

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 17th April 2025.

- Present:** Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Richard Eglington (Cabinet Member), Cllr Paul Rowling (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member)
- Officers:** Peter Bell, Julie Butcher, Tara Connor, Garry Cummings, Jane Edmonds, Mike Greene, Reuben Kench, Majella McCarthy and Martin Skipsey
- Also in attendance:** Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley
- Apologies:** None

CAB/1/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/2/25 Declarations of Interest

With regard to agenda item 8 – Local Authority Governing Bodies Councillor Pauline Beall declared an Other Registrable Interest as she was listed as one of the nominees at Mill Lane Primary School. Councillor Pauline Beall did not vote on the item.

CAB/3/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025 be approved.

CAB/4/25 Scrutiny Review of Affordable Housing - Final Report of Place Select Committee

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the Place Select Committee's review of Affordable Housing.

Affordable Housing were homes for those whose housing needs were not met by the private market. This included affordable rent, social rent, rent to buy schemes, shared ownership schemes and discounts for market sale / first homes.

The demand for affordable and social rented housing in the Borough was increasing across all needs groups e.g. families, singles and couples, those with health needs, and those seeking supported housing to enable independent living, as well as all housing bands. However, the number of properties being advertised per week had reduced. The number of people on the register therefore outstripped number of affordable homes currently available and being built and is projected to do so going forward. The aim of the review was to identify potential options for how the Council

could increase the supply of affordable rented housing in the Borough and therefore address the housing need.

The Committee had taken evidence from several relevant SBC services and stakeholder organisations, including Planning Services, Lettings & Nominations Team, three Registered Providers: Beyond Housing, North Star and Thirteen, and three private developers: Keepmoat, Storey and Taylor Wimpey North Yorkshire. To ascertain how other LA's were meeting their housing needs best practice was sought from Northern Housing Consortium and LGA who shared a variety of projects being carried out across the country. A report by a local resident group, Housing Action Teesside, was also reflected upon.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The outcomes of the Affordable Housing Option Appraisal to date are supported, and officers be requested to carry out further investigation into a hybrid model to address the borough's affordable housing need, which should include:

- Enabling (which may include for example the Council seeking an increased requirement for the provision of affordable housing on sites the Council owns i.e. above our minimum planning requirement)
- Partnerships with Registered Providers and Developers – partnerships may be a single partner or several partners and can come from a variety of sectors
- Direct delivery (model to be determined)

2. Correspondence is sent to Central Government to ask that the regulations for returning empty homes back into use are reviewed to ensure a more streamlined and strengthened process.

3. Given the current demand for social/affordable housing, the Council (via its website and other means as appropriate) provide regular updates to applicants regarding general property availability and demand (for example with information on the average number of properties advertised per month/the average number of bids made on each property per month), in an attempt to manage applicant expectations.

4. Following Cabinet approval, and six months after the implementation of the revised Common Allocation Policy, an update be provided back to the Committee on the impact of banding changes (i.e. to provide a breakdown of applicants who have secured accommodation).

5. Council notes that Local Housing Allowance rates are not close to real costs, and local landlords are increasing rents to such a rate that people cannot afford, and this is putting pressure on local authorities to house people. Council therefore calls on central government to take this into consideration when reviewing Local Housing Rates and within the Renters Rights Bill.

CAB/5/25 Common Allocation Policy (Tees Valley Lettings Partnership)

Consideration was given to a report on the Common Allocation Policy (Tees Valley Lettings Partnership).

The members of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership included Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees borough councils, Beyond Housing and North

Star. The partners work collaboratively to let social and affordable rent properties in accordance with an agreed Common Allocation Policy (CAP). The CAP detailed how people register and bid for homes through the Partnership's choice-based lettings platform (Tees Valley Home Finder).

Faced with rising demand for social/affordable rented housing, it was essential that the CAP remains relevant, adheres to national policy and, vitally, meets our local housing needs. To ensure the Council had a policy that was fair, clear and helps those who need social/affordable housing most, the Partnership had recently undertaken a review of the current CAP. The review was informed by consultation with applicants registered on Tees Valley Home Finder, key partners and stakeholders. Following the conclusion of the CAP consultation exercise, Members are asked to approve the proposed new CAP at Appendix A of the report.

RESOLVED that the recent consultation exercise recently undertaken to inform an updated Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy (as detailed in paragraphs 4-6 of this report) be noted and the proposed new Common Allocation Policy (Appendix A of the report) be approved.

CAB/6/25 Scrutiny Review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres - Final Report of Community Safety Select Committee

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the Community Safety Select Committee's review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres.

For several years now, debate had ensued over the future purpose and provision of town centres across the UK, with Local Authorities and their numerous partners considering the ways in which they could make these locations as appealing as possible within the context of a tough financial landscape. In related matters, the issue of town centre safety had drawn more recent national attention, with significant concerns raised around reported increases in shoplifting, rising incidences of violence and abuse of shop staff, and police / community support officer numbers.

As Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) progressed with the redevelopment of its six town centres, fostering feelings of safety and creating welcoming spaces were crucial for several reasons. A safe environment encourages residents and visitors to engage in activities, boosting economic vitality through increased footfall and business opportunities. A welcoming town centre also promoted community cohesion and pride, attracting investment but also encouraging a sense of belonging amongst residents. Cultivating and developing a positive perception of the Borough's town centres is an essential component of the Council's regeneration strategy.

Over recent years, a significant amount of work had gone into supporting Stockton-on-Tees town centres, both from a regeneration investment perspective and a community safety standpoint. A substantial amount of investment had been made in community safety measures such as new CCTV cameras and the provision of additional Civic Enforcement Officers to patrol and work with key stakeholders to problem-solve issues. Furthermore, last year saw the introduction of the Council's first Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to tackle aggressive begging and street drinking in both Stockton Town Centre and Norton Village.

These measures, alongside additional support from SBCs strategic partners, had resulted in sustained reductions in key areas of crime and disorder. Despite this,

however, some negative public perception of town centre safety persisted (noted particularly among some social media commentators), which could influence prospective visitors and also commercial investors.

The review provided an opportunity to scrutinise what was in place in terms of promoting safety in town centres and how effective the measures were in addressing crime and disorder, whilst also further exploring what more could be done to positively promote the Borough's town centre spaces to address negative perceptions and improve feelings of safety.

The main aims for this review were to:

- Establish the key issues within each of the Borough's six town centres with regards safety.
- Understand the measures already in place to address these issues and ascertain any gaps in future plans.
- Identify any potential learning from other parts of the UK.

The Committee took evidence from several SBC departments (Community Safety and Regulated Services; Town Centres Development; Public Health; Social Care), the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland, Cleveland Police, and Cleveland Fire Brigade. Further contributions were received from Town Councils, local business forums / groups, the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector (via Catalyst), and Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF). Responses to a SBC Ward Councillor survey were considered, as were examples of town centre promotion / safety within other areas of the UK.

RESOLVED that:-

Strategy

1. Future refreshed versions of relevant Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) long-term strategies (e.g. Stockton-on-Tees Plan, Community Safety Strategy, Inclusive Growth Strategy) identify and reflect the unique nature of each of the Borough's six town centres, and outline how SBC and its partners will maximise a sense of 'welcoming' and 'safe' within these spaces (acknowledging the key findings of this review).
2. Utilising existing partnerships (including engagement with local business forums / groups), consideration be given over how to maximise the annual events and markets programme to provide further opportunities for increased footfall / exposure to town centre environments.
3. As far as possible, SBC ensures the ongoing and future development of the Borough's town centres maximises accessibility, with appropriate amenities (e.g. seating / toilets) to support the experience of those using these spaces, and the promotion of existing public transport options into these areas.

Communications / marketing

4. There should be a specific 'town centres' element to the SBC Communications Strategy which reflects greater and more consistent use of communication platforms (online and print media) to proactively market the Borough's town centres (including periodic marketing campaigns) and promote positive developments, ensuring this reflects all six town centre spaces (not just Stockton).

5. SBC engages with the Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) initiative to establish effective ways in which to publicise / promote the Borough's town centre offers to young people.

Data / Evaluation

6. SBC provides the Committee with an evaluation of the 2023 implementation of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Stockton and Norton town centres, including details of how this was / is resourced, and whether such an approach may be suitable for other town centre spaces within the Borough.

7. Within 12 months, SBC provides the Committee with an assessment of how the 2025 implementation of new / increased parking charges in Stockton and Yarm had impacted access (footfall / dwell time) to these town centre spaces, clearly demonstrating views from / experiences of local businesses.

8. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland provides the Committee with the outcomes of its evaluation of the recent anti-social behaviour (ASB) hot-spot patrols in Billingham, Stockton and Thornaby.

9. Cleveland Police ensures incidents reported to them by the business community are captured and reflected within its own crime / ASB recording systems.

Town centre presence

10. Cleveland Police and SBC consider further ways in which greater police / enforcement visibility can be achieved within the Borough's town centres, particularly around identified hot-spot areas for crime / ASB / congregations of groups of individuals with addiction issues, as well as anticipated new developments (e.g. new Stockton waterfront).

11. Where appropriate, consideration be given to the introduction of multi-agency, co-located hubs within town centre spaces to provide sanctuary, support and signposting for those with addiction needs.

12. SBC and its relevant partners formulate an agreed plan for managing and supporting highly visible street drinkers / drug-users (who may or may not be ready for recovery).

CAB/7/25 Local Authority Governors on School Academy Governing Bodies

In accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school/academy governors, approved as Minute CAB 27/13 of the Cabinet (13 June 2013), Cabinet was invited to consider the nominations to school/academy Governing Bodies listed in the Appendix to the report.

RESOLVED that the following appointments be made to the vacant Governorships in line with agreed procedures subject to a Personal Disclosure and DBS clearance:-

Mill Lane Primary School - Cllr Pauline Beall (School Nomination)
St John the Baptist Primary School - Geraldine Brown (School Nomination)

CAB/8/25 Minutes of Various Bodies

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below were submitted to Cabinet for consideration:-

TVCA Cabinet – 31 January 2025

SSP – 22 January 2025

RESOLVED that the above minutes be received.