

Date:

Monday 7 September 2026 at 2.00 pm

Venue:

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

Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair)

Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair)

Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Agenda

1. Live Streaming

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 6 July 2026.

6. Progress Update- Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working in Early Help (Pages 15 - 28)

7. Xentrall Annual Report (Pages 29 - 34)

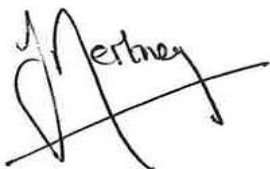
8. Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes (Pages 35 - 56)

9. Chairs Update and Work Programme 2026 - 2027 (Pages 57 - 58)

10. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RECOMMENDED that under Section 100A of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that it is likely to discuss exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Act.

11. Review of Catering - School Delivery (Pages 59 - 64)



Jonathan Nertney
Head of Democratic Services
Thursday 27 August 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

Key – Declarable interests are :-

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

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

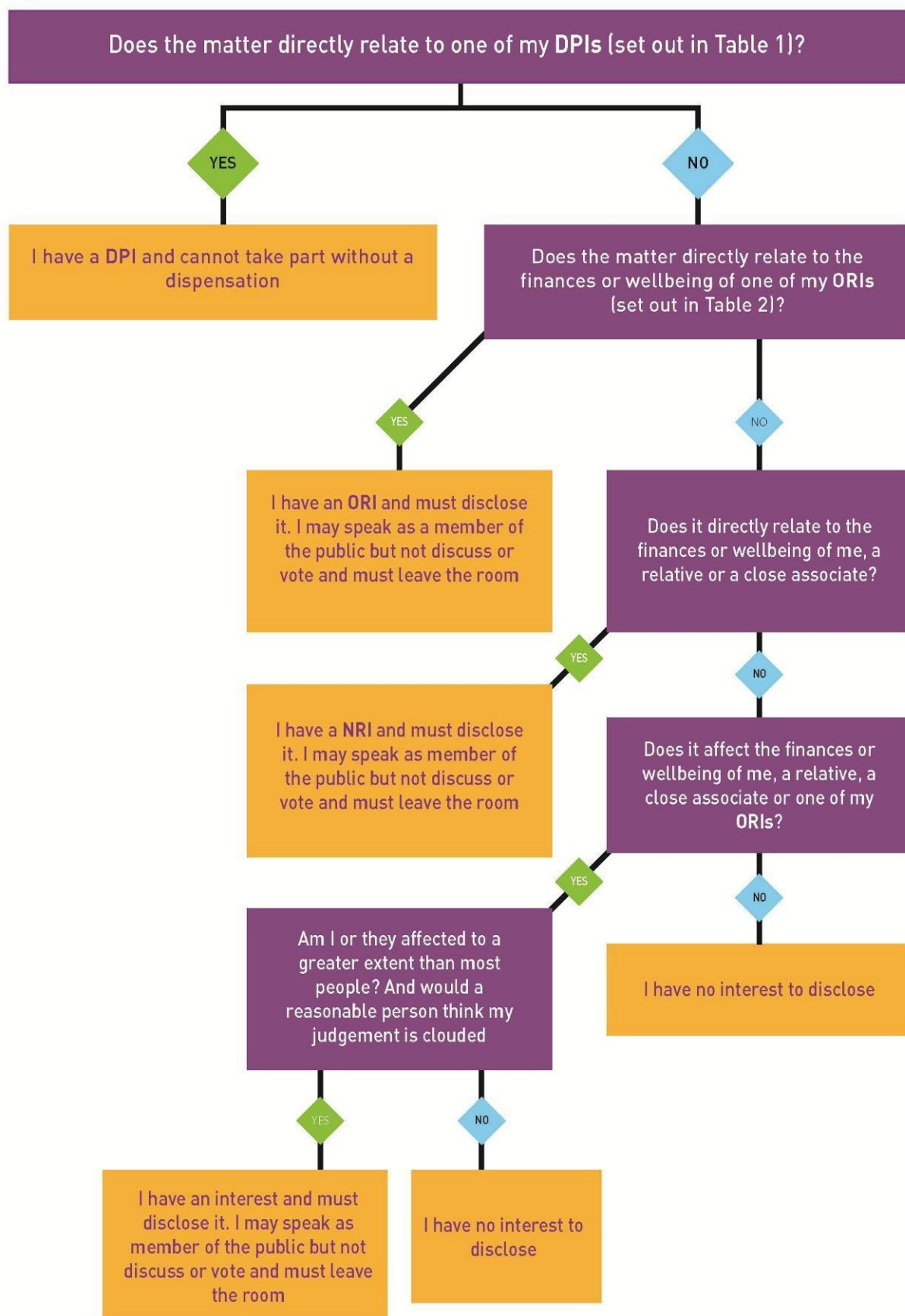


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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.

Table 2 – Other Registrable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

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

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

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

Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

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



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

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

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

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

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

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



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

When the Alarm sounds:

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

5. await further instructions.

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

Toilets

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

Water Cooler

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

Microphones

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

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People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 6th July 2026.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Vanessa Housley (Children's Services), Martin Skipsey (Finance, Transformation and Performance), Aishah Waithe, Michelle Gunn and Junita Agyapong (Corporate Services)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

PEO/14/26 Live Streaming

The Chair announced to those present that the meeting would be live streamed.

PEO/15/26 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/16/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

PEO/17/26 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/18/26 Scrutiny Review of Post-16 Education

Consideration was given to the draft final report and recommendations for the Scrutiny Review of Post-16 Education. The aim of the review was to consider the current position, challenges and proposed solutions to post-16 provision in Stockton-on-Tees, to assist in increasing attraction and retention and lead to better outcomes for young people.

The review found that there was a broad and high-quality offer in the borough, and good collaborative work taking place to strengthen engagement, alignment with local labour market needs, and outcomes for young people. The recommendations built on this strong foundation to improve transition arrangements, systems to flag declining attendance and engagement, early awareness and guidance for industries and career pathways, communication, and transport to different providers within the borough.

It was noted that the Cabinet member, who had been invited to attend the meeting as was customary but unable to attend, had passed her thanks to the Committee for their hard work and looked forward to receiving the report at Cabinet.

The link officer also thanked the Committee for their work on the review, expressing how the recommendations would support the work of the Council and Post-16 Partnership to drive outcomes for young people further forward.

The Chair thanked the Committee, Officers, and leads from the Post-16 Partnership that had provided evidence for their contributions to the review.

AGREED that the final report be approved for submission to Cabinet.

PEO/19/26 Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes

A background presentation was received for the Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes from the review's link officer, Assistant Director for Procurement and Governance, which included:

- The UK public sector spent £434billion on procurement in 2024/25, which had a considerable impact on the UK's economy both at a national and a local level. Stockton Borough Council spent £237million through procurement and contracts. Unlike in the private sector, procurement in the public sector was regulated due to being public money and therefore transparency was needed on how it was spent. Legislation such as the Procurement Act 2023 and the previous Public Contract Regulations 2015 detailed how procurement should take place e.g. advertising contract opportunities, the process of procuring, and how the market was informed who the contract was awarded to. There should be an equality of opportunity for businesses to apply for contracts and they should be treated fairly and equally when they do apply.
- The Councils contract procedure rules set out the way it undertook procurement and these were included in the constitution. They were proportionate to the level of expenditure, with processes for low cost items being relatively simple and more robust processes for contracts, goods or services that were higher value.
- Any expenditure of £500,000 or above had to be agreed by Cabinet, and an annual procurement report was presented to Cabinet identifying contracts for the following year that were valued over that amount for approval. Ad hoc reports were also taken to Cabinet throughout the year for approval when new contracts were identified. The only other Member involvement in procurement was oversight via Audit Committee and through scrutiny reviews.
- Xentrall processed 29,000 invoices in 2024/25 which demonstrated the scale and breadth of goods, services and works that was procured. These were categorised by master-category and sub-category to enable understanding and analysis for value for money. A breakdown of the procurement spend in 2024/25 showed that the majority was spent on Health and Social Care (over £130million). This category included contracts related to residential care and domiciliary care amongst other services. Buildings were the second highest spend with £40million, and this included extensions to schools, cost of running admin buildings, insurance, building costs of running libraries, and building costs associated with schools and community centres the Council provided services to.
- Stockton-on-Tees joint-contracted for some services sub-regionally with other Tees Valley local authorities and were also members of the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) which arranged contracts regionally and bulk buy on the Councils behalf. The Council also sometimes utilised national contracts set up by central government and the NHS. NEPO also undertook other policy and practice work such as setting up standard terms and conditions of

contracts which made the process of bidding for contracts from different councils easier for businesses.

- Approximately 61% of external spend was on Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). There was also significant Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSE) expenditure.
- There was a Social Value Policy which applied for most, but not all contracts, to ensure that when the Council contracted a business, the business also committed to deliver some social value to the communities within the borough. This ranged from providing work experience for school leavers, taking on apprenticeships, or providing benefits such as donating laptops to community organisations. A Social Value Officer was employed to take a lead on attaining a return on contracts with a social value element.
- There was an ongoing phase 2 Transformation review of the procurement of non-social care goods and services.
- All contracts were included on the Contract Register, which held data on the start and end dates of each contract, the approximate value, the department it related to and the contact officer. The number of contracts changed from week to week due to the different start and end dates, and at the time of the meeting there were 550 contracts on the register. The Contract Register was published for transparency and to assist businesses considering bidding for contracts.

The Committee discussed whether there was sufficient challenge regarding whether the Council was getting value for money through some of its expenditure when different departments were procuring. It was noted that the review would examine the process of making the commissioning decision to contract a service, and when and how the options were explored.

NEPO was discussed, with members questioning the checks and balances in place to ensure the local authorities were getting best value for money. It was explained that NEPO had a considerable gateway and consultation process with local authorities when deciding on whether to procure regionally or locally. Robust contract management was needed to ensure that costs did not rise, both when procuring regionally via NEPO and locally, as well as an understanding of the market and how contracts would operate to make informed decisions when outsourcing.

Consideration was given to the draft scope and project plan for the review. The aim of the review would be to ensure procurement processes deliver value for money, were competitive, and transparent. The key lines of enquiry focussed on the legislation, the Council's contract procedures, arrangements, and structures, how best value duty was met and procurement arrangements with other local authorities and North East Procurement Organisation.

AGREED that the information be noted and draft scope and project plan of the review be approved.

PEO/20/26 Chairs' Update and Work Programme 2026 - 2027

Consideration was given to the Committee's work programme. It was noted that the dates for the Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes would be added to the programme.

AGREED the work programme be updated.

Chair:

People Select Committee
7 September 2026

Progress Update for Agreed Recommendations – Review of Partnership Working in Early Help

Summary

Members are asked to consider the evidence and assessments of progress contained within the attached Progress Update on the implementation of previously agreed recommendations in relation to the review of Partnership Working in Early Help. For access to the final report, please see [Final Report - Partnership in Early Help - Agreed.pdf](#)

Detail

1. Following the Cabinet consideration of scrutiny reports, accepted recommendations are then subject to a monitoring process to track their implementation.
2. Two main types of report are used. Initially this is by means of Action Plans detailing how services will be taking forward agreed recommendations. This is then followed by a Progress Update report approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Evidence is submitted by the relevant department together with an assessment of progress against all recommendations. Should members of the Select Committee agree, those recommendations which have reached an assessment of ‘1’ are then signed off as having been completed.
3. If any recommendations remain incomplete, or if the Select Committee does not agree with the view on progress, the Select Committee may ask for a further update.
4. The assessment of progress for each recommendation should be categorised as follows:

1	Achieved (Fully)	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has been fully implemented within the timescale specified.
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2	On Track (but not yet due for completion)	The evidence provided shows that implementation of the recommendation is on track but the timescale specified has not expired.
3	Slipped	The evidence shows that progress on implementation has slipped. An anticipated date by which the recommendation is expected to become achieved should be advised and the reasons for the delay.
4	Not Achieved	The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has not been fully achieved. An explanation for non-achievement of the recommendation would be provided.

5. To further strengthen the monitoring process, from August 2020, the Progress Update report will also include references on the evidence of impact for each recommendation.
6. For progress update reports following the completion of a review, the relevant Link Officer(s) will be in attendance.
7. **Appendix 1** (Review of Partnership Working in Early Help) sets out the outstanding recommendations for this Committee. Members are asked to review the update and indicate whether they agree with the assessments of progress.

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn

Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

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PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Partnership Working in Early Help

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Review of Partnership Working
Link Officer/s:	Kellie Wigley
Action Plan Agreed:	February 2026

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 1:	A culture of shared responsibilities across the partnership is promoted to ensure that the principle of Early Help being “everyone’s business” is embedded within schools, health, and the voluntary sector.
Responsibility:	Stacey McQuilling – Service Lead Integrated Front Door
Date:	December 2026
Agreed Action:	• Deliver a coordinated multi-agency communication campaign (schools, health, police, VCS, early years settings) to introduce the integrated Front Door and its benefits. • Provide clear partnership guidance outlining thresholds, pathways, and roles within Early Help. • Co-produce EH/Families First Strategy. • Host launch webinars and drop-in sessions for partners to build confidence and consistency in how Early Help concerns are managed. • Develop feedback loops so partners know the outcome of their contacts, reinforcing trust and shared ownership. • Develop Early Help Portal to log partnership activity.
Agreed Measure:	Success • Higher proportion of Early Help consultations or contacts made by schools, health, and VCS agencies rather than direct statutory referrals. • Reduction in inappropriate statutory referrals as partners gain clarity and confidence about thresholds. • Positive partner feedback on accessibility, clarity, and timeliness of the integrated Front Door.

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	Increased number of partners actively using the portal to record Early Help activity.
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	Since the launch of the new Family Help Front Door on 1 April 2026, there is strong evidence of progress in embedding a culture of shared responsibility across the partnership and reinforcing the principle that early help is everybody's business. Through the introduction of daily professional conversations, improved referral screening processes and a dedicated duty system, schools, health partners and voluntary sector organisations are receiving timely advice and support to make informed decisions about the most appropriate response for children and families. A host of external briefing sessions have taken place prior to the launch of the front door; these were very well attended. Refers receive outcome letters via the portal following referrals being received. To build on this progress, mapping work is underway to review the current Early Help pathway, understand the multiple access points into support, and identify opportunities to simplify and strengthen the family journey. Findings and proposals will be presented to the Families First Partnership Board to support continued system-wide improvement. This will allow us to further develop portals and registration of assessments and referrals. Families First Strategy is proposed to be completed for full launch of Family first Reforms come April 2027. Overall, the early indicators demonstrate positive cultural and operational change across the partnership, with increasing evidence that schools, health services, voluntary sector organisations and Children's Services are working together more effectively to deliver timely support and improve outcomes for children and families.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track: Overall, we believe strong progress has been made in a relatively short period of time. Since the launch of the new Family Help Front Door on 1 April 2026, the focus has been on establishing a new way of working, embedding processes, and building confidence across the partnership. Recognising that implementing a brand-new front door takes time, we continue to develop our understanding of demand, referral patterns and system throughput to ensure the model delivers the intended outcomes. Despite being in the early stages of implementation, the evidence demonstrates a positive direction of travel. We have seen increased utilisation of Early Help pathways, greater engagement from partner agencies, improved professional consultation arrangements, and a significant reduction in contacts progressing to statutory assessment. These changes

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	indicate that partners are increasingly working together to identify and respond to needs at the earliest opportunity. While there is more work to do to fully embed the new model and further strengthen partnership practice, the early data and feedback provide assurance that a strong foundation has been established and that good progress is being made against the recommendation and associated actions.
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	The emerging data demonstrates a significant shift towards earlier intervention and partnership-led support. Compared to the same period in the previous year, contacts remaining within Early Help have almost tripled, requests for Early Help have increased by 29%, and referrals to partner agencies have increased by 94%. These improvements indicate growing confidence in the Early Help system and greater ownership across the partnership in responding to need at the earliest opportunity. Most notably, contacts progressing to statutory assessment have reduced by 61%. This suggests that children and families are increasingly receiving the right support at the right time through Early Help and community-based services, preventing escalation to statutory intervention wherever appropriate. Robust and ongoing audit activity undertaken to ensure threshold application is consistent and appropriate. Uptake of the Online Family Help Triage Tool has seen a significant uptake and access with a total of 1841 families and professionals accessing information via this route. In relation to the portal a total number of 5479 referrals made on this system, with referring agencies increasingly using the platform to submit contacts and referrals. Although this is currently for social care referrals only. This is improving consistency, transparency and accessibility within the Front Door. Work is also underway with partner agencies that currently use their own referral processes to explore how these can be aligned with, or integrated into, the portal, maximising its use as the single route for recording and managing Early Help activity across the partnership.

Recommendation 2:	The re-design of the front door to Children's Services embeds an Early Help focus, enabling timely outcomes and ensuring families are able to access the right support at the right time.
Responsibility:	Stacey McQuilling – Service Lead Integrated Front Door
Date:	December 2026
Agreed Action:	Launch of the newly Integrated Front Door in April 2026.

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	Create user-friendly online triage and guidance tools so families and professionals can self-identify needs and access appropriate support pathways without needing to contact the Front Door unnecessarily.
Agreed Measure:	Success - Performance reports reflect timely response to families. - Reduction in statutory requests. - Increase partnership responsibility. - Increase in EH Activity in house and externally.
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	Significant progress has been made against Recommendation 2 through the successful launch of the new Integrated Front Door in April 2026. The redesigned front door has been developed to embed an early help approach at the earliest point of contact, ensuring that children, young people and families can access the right support at the right time and receive timely interventions that prevent needs from escalating. A key element of this redesign has been the creation and implementation of user-friendly online triage and guidance tools. These tools enable children, families and professionals to self-identify needs, understand the range of support available, and access the most appropriate services without unnecessary delay. Initial uptake has been positive, demonstrating that the new approach is helping people to navigate the system more effectively and increasing accessibility to support. Whilst the early feedback and usage data are encouraging, we recognise the importance of ensuring that these tools remain relevant, accessible and responsive to the needs of both professionals and the public. As such, further development is planned, alongside ongoing consultation and engagement activities, to inform future enhancements. This will ensure that the platform continues to be innovative, user-focused and appealing to those accessing support, whilst providing clear pathways to the help they need. The new Integrated Front Door has also strengthened the focus on early help through the embedding of dedicated Family Help Manager and six Family Help Navigators within the service. This workforce model is enabling a more proactive and coordinated response to families at the point of referral. As highlighted in the data presented above, there has been a notable increase in the number of families receiving early help support without the need for statutory intervention. This demonstrates that families are accessing support earlier and that needs are being addressed more effectively before escalating. In addition, and reflecting the progress outlined under Recommendation 1, we are seeing an increase in shared partnership responsibility for early help across the system. There has been growth in both internally delivered and externally

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	commissioned early help activity, with partners increasingly identifying and responding to needs at an earlier stage. Collectively, these developments are supporting a more preventative model of practice, strengthening outcomes for children and families, and ensuring that statutory services remain focused on those children who require the highest levels of intervention.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	As recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3:	Advice and training are developed for schools and other partners referring to the Children's Hub, to ensure families who could be better supported by Early Help services are forwarded to the most appropriate service for help and reduce demand on the front door.
Responsibility:	Stacey McQuilling – Service Lead Integrated Front Door
Date:	December 2026
Agreed Action:	• Create a structured, multi-agency training programme delivered on a rolling basis to build partner confidence, competence, and capacity in supporting families early. • Embed School Support within the Front Door.
Agreed Success Measure:	• Meet Reduction in statutory requests. • Increase partnership responsibility. • Increase in EH Activity in house and externally. • Interest from RP's
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	A comprehensive programme of external briefing sessions was delivered to partner agencies prior to the launch of the new model. These sessions provided detailed guidance on referral processes, including when referrals should and should not be made, how information received by the Children's Hub is assessed, and the processes used to review and progress cases. As previously highlighted, work is currently underway to map the Early Help pathway. At present, external agencies are not required to complete Early Help Assessments as part of the referral process. However, through the pathway mapping exercise, we are considering the potential benefits and implications of partner agencies undertaking these assessments

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	directly, alongside arrangements for recording and managing them within our systems. Our focus to date has been on embedding the new front door arrangements and ensuring these are operating effectively. The pathway mapping exercise will inform future recommendations regarding the support, training, and briefing sessions that may be required for partner agencies should a decision be made to introduce Early Help Assessments as part of their role. Any proposed changes will be developed in consultation with partners to ensure they receive sufficient guidance and training, building confidence and capability to support families effectively. A dedicated School Support representative is embedded within the team and works alongside colleagues on a daily basis, strengthening links with schools and supporting effective decision-making and intervention at the earliest opportunity.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	As recommendation 1.

Recommendation 4:	A programme of training, tools and professional guidance is developed to support non-local authority practitioners in holding lead professional roles with children and families.
Responsibility:	Stacey McQuilling – Service Lead Integrated Front Door
Date:	December 2026
Agreed Action:	• Create a structured, multi-agency training programme delivered on a rolling basis to build partner confidence, competence, and capacity in supporting families early. • Create user-friendly online triage and guidance tools so families and professionals can self-identify needs and access appropriate support pathways without needing to contact the Front Door unnecessarily. • Co-produce EH/Families First Strategy.
Agreed Measure:	Success • Reduction in statutory requests. • Increase partnership responsibility. • Increase in EH Activity in house and externally

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Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	This action appears to be a combination of Action 2 &3 already covered in above points.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	

Recommendation 5:	The design of a multi-agency data impact assessment, combined privacy notice, and data sharing systems to ensure effective and timely communication between the Council and its partners is supported.
Recommendation 6:	A robust data collection system is established to measure partnership delivery of Early Help services.
Responsibility:	Families First Partnership Board
Date:	January 2027
Agreed Action:	• Within the Families First Partnership Board bring together IG leads from the Council, Police, Health, Education, and VCS partners, to agree scope, responsibilities, timelines, and expected outputs. • Develop a Dashboard accessible to all partners. • Agree KPIs and dashboards to track data-sharing performance, timeliness, and accuracy.
Agreed Success Measure:	• Reduction in statutory requests. • Increase partnership responsibility. • Increase in EH Activity in house and externally. • Reducing duplication. • Increased partnership work and pooling resource.
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	As highlighted in Recommendation 1, we have completed an initial mapping exercise on Early Help through points and will be taking the findings and proposals arising from this work will be presented to the Families First Partnership Board later in September to facilitate discussion and agreement with partners regarding next steps. The decisions made will then inform work to support effective, lawful and timely information sharing between the Council and partner organisations, ensuring that data-sharing arrangements are clearly understood and underpinned by appropriate governance structures. It will also support the establishment of

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	robust and consistent data collection processes to enable the measurement and evaluation of partnership delivery across Early Help services. In parallel, we are working with internal colleagues on the development of performance dashboards and data collation processes, initially focused on Front Door activity. This will strengthen our ability to monitor service demand, outcomes and partnership effectiveness, while ensuring that data is used consistently to inform strategic decision-making. Further progress on the development of the multi-agency DPIA, combined privacy notice and supporting performance framework will be reported through the next update to scrutiny.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	As per findings in recommendation 1.

Recommendation 7:	The updated online offer is relaunched, promoting it to partners, schools, and residents. Self-navigation tools should also be introduced to empower families to access early, universal support without needing formal referral.
Responsibility:	Stacey McQuilling – Service Lead Integrated Front Door
Date:	December 2026
Agreed Action:	Create user-friendly online triage and guidance tools so families and professionals can self-identify needs and access appropriate support pathways without needing to contact the Front Door unnecessarily
Agreed Measure:	Success • Increase in families requesting support and reducing reliance on services to make referrals. • Increase in universal access to services and self-referrals.
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	As highlighted within Recommendation 2, a key element of the Early Help transformation has been the development and implementation of a self-navigation online triage tool for partners and families. This tool was launched alongside the new Integrated Front Door and was supported through a comprehensive programme of communications and engagement sessions with partner agencies to raise awareness and promote consistent use.

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PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Partnership Working in Early Help

	The online offer has been designed to provide partners with accessible, timely guidance and support, enabling them to identify the most appropriate pathway for children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity. Initial usage data and feedback indicate good levels of accessibility and engagement with the platform, demonstrating that partners are increasingly utilising the tool to navigate support and referral processes. Whilst this represents positive progress, we recognise that the online offer is not static and there remains further opportunity to enhance its functionality and user experience. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we will continue to review performance, gather partner feedback, and analyse usage trends to inform future development. This will ensure the tool remains effective, responsive to partner needs, and aligned with the evolving Integrated Front Door model. The relaunch of the updated online offer therefore marks an important milestone in strengthening the accessibility of Early Help support, while also providing a foundation for ongoing development and refinement to maximise its impact across the wider partnership.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	

Recommendation 8:	Partners are encouraged to utilise Family Hubs, basing and/or providing services in the venues where appropriate to ensure that these are accessible to children and families.
Responsibility:	Hazel Clark
Date:	January 2027
Agreed Action:	•Further promotion of Family Hub offer. •Integration of Family Hubs within the Integrated Front Door, to educate partners of offer of support. •Increase in community engagement sessions.
Agreed Measure: Success	•Increased uptake of the universal offer of support. •Reduction in statutory and targeted EH support.
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	Throughout the scrutiny review, Members heard compelling evidence of the strength and maturity of Stockton's Family Hub offer. Family Hubs are now well-established, trusted community

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	assets that provide accessible support for children, young people and families and have become a central component of the Early Help system. The breadth of services available through Family Hubs, alongside their strong community presence, places them in a unique position to act as a gateway to support and a focal point for integrated working. In response to Recommendation 8, there is a clear opportunity to build on these strong foundations by encouraging a wider range of partners to utilise Family Hub venues as a base for service delivery where appropriate. Co-location and increased partner presence within Family Hubs can enhance accessibility for families, reduce barriers to engagement and strengthen multi-agency collaboration. By providing services in familiar, community-based settings, partners can reach families earlier, offer more joined-up support and improve the overall experience for children, young people and parents. Alongside this, the Council is increasingly focused on raising the profile, awareness and visibility of Family Hubs within the Integrated Front Door arrangements. As services continue to evolve, there is significant potential to strengthen the connection between the Integrated Front Door and Family Hubs, ensuring that families accessing support at the earliest opportunity are routinely signposted to local Family Hub provision. This will help families navigate the system more effectively, access support closer to home and receive the right help at the right time. Work is therefore underway to further embed Family Hubs within the wider partnership landscape, promoting their role not only as venues but as key components of the Early Help ecosystem. Through ongoing engagement with partners, the Council will continue to explore opportunities for co-location, outreach delivery and integrated service models that maximise the use of Family Hub spaces and resources. This approach supports the wider ambition of creating a more visible, accessible and connected system of support for families across Stockton-on-Tees. As awareness grows amongst both professionals and residents, Family Hubs will continue to play an increasingly important role in ensuring families receive timely support, reducing duplication across services and strengthening pathways into Early Help and targeted interventions where required.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	

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Recommendation 9:	Further support is provided for partners to understand the needs of SEND families to enable them to offer appropriate Early Help service to these families.
Responsibility:	Stacey McQuilling – Service Lead Integrated Front Door and Hazel Clark – Service Lead – Early Help.
Date:	December 2026
Agreed Action:	• Create user-friendly online triage and guidance tools so families and professionals can self-identify needs and access appropriate support pathways without needing to contact the Front Door unnecessarily. • Create a structured, multi-agency training programme delivered on a rolling basis to build partner confidence, competence, and capacity in supporting families early. • Develop SEND offer within Family Hubs.
Agreed Measure: Success	• Increased awareness of support available. • Increased level of support available for families with children within additional needs.
Evidence of Progress (September 2026):	As highlighted in the previous recommendations, the online triage tool does encompass consideration of SEND needs and supports practitioners to identify these at the earliest possible stage. This enables more informed decision-making and helps ensure that families are directed to the most appropriate support and services from the outset. Alongside this, we continue to work with partners to improve awareness and understanding of the support available for children and young people with SEND and their families. The introduction of the SEND Navigators, combined with the ongoing development of the Family Hub offer, has strengthened our ability to respond earlier and more effectively to emerging needs. Feedback from families and practitioners has been positive, particularly in relation to the accessibility of advice and support and the ability to access information through a single point of contact. Within the Best Start in Life initiative and Family Hub developments, we will continue to review provision, gather feedback and identify opportunities to further enhance the support available to SEND children, young people and their families. Overall, significant progress has been made in strengthening the early help response for SEND families. Whilst there remains further work to do to fully understand and address any gaps in provision, the foundations are now in place to provide a more coordinated, accessible and family-centred approach, ensuring

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	that children and young people with SEND receive the right support at the right time.
Assessment of Progress (September 2026): (include explanation if required)	On Track
Evidence of Impact (September 2026):	

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
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REPORT TO PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

7 SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report 2025/26

Summary

This annual report allows People Select Committee to review the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services.

Reasons for Recommendation

To allow Members to receive information about the progress of the partnership and acknowledge the continuing success of Xentrall and the savings it has achieved over the eighteen years since it was formed.

Recommendation

1. It is recommended that Members note the report and acknowledge the continuing success of Xentrall over the eighteen years since it was formed.

Background

1. Xentrall Shared Services is a public sector partnership between Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and Darlington Borough Council (DBC). Established in May 2008, Xentrall is now in its eighteenth year working jointly with both Councils supporting them in the delivery of their services.
2. The services delivered by the partnership are:
 - a. Xentrall Design & Print (Printing Services, Design Services, Displays & Exhibitions)
 - b. Xentrall Finance (Creditors, Debtors, Banking, Income, System Support & Development)
 - c. Xentrall HR (Payroll, Pensions, Recruitment, System Support & Development)
 - d. Xentrall ICT (Service Desk, End User Device Management, Platform, Applications, Architecture Strategy, Information & Cyber Security)
3. The initial aim of Xentrall was to improve service performance and reduce the cost of the functions it delivers by £7.4m over the original ten-year period of the partnership. Xentrall surpassed this financial expectation by delivering £14m savings across the same period as reported to Members over previous years.

4. The quality and performance of services have also improved over the lifetime of the partnership through a range of past and continuing service improvements and developments.
5. This is a significant achievement for a public/public partnership and it compares very well to other private sector partnerships many of which have failed over the same period or been brought back in-house for a variety of reasons.
6. In recognition of the on-going success of the partnership, in 2015 Members agreed to amend the original ten-year period into an on-going rolling agreement which continues to this day.
7. The partnership is governed by the Xentrall Executive Board, namely the Director of Corporate Services (SBC) and Executive Director – Resources and Governance (DBC), and is managed by the Assistant Director (Xentrall Shared Services).

Employees and staffing

8. Xentrall has approximately 150 full time equivalent employees based in Stockton and Darlington. All Xentrall services continue to have low sickness levels and high levels of staff satisfaction. Workforce planning and development is an ongoing process to ensure all services have the capacity and skills to effectively manage the daily challenges of such critical services, together with planning future service improvements and developments.
9. The last year has seen some changes in the focus and capacity of the Xentrall services to improve service resilience and meet changing service demands. Additional senior management and service improvement capacity has been created within Xentrall HR and a new cyber security team has been developed within Xentrall ICT.

Customers - internal

10. Each of the Xentrall services seek customer feedback and satisfaction levels as part of their daily service operations. This instant feedback drives immediate operational service improvement responses on an ongoing basis.
11. Wide-ranging customer satisfaction surveys have generally been undertaken in SBC and DBC every two years throughout the life of the partnership. These involve canvassing service users and managers across both Councils. The last main customer survey was undertaken during 2024, resulting in a score of 3.9 out of 5. This is lower than Xentrall's all-time peak scores in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic (4.5 out of 5) but is still relatively high and consistent with previous results.
12. Xentrall will continue to monitor customer satisfaction in both Councils in future surveys.

Customers - external

13. Xentrall continues to enjoy successful ongoing contractual relationships with a number of external customers. We also explore new opportunities for external business as and when these arise, which is in-line with the partnership's objective of tactically growing the business.

14. This continues to form a significant part of the overall Xentrall financial model and thereby reduces the funding required from both Councils. Xentrall generated external annual income of over £1.2m from external customers during 2025/26.
15. Existing services to external customers include:
 - a. All Xentrall services to Tees Valley Combined Authority
 - b. Design & Print services to a range of ad hoc external customers
 - c. Finance and HR/Payroll services to SBC maintained schools
 - d. Finance and HR/Payroll services to academies across the North East
 - e. Finance and HR/Payroll services to South Tees Development Corporation
 - f. HR/Payroll services to North Yorkshire Citizens Advice & Law Centre
 - g. HR/Payroll services to Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland schools
 - h. HR/Payroll services to SBC Direct Payment Clients
 - i. ICT and Finance services to Tees Active Leisure Ltd
 - j. ICT services to Theatre Hullabaloo in Darlington
 - k. ICT services to North East Purchasing Authority (NEPO)
 - l. ICT services to Northumberland County Council

Finance and value for money

16. Since the formation of the partnership in 2008, the financial situation in both Councils has changed significantly as a result of reductions in local government funding and more recently with high levels of inflation. Throughout, Xentrall has continued to support both Councils in achieving balance in their respective Medium Term Financial Plans. This has mainly been achieved through staff savings resulting from more efficient ways of working across all service areas, as well as cost reductions arising from partnership joint procurement. The additional pressure of inflation and the increasing cost of technology software and hardware continues to be a concern, particularly at renewal points in contracts for goods and services.
17. In 2025/26 Xentrall's core net budget is approximately £7.5m, funded jointly by SBC and DBC. In addition, Xentrall manages approximately £2.9m in shared ICT costs on behalf of SBC and DBC.
18. To accompany previous cost reduction exercises, all of the Xentrall services used to take part in national benchmarking schemes to ensure that service quality was not compromised and to confirm that a balanced approach was used to measure improvements and success. At that time these comparators confirmed the low cost of the services provided by Xentrall. As reported previously, during the pandemic these activities were paused and now post-pandemic the national programmes have ceased. In the absence of this comparator, Xentrall services continue to monitor service performance and remain alert to any new benchmarking programmes, should they arise.

Performance

19. Xentrall uses a balanced scorecard approach to performance management. This incorporates performance indicators covering the four interconnecting perspectives of employees, customers, service efficiency and cost.
20. The service efficiency key performance indicators for both SBC and DBC are:
 - a. Finance - Invoices paid within 30 days
 - b. Finance - bank reconciliation completed within 5 days of month end
 - c. HR - accuracy of payroll payments
 - d. HR - employee contract issued on or before start date

- e. ICT - ICT incidents resolved within agreed service levels
 - f. ICT - availability of ICT systems
 - g. ICT - availability of ICT network
21. In 2025/26 all but two of the key performance indicators were at or above target. The timeliness of completing DBC's bank reconciliation was recovered in time for the financial year end and is subject to a range of ongoing improvements to ensure performance is within target in future. The timeliness of paying invoices slipped slightly in the first quarter of the year owing to some short-term staffing issues, the backlog was cleared in quarter 2 and performance returned to normal/target levels in quarters 3 and 4.
22. Xentrall is also subject to various internal and external audit regimes which also confirm the good performance and governance of its services. 97% of the Xentrall control checks undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit team during the year have achieved a green assessment, those in exception are minor in nature and work is in progress to address them.
23. The Xentrall ICT service successfully maintained certification in ISO standards 27001 (Information Security Management) and 9001 (Quality Management) and was re-certified for continued access to the Government's Public Services Network (PSN).
24. The Xentrall Finance and Xentrall HR services successfully maintained the BACS Accredited Bureau status following a full audit by Pay UK.

SBC & DBC achievements

25. Xentrall continues to be a critical element in the continued effective functioning of both Councils. This covers a range of vital recurring tasks and services plus providing critical support to organisation-wide and service-based projects in. A snapshot of some of the Xentrall activities and achievements over the last year is shown for each of our services in the following paragraphs.
26. Xentrall Design & Print highlights - the production of digital graphics, operational print, marketing, promotional, advertising, report and signage materials for:
- a. Changes to waste and recycling (SBC & DBC)
 - b. Stockton & Darlington 200 (S&DR 200) (SBC & DBC)
 - c. Stockton-on-Tees News & One Darlington
 - d. Developing Darlington, Darlington Hippodrome Theatre, Hopetown Darlington, Dolphin Centre (DBC)
 - e. Learning & Skills, Library Services, Fostering Services (SBC & DBC)
 - f. Stockton Crematorium and Register Offices (SBC)
 - g. Support of Stockton's Powering our Future programme with the centralisation of outbound post, electoral packs and volume print for Revenues & Benefits (SBC)
 - h. Hoarding projects including Golden Eagle Demolition Thornaby (SBC), Riverside Businesses at Jewson's Yard (SBC) and Dolphin Centre Redevelopment (DBC)
 - i. A wide variety of campaigns across both Councils including Let's Talk (SBC), Oral Heath Darlington (DBC), Smoking Cessation (DBC) and Holidays Are Fun (SBC)
 - j. Recognition and award ceremonies including Stronger Communities Awards (DBC), Annual Colleague Awards (SBC), Stars Awards (SBC) and Social Worker of the year (DBC)
 - k. Events including Stockton International Riverside Festival (SBC), Destination STEM Darlington (DBC), La Voix Exhibition Preston Park (SBC), Love your local market (SBC), Armed Forces Day (SBC), Proms in the Park (DBC), Darlington

10k, 5k & Junior 3k runs, Rhythm & Tunes Weekender (DBC), Norton Advent Trail (SBC), Ice Sculpture Trail (DBC), Stockton Sparkles (SBC)

- I. A whole range of other regular requests for digital graphics along with recurring high volume printing tasks such as school admissions correspondence, travel permits, resident parking permits, adult social care surveys, rent statements, landlord statements, green garden waste packs, food dietary/allergen information stickers and resident consultation packs etc (across both SBC & DBC)

27. Xentrall Finance highlights:

- a. Processed and paid around 73,000 creditor invoices for SBC, DBC and Tees Valley Combined Authority
- b. Over 11,000 sundry debtor invoices worth around £85 million issued
- c. Over £1 billion in cash income transactions posted and reconciled
- d. Working with SBC and DBC to implement the Supplier Incentive Programme
- e. Expansion of Lingfield Academy, increasing Xentrall income
- f. Successfully migrated BACS processing software to a cloud hosted environment

28. Xentrall HR highlights:

- a. Maintained consistent payroll service delivery across more than 140 payrolls, supporting over 15,000 employees
- b. Implemented car mileage claims via MyHR from November 2025, delivering cost savings by reducing reliance on additional finance system modules (SBC & DBC)
- c. Introduced overtime payments on the MyHR self-service portal for SBC, following the DBC rollout in 2024/25
- d. Developed recruitment dashboards to support workload management and provide visibility of active vacancies, onboarding timelines and recruitment trends
- e. Improved a number of processes including the DBS renewals process through automation of proactive notifications to managers and employees ahead of expiry dates
- f. Delivered three mandatory Payroll and HR system upgrades, including comprehensive user acceptance testing, ensuring security compliance and alignment with pay-related legislation.

29. Xentrall ICT highlights:

- a. Resolved over 37,000 user incidents and requests, with 95% resolved within target and a happy customer satisfaction rating of 94%, 80% of all user incidents and requests were logged via our self-service portal which is available 24/7 and accessible across a range of corporate devices
- b. Successfully retained Cabinet Office certification for the PSN (Public Services Network).
- c. Gained recertification for the ISO standards 27001 (Quality Management Systems) and 9001 (Information Security Management).
- d. Continued the ongoing programme of device refresh, with 681 replacement laptops for SBC and 368 for DBC
- e. Completed 36 separate ICT-related projects supporting a diverse range of service improvements in Xentrall, SBC and DBC including the introduction of Artificial Intelligence tools such as Magic Notes and Microsoft Copilot
- f. Increased our cyber security capability through the creation of a new team with dedicated cyber security roles, implemented a new cyber security operations centre with a specialist cyber security partner delivering 24/7/365 monitoring, alerting and isolation of cyber threats
- g. Completed a refresh of environmental management systems in the primary data centre in DBC's Town Hall including new resilient air conditioning and fire suppression systems

- h. Implemented the new secondary data centre in SBC's Dunedin House, this state-of-the-art facility improves availability and reliability of Stockton and Darlington systems whilst reducing running costs and carbon footprint

Looking forward

30. As can be seen from the above, Xentrall continues to perform very well and deliver developmental projects alongside its day-to-day services to both Councils and external customers.

31. Looking forward, activities will include:

- a. Xentrall Design & Print will continue to support both Councils, working closely with their respective Communications Teams and other services to ensure they all receive the creative and technical support and solutions they need. The service continues to promote digital output options and (by using our specialist software) the centralisation of volume print in the hope that it will reduce printing volumes overall at both Councils.
- b. Xentrall Finance will continue to work with both Councils and have a number of projects planned or underway. These include implementing the migration of the main finance system and income management systems to cloud-hosted solutions and the introduction and development of the Supplier Incentive Scheme.
- c. Xentrall HR will continue to work with both Councils and external academy customers in the exploitation of the HR/Payroll system and the MyHR employee interface and app, legislative changes will continue to be applied to the system in a timely manner, as will the application of any pay awards as and when agreed.
- d. Xentrall ICT will continue to support both Councils and external customers, delivering information and technology solutions underpinned by a refreshed ICT Strategy. Major projects already in flight and on track including the refresh and upgrade of the network across all Darlington and Stockton sites, a review and refresh of the core server and storage infrastructure which supports over 400 applications as well as the design and development of our cloud infrastructure. There will also be an ongoing programme of further work to enhance our security posture as we look to counter the ever-evolving cyber threat.

32. In addition to the above programme and as with previous years, the continual service improvement mentality within Xentrall will be applied to leverage any further service improvements and/or savings for both Councils where possible. Outside of this programme, Xentrall will continue to assess new business opportunities should these arise as this approach aligns with the Xentrall business model of tactically growing the business, which in turn helps to support both Council's Medium Term Financial Plans.

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People Select Committee

7 September 2026

Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes

Summary

The first evidence gathering session for the Committee's review of Procurement and Tendering Processes will consider evidence from the Procurement Service.

Detail

1. As part of the scoping process for the Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes, the Committee identified the Procurement Service as a key contributor. Members wished to understand the legislative remit, Council processes and contract procedure rules.
2. The Assistant Director for Procurement and Governance, who is the link officer for the review, will therefore be presenting data regarding the Council's procurement processes, attached.
3. The agreed scope and project plan for the review is also attached for information.

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Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

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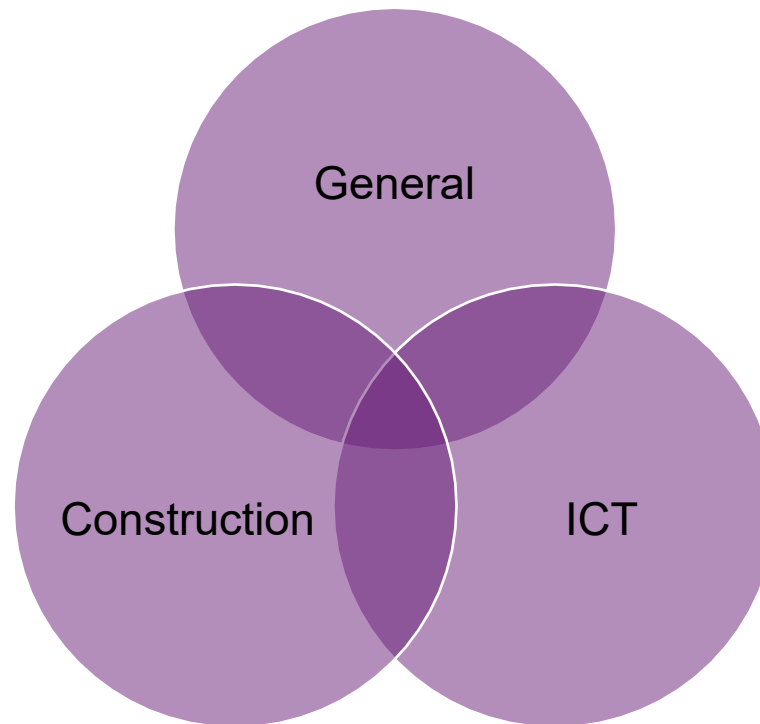
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Scrutiny Review of Procurement & Tendering Processes

SBC Procurement

Who does what

The Hybrid Model



Who does what

Category	Commissioning Stage	Specifying	Procurement Process	Legal/ Finance Process	Contract Management	Social Value
Construction/ Highways (mainly capital)	- Services - Highways Mgt - Regeneration	- Highways, Transport & Design Services - Town Team	- Highways, Transport & Design Services - Town Team	- Legal – T&Cs - Finance - budget	- Highways, Transport & Design Services - Town Team	Procurement Services
ICT	- Services (Systems) - Xentrall (Infrastructure)	- Services (Systems) - Xentrall (Infrastructure)	- Procurement Services - Xentrall	- Legal – T&Cs - Finance - budget	- Procurement Services - Xentrall	Procurement Services
General	Services	Services	Procurement Services	- Legal – T&Cs - Finance - budget	- Services - Procurement Services	Procurement Services

Procurement Processes

Defined in the Procurement Act 2023 and Contract Procedure Rules

- **Value for Money** – satisfy yourself you are getting value for money
- **Quotes** – select a minimum of 4 suppliers to quote, one of which must be local (needs updating to reflect PA2023)
- **Tenders (above threshold)** – Contract advertised on [Central Digital Platform](#) portal
- **Further Competition from a Framework Agreement** – pre-tendered framework agreement with one or more suppliers
- **Direct Award from a Framework Agreement** – no competition
- **Exception to Contract Procedure Rules** – direct award of contract under defined circumstances eg urgency

Framework Agreements

- A framework agreement is a procurement arrangement that pre-selects one or more suppliers and sets the terms for future call-off contracts during the life of the framework.
- Terms can include pricing, service requirements, specification, contract terms, process for awarding call-off contracts
- Must be tendered following Procurement Act 2023 requirement.
- Call-off can include:
 - to supplier (single supplier framework)
 - to supplier following a ranked list (multi-supplier framework)
 - to supplier after a further competition (multi-supplier framework)
 - to supplier without competition (multi-supplier framework)

Exception to Contract Procedure Rules

Used for direct award of a contract.

Value must not exceed Procurement Act 2023 thresholds for advertising.

- Urgency
- Technical/ artistic or protection of exclusive rights
- Mandatory works by statutory undertakings
- Pilot projects
- Civil emergency/ disaster

Exceptions can be abused!!

Thresholds

Category	Contract Value	Process
Supplies and Services	<£15,000	Value for money or call off from an existing framework agreement
	£15,001 to £179,087	Quotation or call off from an existing framework agreement
	>£179,087 (above threshold)	Tender or call off from an existing framework agreement
Works (Construction)	<£15,000	Value for money or call off from an existing framework agreement
	£15,001 to £1,000,000	Quotation or call off from an existing framework agreement
	£1,000,001 to £4,477,174	Tender or call off from an existing framework agreement
	>£4,477,174 (above threshold)	Tender or call off from an existing framework agreement

Decision Making

Restrictions on Delegations to all Officers (Page 47 of the Constitution)

2.155 No officer is authorised by this scheme of Delegation to take any decision in respect of any matter (or related matters) which will result in the Council incurring expenditure which exceeds the limits set out below

Limit in respect of revenue expenditure	Limit in respect of capital expenditure
£500,000 EXCEPT the purchasing of a package of health and social care for an individual to meet a statutorily assessed need provided the expenditure is within the commissioning budget approved by the Council	No limit where Council has approved the scheme in the budget and the Cabinet has agreed to progress the scheme

Decision Making

<£500,000 – automatically delegated to officers

>£500,000 – approved by Cabinet as a key decision and then delegated to officers

Departmental Schemes of Delegation

- Acceptance of quote/ tender/ exception usually by the relevant Director or in some circumstances Assistant Directors.
- Must be done after consultation with Procurement Services and Finance.
- Must be recorded on a Delegated Decision Record (accountability and transparency).
- Supposed to be uploaded to ModernGov.

Social care

Usually agreed at panels by AD or Director

Contract Register

- Comprehensive listing of all contracts.
- Held on the regional e-tendering platform [Contracts Register - Open | Developed by Nepo](#)
- Includes approximate values, start and end dates etc.

Contract Management

- Proportionate levels of contract management based on risk/ value

Level	Number	Contract Management
1	66	Full contract management – KPIs, activity, risk, expenditure, cost monitoring, admin, service improvement etc
2	150	Light Touch – admin, extensions, problems etc
3	17	Social Value monitoring only
0	55	Construction/ one off purchases
ICT	189	Admin, extensions, problems etc
N1	31	NEPO contracts with input to regional working groups
N2	33	NEPO contracts light touch
Grant	9	Collate basic info
TOTAL	551	

Contract Extensions

- Many 'term' contracts have optional extensions
 - Must be included in the original tender/ quote
 - Flexibility
 - Changes in circumstances eg funding regimes/ saving targets
 - Opportunity to negotiate changes eg price/ social value/ scope
- Extension decision must be recorded on a DDR approved by Director after consultation with Procurement Services and Finance

Contract Variations

- Changes to contracts may be needed
 - Changes to scope/ price/ term/ outputs etc
 - General rule of thumb – the value of the variation should not exceed 50% of the contract value. If it does, should trigger a new tender process
- Variation decision must be recorded on a DDR approved by Director after consultation with Procurement Services, Finance and Legal Services

Notices

- Required for various tenders/ contract performance/ variations etc.
- Published on the [Central Digital Platform](#).
- Aims to improve transparency in public procurement and to improve access to public contracts.

UK1 pipeline notice	UK2 preliminary market engagement notice
UK3 planned procurement notice	UK4 tender notice
UK5 transparency notice	UK6 contract award notice
UK7 contract details notice	UK9 contract performance notice
UK10 contract change notice	UK11 contract termination notice
UK12 procurement termination notice	UK13 dynamic market intention notice
UK14 dynamic market establishment notice	UK15 dynamic market modification notice
UK16 dynamic market cessation notice	UK17 payments compliance notice

People Select Committee
Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes
Outline Scope

Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Cllr Marilyn Surtees	Contact details: M.Surtees@stockton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Michelle Gunn	Contact details: Michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk
Departmental Link Officer: Martin Skipsey	Contact details: Martin.Skipsey@stockton.gov.uk
Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? Procurement relates to how the Council purchases goods and works and therefore directly addresses the following Council plan priority: Priority five – A sustainable Council: We will ensure our council is financially sustainable and manages our assets effectively to enhance their local impact. We will be a well-run council across areas of our business and continue to improve outcomes for communities. The actual goods, services and works also support all other council priorities.	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review? Procurement represents a significant proportion of the Council's annual expenditure and there is an expectation that the Council spends money efficiently, secure competitive prices, and demonstrate transparency in purchasing and the awarding of contracts. Robust procurement arrangements ensure high-quality services and infrastructure, can promote sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, and support local businesses and the local economy. The aim of the review will be to ensure procurement processes deliver value for money, are competitive, and transparent.	
The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry What are the Council's contract procedure rules (part of the constitution)? What are the Council's arrangements, structures and procedures for procurement and tendering? What are the pre-procurement stages? How does the Council procure via external organisations e.g. NEPO? What is the breakdown of expenditure through procurement? How is best value duty met when procuring services and/or goods? How are labour costs and overheads within contracts assessed and challenged? How is social value maximised? How are decisions made on whether services are provided inhouse or procured?	

Does the Council procure services with other public sector organisations? What opportunities are there for (further) joint procurement? How often are contracts/procurement reviewed in order to determine best value?
Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work? Council, Cabinet
Expected duration of review and key milestones: Six months (reporting to Cabinet in January 2027) Approve scope and project plan – July 2026 Receive evidence – July 2026 – October 2026 Draft recommendations – November 2026 Final report – December 2026 Report to Cabinet – January 2027
What information do we need? Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.): A councillor's guide to procurement (2025 edition) Local Government Association Contract Procedure Rules Social Value Policy New information: Comparison with other local authorities

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?
Procurement	The legislative remit and Council processes Contract procedure rules Budget and spending areas (i.e. what the Council spends money on)
North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO)	How the Council operates in the wider region How the Council compares to other Local Authorities in the region
LGA	Best practice in procurement processes used
Local Chamber of Commerce	Their experience of the Councils procurement process
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, desk-based research, survey	

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

Committee 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.

Public bodies must have due regard for advancing equality which includes:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people

Robust and well managed procurement and tendering arrangement contributes to the financial stability of the Council and thereby ensures SBC continues to deliver the services that communities need.

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

Robust and well managed procurement and tendering arrangement contributes to the financial stability of the Council and thereby ensures SBC continues to deliver the services that communities need.

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

Examining procurement processes and identifying whether there are any areas where these may be strengthened will ensure the Council is delivering value for money and processes are transparent.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	June 2026	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	23.06.26	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	06.07.26	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Background evidence Evidence from Procurement Evidence from NEPO/LGA & Local Chamber of Commerce	06.07.26 07.09.26 05.10.26	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	02.11.26	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	November 26	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	07.12.26	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	19.01.27	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	21.01.27	Cabinet / Approving Body

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People Select Committee – Work Programme 2026- 2027

Date (2pm unless stated)	Topic	Attendance
Monday 13 April 2026	Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision Working Group Lead for Careers	Vanessa Housley, Aishah Waite, Chris Renahan Ian Caley & Fallon Duleavey
Monday 11 May 2026 (4pm)	Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision - Working Group Lead for Transitions Monitoring: Progress Update – Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant Overview & Performance - Finance - Revenues, Benefits & Welfare - Corporate Services	Vanessa Housley & Aishah Waite Mike Mackin Sam Dixon Cllr Paul Rowling, Clare Harper, Michelle Connolly, Ged Morton, Leanne Dudhill
Monday 8 June 2026 (Informal)	Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision Summary of Evidence / Draft Recommendations	Vanessa Housley & Aishah Waite
Monday 6 July 2026	Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision - Final Report Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes – Scope and Project Plan	Vanessa Housley & Aishah Waite Martin Skipsey
Monday 7 September 2026	Monitoring: Progress Update – Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working in Early Help Xentrall Annual Report Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes Evidence gathering Review of Catering – School Delivery	Kellie Wigley & Aishah Waite Ian Coxon Martin Skipsey Neil Mitchell
Monday 5 October 2026	Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes Evidence gathering	Martin Skipsey NEPO

People Select Committee – Work Programme 2026- 2027

Date (<u>2pm unless stated</u>)	Topic	Attendance
Monday 2 November 2026	Monitoring: Progress Update – Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grant	Sam Dixon
Monday 2 November 2026 (informal session)	Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes • Summary of Evidence / Draft Recommendations	Martin Skipsey
Monday 7 December 2026	Scrutiny Review of Procurement and Tendering Processes Overview & Performance • Strategy, Systems & Improvement • Customer Services & Digital • Culture, Leisure & Events	Martin Skipsey Cllr Norma Stephenson, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Kellie Hopkins, Tara Connor
Monday 4 January 2027		
Monday 8 February 2027		
Monday 8 March 2027		

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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