with Animal Welfare Officers, Environmental Health, and external partners (including the RSPCA and veterinary professionals) to ensure a coordinated approach to safeguarding animal welfare.
  7. Licensing of businesses that provide animal activities licensing continued to increase in 2025-2026. The service licensed 83 animal activity premises and carried out 133 inspections, investigations and advisory visits.
  8. Enforcement actions include issuing of cautions for illegal dog breeding alongside ongoing efforts to disrupt activity linked to organised crime.

### **Supporting High Standards of Animal Welfare**

9. Licensing contributes to animal welfare outcomes by:
  - Ensuring that licensed premises are suitable, safe, and hygienic
  - Verifying that operators are competent, trained, and fit and proper persons
  - Promoting higher welfare standards through the ratings system, encouraging best practice
  - Providing advice and guidance to businesses to support compliance and improvement
10. The Licensing regime therefore acts as a preventative control, reducing the likelihood of poor welfare conditions and minimising the need for reactive enforcement by other services.

### **Links to Animal Welfare and Kennelling Review**

11. The Licensing Service supports the broader animal welfare system by:
  - Regulating commercial operators, reducing pressure on enforcement services
  - Identifying welfare concerns early through inspection activity
  - Sharing intelligence with Animal Welfare Officers, Police, other local authorities and utilising the national Information Data Base (IDB)
12. This contributes to a more joined-up approach to managing:
  - Stray and abandoned animals
  - Irresponsible breeding and sales
  - Cases that may ultimately result in animals requiring kennelling

## Training and professional development

13. The regime requires all officers undertaking inspections to be a qualified inspector. The inspector must have a Level 3 Qualification (or equivalent) granted by a body recognised and regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). The training must cover the application of the licensing conditions for all licensable activities and must contain a practical element.

## Regional Work

14. The established North East Animal Forum, chaired by a Stockton-on-Tees Licensing Officer, meets on a quarterly basis brings together local authorities from across the region, to discuss emerging issues, share intelligence and promote consistent regulatory approaches.
15. The forum provides a platform for joint working, enabling colleagues to improve enforcement outcomes, and develop best practice in relation to animal licensing and welfare. The forum also cascade training, the most recent being the Primate Training in November 2025.

## Future Planning

16. Looking ahead, several emerging issues are likely to impact the Licensing Service and its role in supporting animal welfare:
  - **Increase in online advertising and selling:** Increasing use of social media and online platforms for pet sales and boarding presents ongoing challenges in identifying and regulating unlicensed activity.
  - **Legislation:** Potential for future changes to animal welfare legislation and guidance, including bringing in other areas of animal activity.
  - **Financial and Workload:** Increasing operating costs for businesses (e.g. veterinary care, insurance) may impact compliance and sustainability, with a potential increase in enforcement demand.
  - **Partnership working opportunities:** Opportunity to further strengthen joint working at both regional and national levels to share intelligence, best practice, and resources.
  - **Public awareness –** Educating the public of the borough in relation to licensed vs unlicensed operators
  - **Resource considerations –** Busy inspection programme and ensuring officers remain up to date and confident across a wide range of specialist areas.

## Conclusion

17. The introduction of the Regulations in 2018 introduced a standardised inspection regime, minimum welfare conditions, and a national star rating system designed to improve transparency and improve standards.

18. The Licensing Service provides an essential regulatory framework that underpins animal welfare standards within the Borough. While it does not directly deliver animal welfare interventions (such as kennelling or stray dog provision), it plays a critical preventative and enforcement role, ensuring that animal-related businesses operate safely, responsibly, and in compliance with the law.

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**Number of licensed premises 2018 - Present**

2018	19
2019	31
2020	33
2021	40
2022	52
2023	58
2024	68
2025	82
31/04/26 - 2026	83

There has been a steady and continuous increase in licensed premises, application numbers have risen from 19 in 2018 to 82 in 2025. This represents a significant overall growth in demand for the service, more than quadrupling over the eight-year period, due to business growth and proactive enforcement in this area.

**2025 - 2026 Enforcement activity**

During 2025–2026, the service received and dealt with a total of 23 animal activity complaints, the majority of which (18) related to unlicensed activity. All complaints were thoroughly investigated, and appropriate enforcement action was taken. This included the issuing of written warnings and the provision of advice where necessary.

The service prioritises engagement and education, aiming to achieve compliance through guidance wherever possible. Formal enforcement actions, such as cautions and prosecutions, are considered only when proportionate and necessary.

**2026 - 2027 Proactive enforcement activity**

In response to the continued growth in demand for licensed activity and the increased workload associated with this, the service will focus on maintaining high levels of compliance across existing licensed businesses, while continuing to provide guidance and support to help operators meet required standards.

A key priority will be to build on the current proactive approach, using engagement and education to encourage good practice and early compliance.

Alongside this, there will be an increased focus on identifying and reducing unlicensed activity, particularly where this presents risks to animal welfare and public safety. This work will involve targeted investigations, intelligence led enforcement, and partnership working where appropriate, recognising that these cases can be complex and time intensive.

Through this balanced approach, the service aims to support responsible businesses, protect the welfare of animals, and safeguard the wider community.

## Use of Star Ratings in Animal Activities Licensing

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, licensed animal businesses are assessed using a national star rating system, ranging from 1 star (lowest) to 5 stars (highest).

Ratings are determined through inspection and are based on two main factors:

- Welfare standards – whether the business meets the minimum legal requirements or goes beyond them
- Risk level – including compliance history, management standards, and any previous enforcement issues

These factors are combined to give an overall rating, which is then used in the following ways:

### 1. Licence duration

- Higher-rated, lower-risk businesses (typically 4–5 stars) may be granted licences for up to three years
- Lower-rated or higher-risk businesses (1–2 stars) are usually issued shorter licences, allowing for closer monitoring

### 2. Regulatory approach

- Lower-rated premises are subject to more frequent inspections and closer oversight
- Higher-rated premises benefit from fewer inspections and a more proportionate approach

### 3. Transparency for the public

- Star ratings must be clearly displayed at licensed premises and are often published online
- This helps the public make informed choices and supports well-run businesses

### 4. Encouraging improvement

The system is designed to encourage and support better standards by:

- Promoting higher levels of animal welfare
- Providing a clear incentive for businesses to improve
- Allowing officers to focus time and resources where they are most needed

Overall, the star rating system supports a consistent and proportionate approach to regulation, helps maintain public confidence, and promotes continuous improvement across the sector.

# Adult Social Care Property and Finance – Protection of Property (Pets)

## Overview of the Licensing Function

1. The role of the team is to protect vulnerable people across the Borough who are assessed as being unable to manage their financial affairs because they lack mental capacity and where they have no relatives, friends or solicitor to assist them.
2. Part of the team's work is Protection of property which includes homes, valuables and pets.
3. Under the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2015, and the Animal Welfare Act 2006, local authorities have the following responsibilities:
  - Where an individual is ordinary resident within the local authority area, the authority must make arrangement to protect property of a person who is in hospital or admitted to 24-hour care.
  - Local authorities have a duty to make provisions for pets where no family or relative are available to them.
  - To ensure the welfare needs of the animals are met whilst they are responsible for them.
4. Temporary protection of property, including pets, is a local authority responsibility. Therefore, all departments should work together at the point of contact from the person, Police or a relevant representative to ensure a coordinated "tell us once" approach.
5. Stockton Borough Council provides a provision for a person's property, including pets if they are admitted to hospital or into temporary 24-hour care. Pets are supported through commissioned kennels with boarding services provider. The Provider is subject to licensing regulations and is required to maintain records regarding the animal's welfare.
6. If the person becomes a permanent resident in 24-hour care or passes away, the local authority will take reasonable steps to find pets a suitable home, subject to consent or best interest assessment by social workers.
7. This service is provided to residents who have no relatives or friends who are willing or able to safeguard the property during temporary periods of admission to hospital or 24-hour residential care.
8. Section 47 of the Care Act 2014 places a statutory duty on the local Authority to protect a person's moveable property when:
  - admitted to any hospital.

- admitted to a 24-hour residential care.
- admitted to any other place under the Act.

9. Where it appears, they are unable to protect their property (including pets) and no alternative arrangement is in place.

10. In the last three years the team has provided assistance to:

Animals	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Dogs	6	8	15
Cats	5	10	10
Other	0	15	0

11. The total cost for the provision of kenneling or outreach, pet sitting services is:

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
£13,007	£20,707	£32,701

12. The cost of kenneling pets is recharged to the person when they return to their home or if they pass away. Ongoing kenneling costs are recovered directly each month for any person whose finances are managed by the local authority.

13. The team have recovered income for costs for boarding and other pet related costs to owners for the previous three years:

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
£10,097	£10,189	£8,698

### Response to Key Lines of Inquiry

14. What is the minimum (statutory) service that the Council must provide?

The statutory duty is outlined above under section 47 of the Care Act, requiring protection of property, including pets, where individuals are unable to make arrangements.

15. What services are the Council providing above the minimum required and why?

In addition to kennel provision, the council arranges outreach and pet sitting services where kennel capacity is limited. This ensures continuity of care and support animal welfare when demand exceeds available kennel provision. The council currently commissions 5 kennels, which must meet licencing requirements, including isolation capacity.

16. What is the current position on “put to sleep”?

Decisions regarding euthanasia are not taken routinely and would only be considered in exceptional circumstances, based on veterinary advice and approved by the Assistant Director of Social Care and based on Veterinary advice.

17. How effectively does the current service safeguard animal welfare?

Animal welfare is supported through:

- Use of commissioned licenced kennel provider.

- Maintenance of welfare records
- Alternative arrangement such as outreach and pet sitting where appropriate.

Challenges arise where animals fall outside typical provision (e.g. non-domestic pets) limiting availability and due to increase in demand the welfare of the animal may also be supported the social worker if involved and Adult Social Care Property and Finance.

18. How long are animals at council funded facilities?

Animals are accommodated as long as required. However, efforts are made to return pets to their owners or arrange rehoming, typically after around six months, as long -term kennelling can negatively impact on the pet's welfare.

19. How has demand for the service changed, e.g. number/complexity of cases, and what impact is this having on the service?

The above figures show the demand has grown which has resulted in:

- Increased costs
- Capacity issues
- Challenges in meeting licencing and vaccination requirement, which restrict alternative provision.

20. What support is given to help vulnerable/homeless individuals to care for their pets?

The team does not provide direct ongoing support for pet ownership. However, it will arrange temporary care for pets where individuals are not able to do so due to hospital admission or admission to 24-hour residential care.

21. How is the service funded?

The service is funded through the adult social care budget.

22. Are there any income-generation opportunities?

Costs for kennelling and veterinary care are recovered from individuals where possible, including from estates. Invoices are raised and escalated to the corporate debt team in cases of non-payment. There is a potential to introduce charges for administration and officer time associated with arranging appropriate welfare for the animals.

23. What current partnership arrangements are in place and how effective are these?

The current partnership arrangements are with the contracted provider of the kennels. The team has informal links with the animal welfare team, Vets and Police were necessary.

24. What are the options for increasing capacity to meet an increased demand? E.g. additional facilities, shared provision, alternative models?

Consideration has been given to expand provision with the current provider, including developing additional kennels. This would:

- Increase capacity

- Support compliance with licencing
- Improve animal welfare through better isolation facilities.

25. What training is required for animal welfare officers?

Adult social care property and financial staff are sometimes required to handle animals; however no formal training is currently in place.

26. Is additional training or support required to manage more complex and/or sensitive cases?

Here is a need for:

- Training in handling animals if there is no other alternative service to undertake this task.
- Guidance for situations where animals must remain temporarily in the home environment before placement.

Support is currently sought from the commissioned kennel provider.

27. What public engagement is being carried out to promote responsible pet ownership and reduce abandonment and dangerous dog incidents? How effective are these?

When social care staff undertake assessments and identify pets within the home discussion are had around contingency plans and advice given around services to support owners when they are unable to provide care.

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Post Title: Service Manager Assessment (Early Intervention)

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<b>Place Select Committee</b>
<b>Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and the Protection of Pets</b>
<b>Outline Scope</b>

<b>Scrutiny Chair (Project Director):</b> Jim Beall	<b>Contact details:</b> <a href="mailto:Jim.beall@stockton.gov.uk">Jim.beall@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager):</b> Michelle Gunn	<b>Contact details:</b> <a href="mailto:Michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk">Michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Departmental Link Officer:</b> Marc Stephenson	<b>Contact details:</b> <a href="mailto:Marc.stephenson@stockton.gov.uk">Marc.stephenson@stockton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b>	
<p>The review will address the following priority of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan:</p> <p>Priority Two – Healthy and resilient communities: we will ensure that our diverse communities can live happy and healthy lives, that we support those who are experiencing poverty. We will strive to ensure that our residents are resilient, independent and where ever possible, economically active. We will support residents to be safe and connected to each other in their homes and communities.</p> <p>Animal Welfare also has direct links into both the Partnership and Regeneration Missions of the ‘Powering our Future’ program.</p>	
<b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b>	
<p>As part of the Council's Environmental Health Service, the Animal Welfare Team performs several critical functions and interventions to protect the public, ensure the welfare of animals, and promote animal wellbeing, including the statutory control over stray dogs. The service has a strong track record of high-quality provision, receiving the RSPCA Gold Standard award annually since its inception and recently one of only a few local authorities nationally to receive the platinum award for continual excellent. In addition to our Council responsibilities, there is a short-term kennelling facility at the Security Centre, which is also utilised by the Police for housing dogs involved in daily operations, such as the arrest of suspects with dogs or the detention of dangerous dogs.</p> <p>The service currently receives an average of 700 requests per year with the demand for animal welfare services rising, both in the number of animals handled and the complexity of cases. This national trend is mirrored in Adult Social Care Services, where rehoming animals, particularly dogs, presents significant challenges for staff.</p> <p>In addition, the length of time that dogs are required to stay in long term kennelling provision is increasing while at the same time, the availability of long-term kennelling is becoming more limited, and the associated costs are escalating. This reflects similar issues faced by local authorities nationwide. The increasing costs are driven by factors such as rising operational expenses, stricter regulations, increase in veterinary costs and higher demand for kennelling services.</p>	

The review will therefore assess the long-term challenges and consider options for the future provision of animal welfare services, kennelling, and property protection. Key areas for consideration include:

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

The overall aim of the review will be to address the challenges to the long-term sustainability and cost of services and thereby continue to provide excellent care for animals and ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

**The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:**

What is the minimum (statutory) service that the Council must provide?  
What services are the Council providing above the minimum required and why?  
What is the current position on “put to sleep”?  
How effectively does the current service safeguard animal welfare?  
How long are animals at council funded facilities?  
How has demand for the service changed, e.g. number/complexity of cases, and what impact is this having on the service?  
What support is given to help vulnerable/homeless individuals to care for their pets?  
How is the service funded?  
Are there any income-generation opportunities?  
What current partnership arrangements are in place and how effective are these?  
What are the options for increasing capacity to meet an increased demand? E.g. additional facilities, shared provision, alternative models?  
What training is required for animal welfare officers?  
Is additional training or support required to manage more complex and/or sensitive cases?  
What public engagement is being carried out to promote responsible pet ownership and reduce abandonment and dangerous dog incidents? How effective are these?

**Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?**

Cabinet, Council, key partners e.g. police, other local authorities, public

**Expected duration of review and key milestones:**

7 months, reporting to Cabinet in January 2027

Scope and Project Plan –18 May 2026

<p>Evidence gathering June 2026 – October 2026                  Draft recommendations – 9 November 2026                  Final Report – 14 December 2026                  Submission to Cabinet – 21 January 2027</p>
<p><b>What information do we need?</b></p>
<p>Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory requirements</li> <li>• Existing policy/service</li> </ul> <p>New information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practice from across the country</li> </ul>

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?
Animal welfare officers	Council responsibilities regarding animal welfare The current service offer including short-term kennelling facility and long-term kennelling arrangements The demand on the service Veterinary arrangements and cost Training received Funding of the service
Police	Police responsibilities regarding animal welfare The number of animals/dogs they deal with and kennel What happens in the long term to dangerous dogs and the animals of suspects they seize
Other local authorities	Best practice in providing animal welfare services and meeting demand for services Training provided for staff
Local Veterinary Services and PDSA	Health implications for long term kennelling Veterinary costs Veterinary support for vulnerable/homeless pet owners
Dogs Trust	Demand for pets and issues with rehoming Partnerships with private kennels and Council
RSPCA	View on Council Animal Welfare provision Partnerships with private and Council kennels
Communications Officers	The communication strategies for promoting responsible pet ownership
Licensing	To understand how the Licensing regime supports and ensures high standards of animal welfare
Adult Social Care	Support given to look after/rehome pets of individuals going into hospital or care

**How will this information be gathered? (e.g. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)**

Committee meetings, reports, case studies

**How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?**

Attendance at meetings, information submissions

**How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?**

The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics.

Providing an effective animal welfare service ensures public safety of all residents by controlling stray and dangerous dogs, which reduces the risk of attacks and injuries. This fosters a sense of security and well-being among residents.

**How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?**

By reducing the risk of attacks and injuries and fostering a sense of security and well-being contributes to Focus Area 3: Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities.

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

The review will be seeking to explore funding options and cost-saving measures, ensuring officers are adequately trained and supported, and strengthening partnerships to ensure the continuation of high-quality animal welfare services that is able to respond to the increasing complexity of cases.

It will also seek to raise awareness with residents and encourage responsible pet owners to reduce the number of stray and abandoned animals.

<b>Project Plan</b>
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<b>Key Task</b>	<b>Details/Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>Scoping of Review</b>	Information gathering	April 2026	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	17.04.26	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Agree Project Plan</b>	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	18.05.26	Select Committee
<b>Publicity of Review</b>	Determine whether Communications Plan needed		Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
<b>Obtaining Evidence</b>		15.06.26 13.07.26 14.09.26 12.10.26	Select Committee
<b>Members decide recommendations and findings</b>	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	09.11.26	Select Committee
<b>Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders</b>	Circulation of Report	November/December 2026	Scrutiny Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	November/December 2026 TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Final Agreement of Report</b>	Approval of final report by Committee	14.12.26	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
<b>Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee</b>	Consideration of report	19.01.27	Executive Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report to Cabinet/Approving Body</b>	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	21.01.27	Cabinet / Approving Body

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## Place Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027

Date <u>(4pm unless stated)</u>	Topic	Attendance
<b>Monday 20 April 2026</b>	Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects – Final Report  Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Centres Development</li> <li>• Inclusive growth &amp; Development</li> </ul>	Iain Robinson, Neil Bramma & Andy Corcoran  Cllr Richard Eglington, Tracey Carter, Iain Robinson, & Chris Renahan
<b>Monday 18 May 2026</b>	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing  Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets – Scope and Project Plan	Jane Edmonds  Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
<b>Monday 15 June 2026</b>	Monitoring: Action Plan – Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects  Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence Gathering</li> </ul>	Iain Robinson, Neil Bramma & Andy Corcoran  Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy Polly Edwards, Kirsty Wannop, Graham Lyons & Sarah Garside
<b>Monday 13 July 2026</b>	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste Collections  Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence Gathering</li> </ul>	Dale Rowbotham  Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
<b>Monday 14 September 2026</b>	Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence Gathering</li> </ul>	Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy

## Place Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027

<b>Date (4pm unless stated)</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Monday 12 October 2026</b>	Monitoring: Progress Update – Muslim and Faith Burials  Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence Gathering</li> </ul>	Dale Rowbotham & Darren Robinson  Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
<b>Monday 9 November 2026</b>	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing  Overview & Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Services</li> <li>• Environment, Leisure &amp; Green Infrastructure</li> <li>• Housing and A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees</li> </ul>	Jane Edmends  Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Richard Eglington, Reuben Kench, Craig Willows, Neil Mitchell, Carolyn Nice, & Jane Edmends
<b>Monday 9 November 2026 (Informal)</b>	Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of evidence</li> </ul>	Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
<b>Monday 14 December 2026</b>	Monitoring: Progress Update - Scrutiny Review of Burial Provision  Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling and Protection of Pets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Report</li> </ul>	Chris Renahan  Marc Stephenson & Stephen Donaghy
<b>Monday 11 January 2027</b>		
<b>Monday 15 February 2027</b>		
<b>Monday 15 March 2027</b>		