

Date:

Thursday 17 July 2025 at 5.00 pm

Venue:

Council Chamber, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, TS17 6BJ

Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader of the Council)

Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Paul Rowling and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE

Agenda

1. **Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 10)
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes** (Pages 11 - 18)

Cllr Lisa Evans - Leader of the Council

5. **Minutes of Various Bodies** (Pages 19 - 48)

Cllr Paul Rowling - Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport

6. **MTFP Update (Outturn 2024/25)** (Pages 49 - 58)
7. **Xentrall Annual Report 2024/25** (Pages 59 - 64)
8. **Treasury Management Practices Update** (Pages 65 - 72)

Cllr Richard Eglington - Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

Cllr Paul Rowling – Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport

9. **Powering our Future - Regeneration Mission Update** (Pages 73 - 86)

Cllr Nigel Cooke - Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture

10. **Activ8 Billingham Forum Gym Expansion** (Pages 87 - 92)
11. **Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025**(Pages 93 - 132)

Cllr Clare Besford - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

- 12. **Powering our Future - Transformation Review: Children in our Care - Fostering Service – Annexe 1 contains exempt information** (Pages 133 - 174)
- 13. **Schools Capital Investment Strategy - Northfield and Oxbridge** (Pages 175 - 178)
- 14. **Schools Capital Investment Strategy - SEND St. John's and Mill Lane** (Pages 179 - 184)

Cllr Norma Stephenson - Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety

- 15. **Air Quality Strategy 2025-2030** (Pages 185 - 240)

Cllr Lisa Evans – Leader of the Council

- 16. **Hotel Company Report** (Pages 241 - 246)

Cllr Paul Rowling – Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport

- 17. **Car Parking Charges** (Pages 247 - 260)

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

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

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

Contact: Democratic Services Officer, Peter Bell on email peter.bell@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

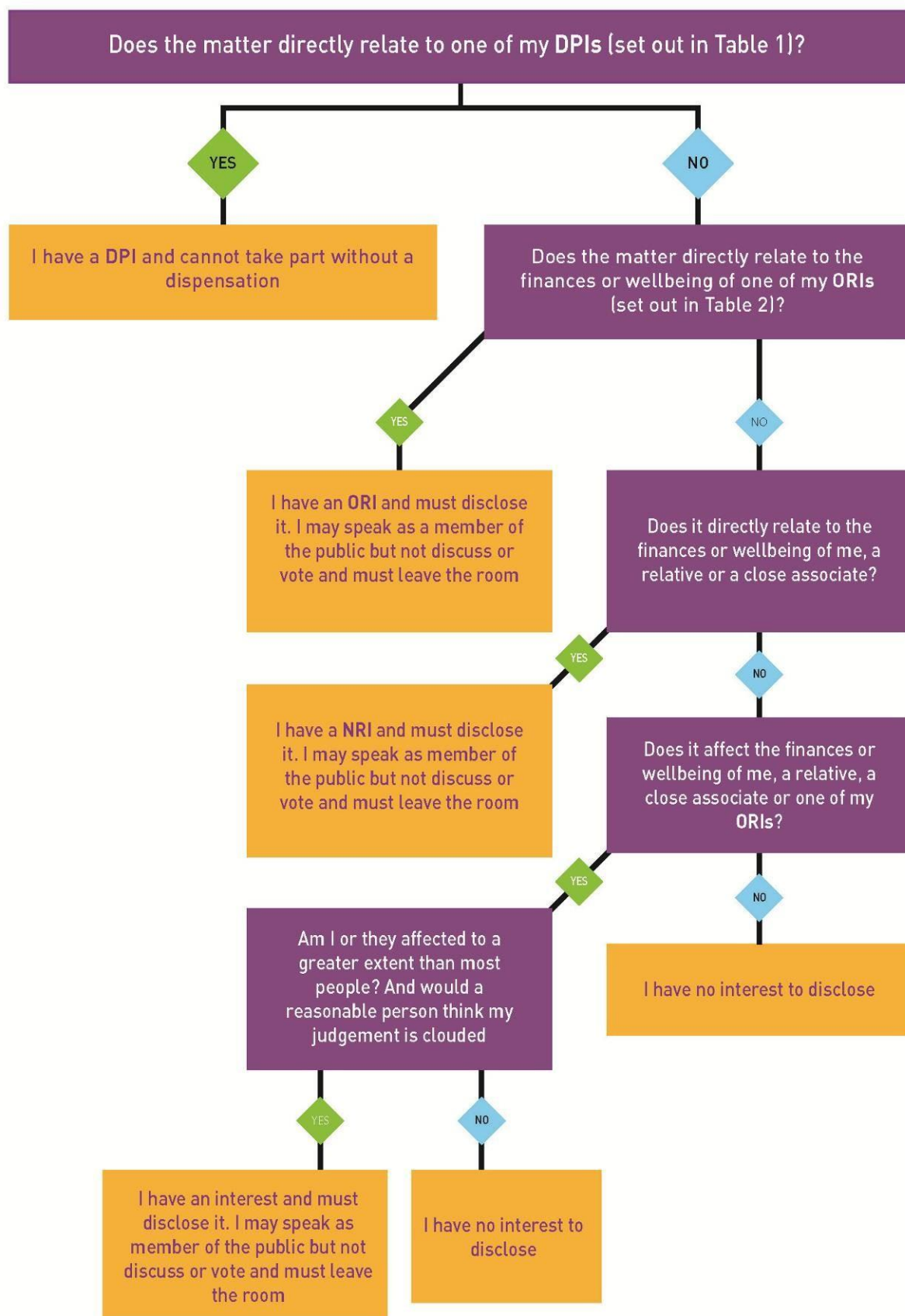


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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 Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

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

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

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

Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

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



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

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

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

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

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

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



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

When the Alarm sounds:

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

5. await further instructions.

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

Toilets

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

Water Cooler

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

Microphones

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

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Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 12th June 2025.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader), 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, Angela Connor, Garry Cummings, Jane Edmonds, Kirsty Grundy and Majella McCarthy.

Also in attendance: Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Members of BMBF.

Apologies: None.

CAB/15/25 Evacuation Procedure

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/16/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CAB/17/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025 be approved.

CAB/18/25 Bright Minds Big Futures

Cabinet received a report (and the accompanying presentation) that provided an update on annual BMBF activity.

Bright Minds Big Future (BMBF) was a youth-led movement working together with the Council to make the Borough a great place to grow up.

The presentation accompanying the report was delivered by representatives of the BMBF team.

BMBF welcome the opportunity to present their progress and achievements for 2024/25. The report also looks ahead and identifies future projects and opportunities.

Cabinet noted the two key themes BMBF were focussing on for 2024/2026:-

- Health and Wellbeing and Community Safety which came out of the consultation with over 6,000 young people during the Mark Your Mark Campaign.

The presentation included the excellent progress that had been made in the last 12 months. Some notable examples included:

- BMBF recruited 20 young people to be SBC Correspondents at SIRF.
- Delivery of the 'Second Chance to Dance Event' providing over 30 dresses and suits to young people (to enable young people who may otherwise have struggled to attend their Prom).
- Social action work including making up and distributing over 60 free goodie bags to families through the 'Kit Out the Borough' campaign.

In addition to the above achievements, BMBF members had also been contributing to a range of projects and initiatives including:

- Environmental work through the Youth Climate Coalition.
- Health & wellbeing initiatives.
- Building links with Council services such as the Leaving Care Team along with other partners including Youth United Stockton Alliance (YUSA), which was a collective of key partners who had come together to form an alliance to support the sustainability of high-quality open access youth provision across Stockton-on-Tees.

Over the last 6 months, a recruitment campaign had been underway to increase BMBF membership. The recruitment drive also continued to ensure that BMBF was representative of young people across the Borough.

Cabinet also noted that the Chair of BMBF, Ethan Gatenby was the Member of Youth Parliament (elected through the Make Your Mark Campaign).

Looking ahead, Health & Wellbeing and Community Safety campaigns would be a key focus for BMBF. BMBF members will do this through project groups and task & finish style groups. This would enable young people to choose to work on projects that they had a keen interest in. There would also be a continuing focus on recruiting new members to ensure BMBF remained representative of young people across the Borough.

CAB/19/25 A Children's Safeguarding Hub for Stockton-on-Tees

Consideration was given to a report on a Children's Safeguarding Hub for Stockton-on-Tees.

The Children's Hub (CHub) served as the first point of contact for anyone concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person in Stockton-on-Tees. Since 2016 the CHub had been managed in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Council. The multi-agency front door included Hartlepool and Stockton local authorities, Cleveland Police, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Trust, a Local Authority Designated Officer, and representatives from 0-19 services delivered by Harrogate District Foundation Trust.

The report asked Cabinet to agree to the disaggregation of the Children's multi-agency hub, and to bringing services in-house within Stockton-on-Tees. This would ensure

that the Council continued to deliver its commitment to the Powering Our Futures Mission by improving service response to communities and formed part of the work programme surrounding the Early Intervention and Prevention portfolio.

The operational context of the CHub had evolved significantly since its inception. The service had experienced a substantial increase in demand, with Stockton referrals surpassing national and regional averages. Economic pressures, the cost-of-living crisis, and the aftermath of COVID-19 had also contributed to the growing complexity of needs of people referred to the hub.

Separating from the integrated front door to an in-house offer aligns more closely with national reforms and the strategic direction of the Council. This transition supported the national policy direction to transform children's social care by improving outcomes, keeping families together, and enhancing localised service delivery. It ensured that the CHub can better reflect local needs, partnership arrangements, and Stockton-on-Tees specific strategies for reform.

The national policy aimed to transform children's social care by improving outcomes, keeping families together, enhancing information sharing, and fostering partnership and multi-agency collaboration. Key policy documents outlining the framework for change included:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DFE 2023)
- Children's Social Care: National Framework (DFE 2024)
- Families First Partnership programme (DFE 2025)
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (Government Bill 2025)

In March 2025 the government issued guidance to support the implementation of these reforms. This guidance encompassed a wide range of changes affecting children's services, from early help to safeguarding, tailored to the needs of local communities. Consequently, the future operation of the CHub must align with local needs, partnership arrangements, and Stockton-on-Tees specific reform strategies.

In alignment with national reforms, the Council's Powering Our Futures (POF) programme had prioritised Early Intervention and Prevention, Partnerships (Team Stockton), Data, Digital, Technology, and Communities.

In April 2024, a cabinet report included a Project Initiation Document for Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP), the EIP programme was focussed on embedding prevention and early intervention across the Local Authority, improving outcomes and reducing the need for statutory services. Bringing the children's front door back into Stockton was a fundamental element of the Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) mission and the broader Children's Social Care Reforms. This approach aligned with the overarching vision to support families at the earliest opportunity, addressing challenges proactively to reduce the need for statutory interventions.

This was an opportunity to reflect on the current delivery model for how children and their families access services, aiming to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families in Stockton-on-Tees. A Stockton-on-Tees CHub will:

- Support the wider transformation of children's social care as mandated by national guidance and outlined in the children's transformation programme.

- Provide SBC senior leaders with the oversight and accountability needed to design and manage services that respond to local needs and systems.
- Enhance direct links with partners, fostering wider engagement and relationship-building, which will build confidence in our collective response and contribute to improved demand management and decision-making.
- Better utilise resources within the broader children's early help system.
- Strengthen connections to the wider corporate approach to Powering Our Futures and Transformation.
- Enable real-time updates on data and intelligence, improving performance and outcomes management, and facilitating ongoing service improvements.

Extensive discussions with leaders of Children's Services at Hartlepool Borough Council had highlighted that, in the context of national reforms, the current arrangements for the CHub were not fully aligned with Hartlepool's nor Stockton-on-Tees' strategic direction. While the CHub had been an integral part of the Children's System North of Tees, the evolving operational circumstances suggested that a separation of the joint arrangements was necessary. This change would allow both Authorities to better align with their respective strategic goals and the broader national reforms.

Partners delivering services from the CHub had engaged in early discussions regarding the future of the North of Tees CHub arrangements. Partners had also been engaged in discussions which encompassed future partnership visions for Stockton, aligning with national reforms.

There would be an extensive process to disaggregate from the CHub, including process reviews, audits, demand and data analysis of the current service. This would inform future arrangements, identify staffing needs, and determine the CHub's location, which would be considered by the Asset Management group. Additionally, any potential transfer of staff would be carefully managed to ensure continuity and alignment with the new operational model.

Future models would be co-designed and developed with partners, the workforce and children and families themselves in the context of the wider reforms. There would be consultation and engagement exercises and an in-depth communication and engagement plan to ensure a seamless transition.

The estimated start date for the new arrangements will be by 1 April 2026, further updates and recommendations would be provided to Cabinet once the more detailed design work has been completed.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The disaggregation of the Children's Hub from Hartlepool be approved and the front door to services for children and young people and their families to be brought in-house and directly delivered by Stockton-on-Tees Children's Services, alongside partner organisations.
2. Cabinet receive an update on future development as part of the wider Children's Services reforms including recommendation on the date in which delegation of the function will occur.

CAB/20/25 Accelerating affordable housing delivery ('A quality home for all')

Consideration was given to a report on Accelerating Affordable Housing Delivery ('A quality home for all').

A previous report was presented to Cabinet (12.9.2024) which outlined the Governments ambition to increase the delivery of quality affordable and social housing and to bring forward investment to help deliver “the biggest increase in affordable housing building in a generation”, whilst also acknowledging the role affordable housing has in supporting economic growth and as a key enabler for local leader to manage local housing pressures. The September 2024 Cabinet report also highlighted that the Council, like most local authorities was experiencing increased demand for affordable housing at a time of limited supply and this was impacting on the ability to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable adults and care leavers to secure independent accommodation. Cabinet subsequently agreed to support an option appraisal which would consider the potential opportunities available to the Council to accelerate affordable housing delivery in the Borough. This was accompanied by a scrutiny review which was reported to Cabinet in April 2025. The report details the outcome of this appraisal and seeks approval for next steps.

The report highlighted the following key areas:-

- Current challenges
- Key headlines
- Accelerating Affordable Housing Option Appraisal
- Affordable housing sites (initial phase)
- Commuted sum monies

The provision of a mixed tenure affordable housing offer (which will provide 'a quality home for all') would be considered as an integral part of the Councils regeneration ambitions across Central Stockton, North Thornaby, Billingham Town Centre and the Care and Health Innovation Zone). However potential sites would also start to come forward through the ongoing work to rationalise council building / assets (as referenced in paragraph 15 of the report). Given the current housing needs and the limited additional units projected to come forward via third parties in the immediate future, it was imperative that the Council moved forward with the Hybrid Delivery Model as quickly as possible. On this basis Cabinet was asked to approve 'in principle' an initial phase of smaller sites for the purpose of affordable housing delivery these were:

- (a) Raleigh Road (vacant potential in-fill site)
- (b) Londonderry Road (vacant potential in-fill site)
- (c) Stirling House (once vacant)
- (d) Parkside House (once vacant)
- (e) Thornaby Baths (once vacant/following the opening of the Thornaby Pavilion & Pool)

It was estimated that the release of the above sites for affordable units would deliver an initial phase of between 67-114 new homes. Subject to Cabinet approval, work would commence to explore the quantum of the affordable housing that could be delivered on each site (in terms of specification, type, tenure and density), site feasibility work and engagement with potential partners. This would inform which of the Hybrid Delivery Models was best placed to successfully bring the site forward.

The principle of using council land for the delivery of housing was set out in the Strategic Asset Management Plan which was agreed by Cabinet in December 2024 (decision record CAB77/24). The Strategic Asset Management Plan sets out the decision making framework for all vacant Council assets and established housing as a priority consideration. Not all sites would be suitable for housing and there were competing priorities for the development of land for economic, community or council use. As noted in paragraph 13 of the report the acceleration of the delivery of housing was a key objective of the Council's wider regeneration ambitions and the delivery of blueprints for North Thornaby, Central Stockton and Billingham. The Council would continue to promote residentially driven town centre regeneration using council land, working with public sector partners and with private sector developers to ensure that growth across the Borough delivered mixed tenure, good quality housing which meet the needs of residents. This included increasing the number of affordable homes delivered but also needed to consider affordability for people across a wide range of income brackets (delivering a 'A quality home for all').

Work undertaken by Place Select Committee and the Affordable Housing Option Appraisal had identified that the market was not at this time responding to address the Boroughs housing needs (in terms of the number, specification, type and tenure of affordable housing units being delivered). Given the Councils landownership and economic & regeneration ambitions there was an opportunity as outlined within the body of the report to step into this space and ensure the delivery of a pipeline of affordable units (type, specification and tenure) which directly addressed housing need, which was not reliant on a third party. The delivery of affordable units would also make a significant contribution to the Councils residential and town centre regeneration ambitions and the annual housing planning target.

In addition to the next steps detailed within the report, the Council was also forging relationship with both Homes England and the Tees Valley Combined Authority to ensure the Council was best placed for future funding as / when announcements were made.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The outcome of the accelerating affordable housing option appraisal, specifically the Hybrid Delivery Model be supported (as detailed in paragraph 11 of the report).
2. The initial phase of sites outlined within paragraph 13,14 and 15 of the report for delivery of affordable housing be approve 'in principle'.
3. The use of S106 commuted sum monies (as detailed in paragraph 16 and 17 of the report) be approved to deliver urgently needed affordable housing (generally smaller self-contained accommodation units).
4. Delegated approval be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration to approve the preferred direct purchase model to secure additional affordable homes (as detailed in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the report).

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

SSP – 19 March 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings detailed in the appendices be received.

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 JULY 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Lisa Evans

MINUTES OF VARIOUS BODIES

SUMMARY

The attached minutes are for consideration by Cabinet.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS

To enable Cabinet to view the minutes of various bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the minutes of the meetings detailed in the appendices be received.

DETAIL

1. In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below are submitted to members for consideration:-

TSAB – 9 April 2025

TVCA Cabinet – 28 March 2025

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

2. This report is not the subject of any Community Impact Implications.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

3. This report is not the subject of any Corporate Parenting Implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. Where applicable, as specified in the minutes.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5. Where applicable, as specified in the minutes.

RISK ASSESSMENT

6. This report is categorised as low to medium risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

7. Not applicable.

Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney

Post Title: Head of Democratic Services

Email Address: jonathan.nertney@stockton.gov.uk



Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 9th April 2025**

Time: **9.30am – 12.00pm**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

Minutes

Attendees

Name	Job Role	Role	Representing
Cllr Pauline Beall	Lead Member	Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Lee Brown	Area Manager	Member	Cleveland Fire Brigade
Angela Connor	Assistant Director Adult Social Care/PSW	Deputy	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Anne Coxon	Temporary Project Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Elspeth Devanney	Group Director of Nursing & Quality	Member	TEWV
Elaine Godwin	Business Support Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Louise Grabham	Interim Director of Adult Social Care	Member	Middlesbrough Council
Adrian Green	Independent Chair	Member	Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
Jill Harrison	Director of Adult and Community Based Services	Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Neil Harrison	Head of Safeguarding & Specialist Services	Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Gina Hurwood	SAR Co-Ordinator	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Rachelle Kipling	Head of Policy, Partnerships & Delivery	Member	Office of Police & Crime Commissioner
Amy Mahoney	Business Manager	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Louise Mason-Lodge	Director of Nursing for Safeguarding	Deputy	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Suzanne Mills	Temporary Detective Inspector	Deputy	Cleveland Police
Jen Moore	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults	Member	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Kay Nicolson	CEO	Member	A Way Out
Lucy Owens **	Chief Executive	Member	Catalyst Stockton
Greg Purta (Part)	Adult Safeguarding Lead	Invited	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
John Rafferty	Compliance Business Partner - Safeguarding	Member	Thirteen Group
Patrick Rice	Corporate Director of Adults and Communities	Member	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Angela Storm	Data Analysis and Performance Monitoring Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Mike Ward (Part)	Independent Reviewer	Invited	Alcohol Change

Apologies

Name	Job Role	Role	Representing
Jane Bell	Business Support Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Richard Baker	Assistant Chief Constable	Member	Cleveland Police
Katie Cowley	Safer Custody and Equalities Hub Manager	Deputy	HMP Holme House Prison
Mike Flett	Principal Lecturer (Programmes)	Member	Teesside University

	Department of Nursing & Midwifery		
Alyson Longstaff	Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader	Member	Durham Tees Valley Department for Work and Pensions
John Lovatt	Assistant Director	Deputy	Hartlepool Borough Council
Matt Murphy-King	T/Superintendent Adult Safeguarding	Deputy	Cleveland Police
Carolyn Nice	Director of Adults and Health	Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Vicky Playforth	Interim Director of Nursing	Member	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Stephen Thomas	Development Officer	Member	Healthwatch Hartlepool
Julian Penton **	Development Officer	Member	Hartlepool Community Trust
Ann Powell	Head of Stockton & Hartlepool PDU	Member	National Probation Service
Ruth Musicka	Head of Access and Safeguarding	Invited	Middlesbrough Council
Cara Nimmo	Assistant Director for Adult Care Operations	Deputy	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Iain Richardson	Head of Safer Prisons & Equality	Member	HMP Holme House Prison
Nicky Smith	Associate Director for Nursing (Safeguarding)	Deputy	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Helen Wilson	Superintendent	Deputy	Cleveland Police

Absent (Invited)			
Name	Job Role	Role	Representing
Cllr Gary Allen	Lead Member	Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Sarah Bowman-Abouna	Director of Public Health	Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Lindsay Britton-Robertson	Assistant Director of Safeguarding	Member	University Hospitals Tees
Mark Davis *	Chief Executive	Member	Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Natasha Douglas	Healthwatch Manager	Member	Healthwatch Stockton
Dean Johansen-Berg	Engagement & Events Officer	Member	Healthwatch South Tees
Peter Neal *	CEO	Member	Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency
Cllr Lisa Robson	Lead Member	Member	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Cllr Jan Ryles	Lead Member	Member	Middlesbrough Council
Leanne Stockton	Business Manager	Member	Hartlepool & Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership
Gary Watson	Business Manager	Member	South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership
Kellie Woodley	North East Director	Member	People First

* Attends on behalf of MVDA & RCVA,

** Attendance will be shared between Catalyst and Hartlepool Community Trust

Referenced Organisations		
Name	Role	Representing
Sarah Aspinall	Inspector	CQC (Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar & Cleveland) ***
Rachel Lucas		North East Ambulance Service

*** CQC Attend the Regional Safeguarding Adults Board Chairs Network Meetings.

Copies: Margaret Blakey, Tami Egonu, Emily Johnson, Judith Oliver, Rachael Winspear, Executive Mailbox Cleveland Police, NENCICB Safeguarding.

Agenda Item 1	Introductions and Apologies	Presenter: Chair
<p>Adrian Green (AG) welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.</p> <p>Vicky Playforth (VP) (Interim Director of Nursing) is the new ICB Board Member but was unable to attend the meeting. Louise Mason-Lodge (LML) (Director of Nursing for Safeguarding) attended on VP's behalf.</p>		

Agenda Item 2	Minutes from March Meeting	Presenter: Chair
<p>All actions from the 12th March meeting have been completed apart from the update on the Oliver McGowan training which is scheduled for March 2026. This has been recorded on the Business Unit action tracker so will be picked up closer to the time.</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting on 12th March were agreed as a true and accurate record.</p>		

Agenda Item 3	Chloe Safeguarding Adult Review	Presenter: Mike Ward
<p>SAR Overview Report</p> <p>Mike Ward (MW) provided an overview of Chloe's case and the key findings from the SAR.</p> <p>Efforts have been made to involve Chloe in the SAR and colleagues have worked sensitively and carefully to ensure that the process does not retraumatise her. An attempt was made to speak with Chloe with support from her key workers earlier in the week, but this was unsuccessful.</p> <p>MW acknowledged that the central message from this SAR is that there is a need for a system or structure that allows practitioners to identify, flag and respond to vulnerable or risky individuals with complex needs that services are finding difficult to engage. Chloe was very well-known to services and had a long history of risk and vulnerability. However, services failed to initiate a coordinated approach to the support provided to her. An agreed structure will allow a more targeted and assertive approach.</p> <p>In order to make this effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge stigma and prejudice • A methodology for flagging these individuals • An agreed multi-agency framework to which this client group can be escalated • Assertive outreach capacity • Guidance on how to practically intervene with individuals that services find hard to engage <p>Good practice was highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive and assertive work of the Probation Officer (prior to the scoping period) • Chloe's second midwife who specialised in drug and alcohol support and tried to support and signpost Chloe to manage her withdrawal • Subsequent and ongoing work with Chloe since the incident and ongoing support from Adult Social Care <p>Recommendations related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust use of drug and alcohol screening tools • Ensuring hospital and other settings pursue the Duty to Refer for homeless individuals • Raising Safeguarding Concerns or escalating issues regarding domestic abuse • Having a robust procedure for supporting complex individuals • Stigma and prejudice and ensuring it does not intervene with the support offered to individuals • A methodology to flag complex individuals and to consider developing a joint screening/assessment tool • A multi-agency framework where complex individuals can be escalated – this may be incorporated into the existing High Risk Adults Panel process 		

- Capacity for assertive outreach
- Professional curiosity, harm reduction and motivational interventions

Adrian Green (AG) commented that two of the recommendations (drug and alcohol screening and duty to refer) have recently been referred to in another local SAR where work is already underway to address this. The action plan for Chloe’s SAR may need to check that the learning has been embedded. Jill Harrison (JH) advised that the SAR Sub-Group will need to liaise with Public Health colleagues, as in Hartlepool their substance misuse services are commissioned by Public Health.

Members approved the report.

Publication

JH provided an overview of the current situation regarding publication.

Chloe has been involved in the SAR process through support with her key workers. Attempts have been made for Chloe to speak directly with the Independent Reviewers; however, this has not been possible. Her voice has been captured within the report indirectly through the key workers and the practitioners who knew Chloe. Chloe continues to be supported by agencies. She is believed to still have connections to the alleged perpetrator. Although ‘Chloe’ is a pseudonym, due the nature and circumstances of the case, Chloe’s SAR Report if published could be identifiable to those who know her. Feedback was sought from Governance Group members on whether publishing the report would be in Chloe’s best interest. Views have also been sought from the key workers, who were also going to ask Chloe for her views. TEWV and one of the key workers have indicated that they don’t feel the report should be published. To date, we have not heard from Chloe for her views on publication.

JH asked for members’ views on whether the report should be published, an anonymised learning briefing that removes reference to Chloe’s circumstances and focuses purely on the learning or whether nothing at all is published, believing that this is in Chloe’s best interests.

The general consensus from members was not to publish the report but for a very anonymised learning briefing to be published focusing purely on the learning.

JH extended her thanks to MW and Jane Gardiner who has supported MW with the SAR.

The report itself has not yet been shared with Chloe. It may be that a copy of the learning briefing would suffice as going through the full report in detail may be very difficult for her. MW advised that the meeting scheduled earlier in the week was to seek Chloe’s views on how she wanted to the learning to be shared with her, but this wasn’t possible. There will need to be ongoing conversations with Chloe’s key workers to guide this sensitively and try to share with Chloe in the best possible way for her.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Learning Briefing to be developed for publication	MW	25/04/25
2. Continue to liaise with key workers on best approach to share learning with Chloe	GH	09/05/25

Agenda Item 4	HRAP Review Update	Presenter: Amy Mahoney
Following the Molly SAR a recommendation was made to strengthen and replace the existing Team Around the Individual (TATI) arrangements, as a result the High-Risk Adult Panel (HRAP) was created. Following the rollout of HRAP, there was an agreement by members of the original Task and Finish (T&F) Group to carry out a review after 12 months.		
In December 2024 a T&F Review Group was established with members of the original group as well as new members actively involved in HRAP. The group reviewed the findings of the HRAP audits and subsequent meetings have taken place to review all the related HRAP documentation and explore the current data collection.		
The HRAP Terms of Reference (ToR) and guidance have been updated and attached to the agenda for approval. All other documents associated with HRAP were web linked for information on the agenda,		

but no changes have been made to these.

There will be promotion of the documentation across partner agencies internally and externally and TSAB will promote in the next newsletter, across the safeguarding champions network and bulletin, as well as on the TSAB website.

LML highlighted the previous conversations regarding Chloe and how one of the routes of support would have been through the HRAP and asked whether the two areas will be connected to ensure the focus is on the learning. It was explained that all processes will be considered in the action planning stage and also further HRAP audits are planned for later in 2025 across all of the Local Authority areas, with findings brought back to TSAB. The feedback from these will be used to consider whether the process needs to be further strengthened along with any promotional activity.

Questions were raised regarding the Closure checklist for defensible decision making on page 6 and whether a certain amount of the criteria needs to be met in order for a case to be closed or whether it is a reminder for panel members. It was noted that the closure checklist should be considered by the panel before the closure of all cases, especially given some of the challenges from a previous SAR.

Following discussions, it was agreed for an amendment to core attendees specifically the 'Integrated Care Board / General Practitioner' entry. The ICB will routinely attend HRAP and then liaise with primary care where required. It was noted that where there was a specific concern, every attempt would be made to arrange for GP attendance at the panel however this would be done on a case-by-case basis. It was agreed for case-by-case basis to be added next to General Practitioner.

Members approved the HRAP documentation subject to the amendment noted above.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Case by case basis to be added next to General Practitioner in core attendees' section	AM	ASAP

Agenda Item 5	Strategic Plan Progress Monitoring Framework 2024-25	Presenter: Angela Storm
<p>The Progress Monitoring Framework was implemented to monitor and record actions against the Business Plan to ensure that the Board are achieving what they set out to do during the three-year plan.</p> <p>This Framework presented was the final one of the 3-year cycle. The full report was shared with the meeting agenda; however, Angela Storm (AS) highlighted the key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall good progress has been made against the actions outlined in the Strategic Business Plan for 2024/25. All areas have been achieved and are marked as green. At the end of the 2023/24 reporting year, there was one action outstanding within 1.3 which carried forward into this reporting year. This involved the development of the Adult Exploitation Strategy which has now been finalised, with a 3-year strategy in place. Implementation meeting dates are to be arranged to monitor the strategy that has been put into place. There will always be key areas from each strategic plan that will roll over into the next one, including the quality assurance processes, audits, and training etc. which will continue to be used to deliver the objectives required in the new Strategic Plan. <p>Key highlights/achievements over the last 3-years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each year multi-agency audits have been undertaken based on key themes and the learning from these audits has been shared with TSAB members. The TATI was reviewed and HRAP was implemented. HRAP has recently been reviewed with more developments underway to ensure this is effective for those most complex cases. An effective QAF Self-Audit process continues to be undertaken each year with key agencies to 		

ensure the quality of the safeguarding services in Tees continues. A good uptake in taking part in this process continues, with positive feedback about the process being received.

- TSAB moved performance reporting to PowerBi, which has become a powerful and more interactive reporting tool to engage more conversation about the data.
- The Implementation of an Adult Exploitation Strategy.
- A number of SARs were undertaken, with the learning shared with TSAB members.
- Communication & Engagement continued to be undertaken to raise awareness of Safeguarding to all people with various campaigns and spotlight campaigns being undertaken each year. NSAW was undertaken each year.
- A significant amount of training was offered and delivered to various organisations throughout this 3-year plan with good uptake and positive feedback received. A particular focus on Trauma Informed Practice was covered throughout this plan, through webinars, workbook, resources, fact sheets etc.
- Improved links were forged with the Children's Partnerships with joint events and work taking place to ensure a joined-up approach.
- Awards have been won by partner organisations who were recognised for their good work at the National Safeguarding Adults Boards (SAB) Managers Awards with both Thirteen Housing and Independent Voices winning innovation awards.

AG thanked all partners who have been involved in the work over the past 3 years, the content highlighted in the evidence of achievement column demonstrates and evidences the significant amount of work that has been conducted. The journey will continue and looking at how the work has been embedded will be paramount.

Agenda Item 6	TSAB Strategic Plan 2025-28 & Sub-Group Workplans	Presenter: Amy Mahoney
<p>The new 3-year Strategic Business Plan for 2025-28 has been drafted in line with the discussions that took place at the TSAB and Operational Leads (OL) Development Sessions in February. Feedback from the Annual Survey from professionals and the public has been included as well as key learning themes from SARs and National recommendations from the 2nd National SAR analysis and ministerial letter from the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities for SABs on rough sleeping.</p> <p>The plan includes a new vision statement, and values that were agreed on by Operational Leads, the safeguarding principles, business cycle and the governance in terms of updates to Board and the monitoring framework that sits alongside the Strategic plan.</p> <p>An overview of the overarching Priorities and aims for 2025-28 was provided as follows:</p> <p>The objectives and actions are set out as well as the assurance methods and lead for each action. With the impact and outcome highlighted underneath.</p> <p>The first priority is 'Information. Engagement and involvement'. A number of the actions will be led by the CE Sub-Group but there are other Sub-Groups who will also lead on some actions.</p> <p>The next priority is 'Confident Competent Practice' which relates to training, support and competence in safeguarding practice. A number of the actions will be led by the LTD Sub-Group but there are other Sub-Groups who will also lead on some actions.</p> <p>The final priority is 'Emerging Challenges and Enabling Solutions'. It was highlighted that there had</p>		

been some minor tweaks to the wording of this aim following the draft shared with the agenda. the most up to date version is 'We will actively identify and respond to emerging trends and challenges working together to provide a solutions and outcomes focused co-ordinated response to safeguarding issues'. There are a number of actions which require a collaborative approach, and this has been highlighted within the action itself but also in the lead, where it does not quite align with a Sub-Group this has been noted and an alternative lead identified.

Sub-Group Workplans

Each of the five Sub-Group Workplans align to the Strategic Plan and were attached to the agenda for members approval. All workplans have been shared with and approved by Sub-Group Chairs. The workplans are routinely reviewed at each Sub-Group to monitor the actions and are RAG rated, again these are reviewed each year in line with the strategic actions.

A reference system has also been introduced, to ensure that there is a link to the Strategic Plans, Priorities, Objectives and Actions. This system will allow the Board to challenge itself to ensure outcomes are embedded with clear evidence that demonstrate actions are making a difference.

To ensure the Board delivers on its actions, all work should either come from a SAR or from the Strategic Business Plan. Anything that falls outside of this should be challenged and if still necessary considered as a future priority area for the delivery plan.

It was proposed that due to a number of members having only had sight of the Strategic Business Plan for the first time, and to allow robust feedback further time is allowed to provide feedback before it is approved. Members agreed to provide any final feedback on the Strategic plan by 2nd May for approval at the June Board.

Thanks were given to AM and the Business Unit for the rapid time in which the documents had been produced; the documents are very clear, and a lot of consultation has already taken place to achieve the draft version presented.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Feedback on the Strategic Business Plan to be sent to the Business Unit.	All	02/05/25
2. TSAB Strategic Business Plan to be added to the June TSAB agenda for approval	BU	01/06/25

Agenda Item 7	Sub-Group and Task & Finish Group Update	Presenter: Sub-Group Chairs
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Updates were provided for the Sub-Groups that have met since the last Board meeting in March.

Learning, Training & Development – Patrick Rice (PR)

The LTD subgroup met on 27th March.

Discussion took place regarding the Multi-Agency Training Strategy, which was attached to the agenda for approval by members. The strategy remains similar to that of previous years. The training plan and budget was considered and approved following partner feedback from the training needs analysis. Some training courses have been moved from online to face to face following feedback from practitioners. Legal Updates for Board Members runs annually and is tailored specifically for TSAB. However, despite this being a really useful session there was poor uptake this year despite efforts to promote the course to Board members. AG supported this comment and advised that the session was extremely useful and encouraged members to attend next year.

It was agreed to phase out the Workbooks that were created when TSAB was first set up and were typically for care providers who did not have access to other forms of training. Considerable change has taken place in terms of delivery methods and the range of training available through TSAB since the workbooks were introduced and uptake is minimal against the time it takes for them to be reviewed and updated.

Membership was reviewed and clarification is being sought from Cleveland Police as to who their representative is, although they are a member they rarely attend the meeting. A query was raised as to how many Police Officers attend the TSAB training courses, and whether the information is shared widely within the force. SM and AM to liaise outside of the meeting regarding this matter.

Operational Leads – Amy Mahoney (AM)

The OL Sub-Group last met on 13th March.

A presentation was given regarding the Harm Outside The Home (HOTH) transitions procedure which was developed following a workshop with operational leads from adults and children's services and wider partners. Leads were asked for feedback, and it is hoped the procedure can be presented to the June board for sign off.

A multi-agency audit on Domestic Abuse which was presented to the March Board was discussed and a themed discussion on DA using the PowerBi dashboard to support. The Multi-Agency Audit schedule for 25-26 was also agreed, with some of the themes those that were recommended by Board members.

A discussion on stage 2 of the TSAB Procedures took place, timescales were explored and an action for this to be raised at the National SAB Managers' Network.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and sexual exploitation were discussed following a conversation at the anti-slavery network, potential training/support for first responders is also being considered.

The community of practice approach piece of work was explored again following a number of documents being reviewed and will shortly be published following feedback, this also supports a number of SAR actions.

Good practice was highlighted regarding the creation of a new team set up focussing on assertive outreach to reduce homelessness with a further update requested in 6 months on the outcomes achieved

Overall, the meeting was extremely interesting with lots of contribution from partners, the membership of the group is really valuable to the Board.

Safeguarding Adults Review – Jill Harrison (JH)

The Sub-Group met on 19th March.

One new SAR Notification was considered (SF) involving a Middlesbrough resident where there were concerns regarding Self-Neglect and learning regarding timeliness of MCA assessments and balancing the building of a rapport and positive relationship with someone to carry out an assessment against escalating risks whilst that assessment process is ongoing. A Discretionary Safeguarding Adult Review will be taken forward with a focus on MCA and will be in the form of a 1–2 day workshop.

AG highlighted that there are a number of SAR's/ thematic reviews taking place nationally regarding self-neglect and as a result a significant amount of work conducted. Where the Board has not procured an Independent Reviewer for a SAR, the Board will always be provided with an opportunity to understand the reasoning why to provide reassurance.

A new SAR process has been agreed, which will involve appointing a SAR Lead to chair case specific meetings. SAR Leads are from Statutory Partner organisations.

• Joint Review Protocol – For Approval

A copy of the Joint Review Protocol was circulated to members with the meeting agenda. The Joint Review Protocol was originally developed in February 2023 together with TSAB, Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships in Tees. The purpose is to strengthen existing

arrangements between the partnerships, to consider each other at key points during review processes in an effort to maximise learning and prevent duplication. The protocol has been through a full review and is presented to Board for sign off. The protocol will also go to each of the CSP Boards and Safeguarding Children Partnerships for their sign off too. It was emphasised that where a notification meets the requirements for a SAR, it will carry the same legal requirement under s45 The Care Act and be counted as a SAR, where other processes overlap there will be a cross-pollinated group with an appropriate author appointed. Members approved the document.

- **Cross Boundary SAR Guidance for Business Units – For Approval**

A copy of the Cross-Boundary SAR guidance for Business Unit was circulated to members with the meeting agenda. It is being increasingly recognised nationally that the host SAB (where the adult has died/been seriously harmed) may not always be best placed to lead a SAR as the adult may not be known/have limited involvement with services within that area. Due to an increase in the number of cross boundary SARs, the North East SAR Champions Network have developed Cross Boundary SAR Guidance for Business Units. The guidance helps to provide a practical, consistent and proportionate approach to SARs that involve more than one SAB. The Guidance is being taken to all SABs in the North East Region for approval and will be shared nationally as an example of good practice.

A question was raised regarding how the cross-boundary SAR will be funded in reference to the statement *'Where required, any commissioning decisions in respect of the SAR will be discussed and agreed by the SAB Chairs'*. Gina Hurwood (GH) explained that there had been discussions regarding this matter at the North East SAR Champions Group and due to each SAR presenting differently, this was purposefully not prescriptive as the Business Units and SAB chairs will come to an appropriate agreement on a case-by-case basis.

- **RASC Policy and Procedure Review v6 For Approval**

A copy of the RASC Policy and Procedure was circulated to members with the meeting agenda. A number of amendments have been made to the document along with the introduction of a communication section on page 9. Members approved the document.

- **James Action Plan – For Sign Off**

The SAR Sub-Group have been monitoring James' action plan, and all evidence and assurance has now been received. The action plan has been brought to the Board for sign off and circulated to members with the meeting agenda. Members ratified the document.

- **SK Action Plan – This is Me Passport**

Recommendation: Exploring ways to use the "This is Me Passport" for appointments and hospital admissions that ensure that the information is transferred.

Action: TSAB to understand the current position on how the "This is Me Passport" is currently being used across services and if there are systems in place to effectively manage this process. SAR Sub-Group to consider next steps when the regional position is known.

ICB have explored this with the North East and North Cumbria Learning Disability Network. There is no appetite currently to develop a more general passport for information sharing but will remain on their radar, however there is now a regional hospital passport that all acute trusts are using (or similar) across the North East and North Cumbria. A link to the hospital passport will be promoted in TSAB's next newsletter. Sub-Group Members recognised however that this recommendation/action will soon be superseded by the Great North Care Record which is finding digital solutions to share up to date information between agencies. The SAR Sub-Group wanted to bring this recommendation/action to Board to seek approval for it to be signed off as complete.

A form of general 'passport' to share key information between agencies has also been identified as good practice in local SARs (James), regional SARs (Joseph) and nationally where there have been cross boundary issues.

The SAR Sub-Group wanted to bring this recommendation/action to Board to seek approval for it to be

signed off as complete. Members approved the Action Plan to be signed off.		
Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Suzanne Mills (SM) and AM to liaise outside of the meeting regarding Police attendance at training events	SM/AM	ASAP

Agenda Item 8	QAF Reports	Presenter: Greg Purta
<p>SBC received a rating of Green. Recommendations were made in respect of considering implementing a localised Safeguarding Adult Policy to allow for other Policies and Procedures to be linked to it. Along with a review and update of specified documents with current terminology and links, robust evidence of staff practice, and the inclusion of a transitions process and procedure to underpin the identification of young people transitioning from children to adult services.</p> <p>Angela Connor (AC) highlighted that a review is currently underway of the current transitions policy within the Powering our Future Workstream. New proposals are due to be presented and discussed tomorrow.</p>		

Agenda Item 9	Terms of Reference and Governance Arrangements / Members Induction Pack	Presenter: Chair
<p>A copy of the ToR and Members Induction pack was circulated to members with the meeting agenda. Both documents have been updated with only minor changes to the wording which were highlighted in yellow.</p> <p>A small amendment is required to page 15, objective 2.5 of the ToR.</p> <p>Members approved both documents, subject to the amendment to the ToR noted above.</p>		
Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Amendment to be made to Objective 2.5 on page 15 of the ToR	AM	ASAP

Agenda Item 10	Any Other Business	Presenter: All
None		

Next Meeting Date: **Wednesday 11th June 2025**
Time: **09:30-12pm**
Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

Minutes approved by Independent Chair:



Date: 25/04/2025

Appendix 1 - Attendance Matrix

The table below reflects named members of the TSAB, although deputies have been shaded.

Company	09/04/2025	11/06/2025	10/09/2025	08/10/2025	10/12/2024	11/02/2026	11/03/2026	1
A Way Out	1	0	0	0	0			100%
Catalyst Stockton / Hartlepool Community Trust	1	0	0	0	0			100%
ICB	2	0	0	0	0			100%
Cleveland Fire Brigade	1	0	0	0	0			100%
Cleveland Police	1	0	0	0	0			100%
DWP	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Hartlepool Borough Council	2	0	0	0	0			100%
HBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Healthwatch Hartlepool	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Healthwatch South Tees	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Healthwatch Stockton	0	0	0	0	0			0%
HMP Holme House Prison	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Middlesbrough Borough Council	1	0	0	0	0			100%
MBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Middlesbrough VDA / Redcar & Cleveland VDA	0	0	0	0	0			0%
National Probation Service Cleveland	1	0	0	0	0			100%
People First	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Public Health	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Office of Police & Crime Commissioner (committed to 2 meetings per year)	1	0	0	0	0			100%
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	1	0	0	0	0			100%
RCBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	2	0	0	0	0			100%
SBC Lead Member	1	0	0	0	0			100%
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Teesside University	0	0	0	0	0			0%
Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust	1	0	0	0	0			100%
Thirteen Housing	1	0	0	0	0			100%
TSAB Independent Chair	1	0	0	0	0			100%
TSAB Business Unit	5	0	0	0	0			100%
University Hospitals Tees	0	0	0	0	0			0%

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TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday, 28 March, 2025 at 10.00am

Teesside Airport Business Suite, Teesside International Airport, Darlington

These Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next Cabinet meeting and are therefore subject to amendments.

<u>ATTENDEES</u>	
Members	
Mayor Ben Houchen (Chair)	Tees Valley Mayor
Councillor Brenda Harrison	Leader Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Stephen Harker	Leader, Darlington Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Leader, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Bob Cook	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Siobhan McArdle	Chair of Tees Valley Business Board
Officers	
Tom Bryant	Interim Chief Executive, TVCA
Gary Macdonald	Group Director of Finance and Resources, TVCA
Emma Simson	Group Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer, TVCA
Sarah Walker	Interim Director of Business Solutions, TVCA
Victoria Smith	Group Financial Controller, TVCA
Jacqui Banks	Business Solutions Manager, TVCA
Alan Weston	Head of Transport, TVCA
Sarah Brackenborough	Director of Operations, TVCA
Denise McGuckin	Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council
Erik Scollay	Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Council
John Sampson	Chief Executive, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Mike Greene	Chief Executive, Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Rose Rouse	Chief Executive, Darlington Borough Council
Sally Henry	Governance Officer, TVCA
Apologies	
Helen Kemp	Director of Business Solutions, TVCA

	<p><u>CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS</u></p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.</p>
TVCA 54/24- 25	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were noted as above.</p>
TVCA 55/24- 25	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Mayor Houchen declared a non-pecuniary interest in his capacity as Chair of STDC Board, HDC Board and MDC Board.</p> <p>Councillor Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in his capacity as a member of the STDC Board and Freeport Board.</p> <p>Councillor Harrison declared a non-pecuniary interest in her capacity as a member of the HDC Board.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke declared a non-pecuniary interest in his capacity as a member of the MDC Board.</p> <p>All Leaders declared an interest in the Investment Plan Refresh and the Adult Skills items.</p>
TVCA 56/24- 25	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record.</p>
TVCA 57/24- 25	<p>MAYORS UPDATE</p> <p>The Chair introduced a report providing a general update on the key activities of the Mayor and Combined Authority since the last Cabinet meeting.</p> <p>In addition, the Mayor verbally discussed the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are awaiting notices for Net Zero Teesside, contractors are on site testing at the moment. - They discussed the concerns of the British Steel announcement and the potential fallout from potential closure of the Scunthorpe location.

	<p>Cabinet members were invited to ask questions or comment on the report.</p> <p>Councillor Harrison raised a query on careers, noting that she felt it was a fantastic initiative, however, she noted the decline in careers support in education over the years, with the loss of dedicated teachers and advisors being of concern.</p> <p>The Mayor acknowledged Councillor Harrison's concerns and discussed several programmes being delivered by central Government to bridge the gap.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the update.</p>
TVCA 58/24- 25	<p>GOVERNANCE & APPOINTMENTS</p> <p><i>The Appendix to this Report is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972</i></p> <p>The Chair advised that the appendix to this report was confidential so if the details were to be discussed, then members of the press and public would need to be excluded. Cabinet received a report from the Group Chief Legal Officer which set out a number of appointments to be noted and provided an update in relation to any Delegated Decisions taken by officers since the last Cabinet meeting on 31 January 2025.</p> <p>The Mayor advised Cabinet that the version presented had minor amendments due to typographical errors. Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>RESOLVED- That Cabinet noted:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the appointment of Owen Williams to Middlesbrough Development Corporation Audit and Governance Committee; iii. the appointment of Owen Williams to Hartlepool Development Corporation Audit and Governance Committee; iv. the appointment Gerry Stapleton to South Tees Development Corporation Audit and Governance Committee; iv. the appointment of Councillor Mohammed Mazi to Tees Valley Combined Authority Audit and Governance Committee; and v. The position in respect of Delegated and Urgent Decisions.

	<p>RESOLVED- That Cabinet APPROVED the publication of the appendix to the Governance & Appointment paper with redactions as shown.</p>
<p>TVCA 59/24- 25</p>	<p>ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT</p> <p>Cabinet received a report which presented the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/2024 for approval.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions. None were raised.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet APPROVE the Annual Governance Statement, as drafted.</p>
<p>TVCA 60/24- 25</p>	<p>MAYOR'S QUESTION TIME, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & RECORDING OF MEETINGS</p> <p>Cabinet members received a report which summarised the Tees Valley Mayor's proposals for a Mayoral Question Time, proposed changes to the present arrangements for public participation and informed members of the intention to record its public meetings.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Councillor Brown raised concerns with removing the public question facility and felt it would be against the principles of transparency and openness.</p> <p>The Mayor expressed his own view on the public questions received from the public. During this process, members of the public expressed concern around this item from the public gallery, but were advised by the Chair that continuance of disruption of proceedings may result in members of the public being removed from the meeting.</p> <p>There was an extensive discussion around the issue. During this, Councillor Brown proposed the amendment to reduce public questions to 3 per person.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke discussed the Scrutiny Protocol and queried its adoption. Emma Simson advised that the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet regarding the adoption of the Scrutiny Protocol in full had not been accepted by Cabinet, as Cabinet did not approve the recommendation regarding remuneration of members – adoption of all other elements of the Scrutiny Protocol had been approved</p>

	<p>by Cabinet. Mayor Cooke also made a comment around reports to Cabinet, and a recommendation in the scrutiny protocol that reports should be presented by relevant portfolio holders and not officers. Emma Simson confirmed that she did not recognise this as one of the recommendations in the Scrutiny Protocol, but confirmed she would review this and confirm the position to Cabinet.</p> <p>Members discussed the proposed amendment to retain public questions, but with a limit on the questions. Leaders were asked what process is delivered in each of the constituent authorities. Clarity was sought on the details within the public participation protocol for rejecting questions.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke raised that for other Combined Authorities there was often alternate solutions on the 'contact us' section of their websites to provide additional routes for public enquiry.</p> <p>Councillor Brown again proposed a limit in the number of public questions at statutory meetings to 3 per person. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Harrison. Members then moved to vote and the amendment was passed unanimously.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approved the proposals regarding the Mayor's Question Time; - Noted TVCA's intention to record its public meetings; - Proposed an amendment to the recommendation within the report so that public participation is limited to 3 questions per person per statutory meeting. Questions must be linked to the agenda. The amendment was proposed by Cllr Brown and seconded by Cllr Harrison.
TVCA 61/24- 25	<p>GRESHAM REGENERATION – MIDDLESBROUGH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION</p> <p>Cabinet received a report from the Interim Chief Executive providing an update on the progress of the Gresham regeneration project led by Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC).</p> <p>The report set out the work progressing to determine the preferred option of capital raising required to fund the first phase. External advice has been procured to carry out financial due diligence and risk analysis to provide a recommendation to TVCA Cabinet.</p>

	<p>The outcome of the advice will inform the recommendation to Cabinet at the June 2025 meeting.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke noted the error in author on the last page of the item.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <u>NOTED</u> the update provided in this report. ii. <u>NOTED</u> the requirement for market engagement to inform future funding decisions.
TVCA 62/24- 25	<p>TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26</p> <p>Cabinet was provided a report which presented Authority's Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies for the financial year 2025/26. The Capital Strategy incorporates within it the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Combined Authority Cabinet approves the Treasury Management Strategies for 2025/26.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions. None were raised.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the contents of the report.</p>
TVCA 63/24- 25	<p>QUARTER 3 BUDGE REPORT & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE</p> <p>Cabinet was provided with an update on the financial position of the Combined Authority for the period ending 31 December 2024 and present an updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).</p> <p>It is recommended that the Combined Authority Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the quarter 3 outturn position for 31 December 2025; and ii. Note the revised Medium-Term Financial Plan.

	<p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions. None were raised.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Noted the quarter 3 outturn position for 31 December 2025; and ii. Noted the revised Medium-Term Financial Plan.
TVCA 64/24- 25	<p>SOUTH TEES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION UPDATE REPORT</p> <p>Cabinet received a report which provided a general project update setting out the background to the development of the site and its strategic importance, along with major milestones to date, challenges and the immediate next steps in its development. This was the first such update and recognised that TVCA cabinet members have changed during the lifespan of STDC. The report provided a historical summary of STDC.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions. None were raised.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet: <u>NOTED</u> the contents of the report.</p>
TVCA 65/24- 25	<p>TRANSPORT PROGRAMME UPDATE</p> <p><i>Elements of Appendix 2 to this Report are exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972</i></p> <p><i>The Chair advised that elements of appendix 2 to this report are confidential so if the details were to be discussed, then members of the press and public would need to be excluded.</i></p> <p>Cabinet received a report from the Director of Infrastructure on the transport programme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the transport capital investment programme comprising Transforming Cities Fund, City Region Sustainable Transport

	<p>Settlements 2022-2027 (CRSTS1) and 2027-2032 proposed allocation (CRSTS2), together with other funding which TVCA has been able to secure to support the delivery of the Strategic Transport Plan (2020-2030).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the development funding committed since the last report to Cabinet to commence CRSTS2 project development. • An update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme and approval of funding from the 2025/26 BSIP allocation to continue to provide a series of subsidised services from 1st April 2025. <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke raised query on Middlesbrough Railway Station and the anticipated completion of the undercroft. Alan Weston advised that they could not provide a specific date, but completion is moving as fast as possible. An additional query was raised on the expansion on the station, Alan Weston advised that work package 3 was going through detailed feasibility stage.</p> <p>Councillor Brown raised a query on the South Bank Station bridge. Alan Weston advised that there would be a proposal from Network Rail in the coming weeks to provide a temporary solution. He stated that he cannot confirm timings until details have been provided by Network Rail.</p> <p>Councillor Harrison raised concern about the lack of interconnectivity between the towns within the Tees Valley noting challenge in moving around the location. Alan Weston advised that the delivery of the Hartlepool Station improvement was key to improving services in the area, he further highlighted that the potential rail devolution changes presents an opportunity for further service enhancements.</p> <p>Tom Bryant, interim Chief Executive, raised that there are frequent conversations with Transport Committee on a wide range of proposals to improve connectivity within the region.</p> <p>Councillor Brown raised the West Dyke Road feasibility study. Alan Weston advised it will take some time for consultants to consider proposed solutions. Alan agreed to provide additional information in future reports as the work progresses.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet:</p>
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	<p>i. NOTED the update on the development of the transport capital investment programme as set out in paragraphs 1-29 and detailed in Appendix 1.</p> <p>ii. NOTES the delegated decisions taken by the Director of Infrastructure to approve CRSTS2 development funding as set out in paragraphs 30 and 31 and detailed in Appendix 3.</p> <p>iii. NOTES the update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding allocation for 2025/26 and the delegated decision taken by the Director of Infrastructure to approve the use of some of this funding as set out in paragraphs 32-36 and detailed in Appendix 4.</p> <p>iv. DELEGATES authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to manage the CRSTS revenue funding for 2025/26, as set out in paragraphs 37 and 38, to support the development and delivery of the transport capital investment programme, in accordance with the grant conditions and agreement of the Department for Transport.</p> <p>v. DELEGATES authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to manage the Consolidated Active Travel Fund allocation for 2025/26, in consultation with Tees Valley Management Group / Transport Advisory Group as set out in paragraphs 43 and 44. It is proposed that the funding will be used to support the development and delivery of the transport investment programme, in accordance with the grant conditions and agreement of Active Travel England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVED DELIVERY OF THE PROPOSED autonomous vehicle pilot project, included in the CRSTS2 programme, and to DELEGATE authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to progress the project as set out in paragraphs 26-29 of this report and detailed in the feasibility study in Appendix 2, subject to approval of the Business Case. In accordance with the Tees Valley Assurance Framework, the approval of business cases is delegated to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Chief Executive, in consultation with the Tees Valley Management Group, and the Tees Valley Combined Authority Section 73 Officer and Monitoring Officer. The outcome of the business case appraisal will be reported to Cabinet, in accordance with the approval of the CRSTS2 Transport Programme in January 2024.
TVCA 66/24- 25	<p>INVESTMENT PLAN REFRESH</p> <p><i>Elements of Appendix 3 to this Report are exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972</i></p>

	<p>The Chair advised that elements of appendix 3 to this report are confidential so if the details were to be discussed, then members of the press and public would need to be excluded.</p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report which set out a refreshed Investment Plan for approval. It outlined the inclusion of the allocation and programme for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26, funding for infrastructure and a hangar to unlock further business investment at Teesside International Airport, the adoption of the Tees Valley Investment Zone, adoption of the Youth Trailblazer programme and incorporation of the Intra-City Transport Fund into the Investment Plan to bolster the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding for 2025/26.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke noted the redactions with the public pack which did not have detailed exemptions and sought clarity. Emma Simson advised that the specific information was redacted.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke further raised concern that the approvals were combined, which could prevent members from splitting off decisions on the specific elements within. Mayor Houchen discussed that the combined approach is due to the inter-relationship between many of the projects. Mayor Cooke also felt that there hadn't been enough pre-engagement with the leaders and that this process should be improved.</p> <p>Mayor Houchen discussed the different revenue streams and form in which funding will pass through, and that whilst it is a grant to Airport, there would be business rates generated.</p> <p>Councillor Harrison raised concern with UKSPF capital spend and that funding going to the Airport is hard to agree on when they have already received a significant sum – she queried if the money could be shared further afield. Mayor Houchen discussed the Airport Business Plan and the details presented in there and provided clarity on the reason for the proposed funding and potential jobs created.</p> <p>Mayor Houchen raised the process of the Airport Board asking this request of TVCA, and noted that each LA is a shareholder.</p> <p>Councillor Brown raised concern with the amount of money already spent on the Airport itself. How was it decided that £6.5 was to be allocated to this? Mayor Houchen discussed the UKSPF process that had been agreed</p>
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	<p>by Cabinet previously and the additional processes in advance of Cabinet where papers are reviewed by Tees Valley Management Group (TVMG) and Chief Executives before publication.</p> <p>Councillor Brown raised an additional query on the proposed RCBC package of £1.6m and sought to understand when RCBC may receive this. Tom Bryant advised that the reference within the paper was an options assessment and that it was not proposed that RCBC would receive any funding. Councillor Harrison mirrored concerns raised by Mayor Cooke regarding process, however, clarified that she understood that it was proposed the RCBC bid was not supported. Further discussion was held on the process.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke requested that the minutes of TVMG be shared with Leaders so they can understand the process. Mayor Houchen discussed the commitment to collaboratively develop a longer-term strategic investment pipeline.</p> <p>Mayor Houchen discussed the lack of capital available to the Airport to deliver the hangers and raised that the proposed investment has been assessed in line with the Treasury Green Book. Councillor Brown queried concern that if the Airport funding was not approved, would it cease to be viable. Mayor Houchen clarified that the Airport would still be financially viable without this grant. A secondary query was raised on the implications of not providing this grant, with Mayor Houchen informing Cabinet that it would be that 250 jobs would not be created.</p> <p>Councillor Harker felt that the associated borrowing costs for the Airport grant should sit with the Airport rather than TVCA and requested a greater understanding of the financial status of the Airport. Gary Macdonald provided clarity on the financial arrangements for the grant and that the Airport would be purely getting a grant and that the financing costs would not be with them. Councillor Harker felt that the taking on of financial risk should be passed onto the Airport rather than the Authority. Members discussed the concerns around the Airport being unable to access private sector funding to deliver on the scheme directly and subsequently the requirement for grant funding.</p> <p>Members raised concern about potential future requests from the Airport for funding, and sought assurance that it would not be a re-occurring request. Discussion was held on the differing operational capacities of other regional airports.</p>
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	<p>Mayor Cooke mirrored the points raised by Councillor Harker and expanded by raising concern on the liability of financial arrangements.</p> <p>Councillor Harrison noted that she accepted the timeframe challenge and issues with other schemes, but wanted to understand if the Mayoral Development Corporations (MDC) had viable schemes ready to go. Mayor Houchen stated that consideration needed to be given to the MDC schemes as part of the long-term work on developing a strategic pipeline.</p> <p>Mike Greene requested clarity on the financial elements on the Airport allocation, as there is a grant element via UKSPF and then a loan taken by TVCA with the total sum being provided as a grant to the Airport. Mayor Houchen noted that on other projects, it was not typical for a grant to have a return to the grant provider.</p> <p>Councillor Cook raised a query on the Investment Zone and how Stockton represented 35% of the regional digital sector and would like to understand how the Borough would benefit from the Zone. Mayor Houchen noted that most of the capital funding would be specifically for Hartlepool and Middlesbrough, however, the remaining funding would be Tees Valley wide. Additionally, he noted that this is the first allocation of £80m and there would be further funding. Sarah Walker informed members that the government were clear that there must be two distinct zones to deliver at speed, but there will be future development. She provided clarity to members on the investment programme and the agreement with government.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke discussed the Investment Zone business rate retention and reference to the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) in relation to the proposed airport project. Sarah Walker discussed that business rate retention would require an MOU with the respective authorities. She also informed members that the CMA reviews any investments over £10m and they provide advice on the lawfulness of the subsidy. There is early engagement with the CMA as part of the process before the final advice is provided.</p> <p>Additional assurance was sought by Mayor Cooke, who wanted confirmation that the investment represented value for money and that the concerns raised around the borrowing taken on by TVCA had been addressed. Mayor Houchen highlighted that previous grants to local authorities had required borrowing in order to deliver. He also discussed how officers would manage the transaction and impact on TVCA budget.</p>
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	<p>Mayor Houchen moved to approve the recommendations. Councillor Harrison asked for it to be noted that in her opinion the process of identifying projects for the UKSPF capital was flawed and that changes should be made to improve early involvement of Cabinet in the future.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</p> <p>i. APPROVED the Investment Plan refresh, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 into the TVCA Investment Plan as a named programme with a confirmed allocation of £21.5m, and approving the priorities set out in the report and Appendices 1a & b. • An allocation of £12.52m grant to fund infrastructure works and a hangar, to unlock real estate investment opportunities with Draken, Willis Lease Finance Corporation and Airbourne Colours Ltd at Teesside International Airport (TIA) as set out in the report and Appendices 2-3. • Accepting the Tees Valley Investment Zone into the TVCA Investment Plan as a named programme with a confirmed allocation of £80m and approval of the TVIZ Business Rate Retention Reinvestment Strategy as set out in the report and Appendices 4-6. • Accepting the Tees Valley Youth Trailblazer programme into the TVCA Investment Plan as a named programme with an allocation of £5m and approving the proposed core interventions set out in the report and Appendices 7-8. • Accepting the £3.5m Intra-City Transport Fund to bolster the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding for 2025/26 to enable the extension of the under 21 fares offer and the introduction of a care leaver pass, and noting that the Director of Infrastructure has an existing delegation from Cabinet approved on the 22nd July 2022: <i>That Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) become party to the 'shell' Bus Enhanced Partnership agreement, noting that there are no direct obligations at this stage, and delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Transport & Infrastructure to engage through the Bus Partnership governance structure and agree further detail in relation to any element of the delivery plan, which has implications on TVCA, subject to confirmation of funding and satisfactory completion of the necessary statutory processes.</i> <p>ii. NOTED the update on the Tees Valley Connect to Work programme and that the programme's Five-Year Delivery Plan will be reported back to Cabinet for approval at a future meeting.</p>
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	<p>iii. NOTED the update on the Tees Valley Business Growth Service and that the programmes delivery plan will be reported back to Cabinet in June 2025.</p>
TVCA 67/24- 25	<p>ADULT SKILLS</p> <p><i>Appendix 1 to this Report is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972</i></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report which provided the background information to the 2025/26 procurement of the Adult Skills provision, an overview of the outcomes of the procurement and made recommendations on the allocations to be awarded to the successful providers as set out in the confidential appendix. The report also set out the approach for adult skills from the 2026/27 academic year, which includes a commitment to working collaboratively with providers to shape this approach.</p> <p>Emma Simson provided clarity on the reasoning for exempting the names of providers within the proposed allocations appendix. She informed members that this would typically be made public once Cabinet has approved the item.</p> <p>Mayor Houchen advised that should Cabinet wish to discuss the confidential appendix; they must move to closed session.</p> <p>Members were given an opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Councillor Harker raised concern with the late provision of some of the information presented to them, but acknowledged that the process was difficult. He felt that members did not have the opportunity to fully understand the reasoning for allocation. Mayor Houchen indicated that he was happy to move into closed session to provide clarification on the questions that members have.</p> <p>Sarah Walker informed members that the open procurement process had recently closed and that they had brought this report to Cabinet earlier, following feedback from providers, to ensure they could access funds earlier.</p> <p>Councillor Cook noted the issues with the single year funding and that there is hopefully going to be improvements to multiyear funding opportunities to remove some of the bottlenecks in the process.</p>

	<p>A query was raised on the process given there are bids from the individual local authorities.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke noted that other combined authorities produce an annual report with additional detail and felt it would be of benefit to move to that format. Sarah Walker noted that a skills analysis piece of work has been undertaken to inform future provision and commented that TVCA could move to presenting information in this way.</p> <p>At this point of the meeting, Mayor Houchen proposed the exclusion of press and public.</p> <p>The press and public were invited back into the meeting. No press and public returned to the meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet APPROVED both the ASF and Level 3 FCFJ allocations to providers with additional funding of £3,873,802 from the adult skills accrued underspend and the operational management costs of £930k, which remains at the same level as 2024/25. Following the prioritisation of the Delivery Plans, this option will support 100% of remaining delivery.</p>
	<p>Before closing the meeting, the Chair offered his thanks to Councillor Bob Cook who was attending his last TVCA Cabinet meeting. The Chair highlighted Cllr Cook's contributions and stressed what a stable and helpful member of TVCA Cabinet he had been and added that he will be sorely missed.</p> <p>The Chair also welcomed Rose Rouse to her first TVCA Cabinet meeting</p>
	<p>DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10am Friday, 27 June 2025

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

17 JULY 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Resources and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – OUTTURN MARCH 2025

SUMMARY

This report updates Cabinet on the draft financial performance and position as at 31 March 2025.

The overall financial position is similar to the position projected at the end of December 2024, as outlined in the Budget report in February 2025, with a variance of £69,000 from the previously reported position.

Actions taken to manage the overspend of £7m were agreed as part of the budget report, and the position has continued to be carefully monitored.

Members will be aware of the financial pressures going forward with our Powering our Futures Programme integral to identifying opportunities for resolving the gap. Significant progress has been made on this to date, and further reports will be presented throughout the year providing updates.

There has also been a notable movement in the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, increasing to £6.7m as a result of growing numbers of children with Education, Health & Care Plans.

The Capital Programme has been updated to incorporate new schemes and reflect those schemes completed as at the financial year end.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

To update Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial Plan, including the outturn position for 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Note the outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2025 and the updated Capital Programme.

DETAIL**FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2025****GENERAL FUND**

1. The following table sets out the financial position for each Directorate at 31 March 2025. The reasons for any significant variances from those previously reported are summarised in the paragraphs below.

Directorate	Annual Budget	Actual Outturn	Actual Variance Over/(Under)	Projected Variance Q3 Over/(Under)	Movement from Q3
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	97,424	99,626	2,202	1,895	307
Children's Services	58,153	64,224	6,071	4,762	1,309
Community Services, Environment & Culture	53,083	53,516	433	1,489	(1,056)
Finance, Transformation & Performance	14,505	14,414	(91)	96	(187)
Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	613	1,765	1,152	1,110	42
Corporate Services	11,284	11,150	(134)	6	(140)
Corporate Items	9,421	7,235	(2,186)	(1,980)	(206)
Total	244,483	251,930	7,447	7,378	69
Release balances to fund outturn position			(7,447)	(7,378)	(69)

Adults, Health and Wellbeing

2. Demands in adult social care continued to increase in Q4, particularly for people requiring mental health support £521k.
3. The level of uncollected debt increased over the year leading to an increase in the bad debt provision of £296k.
4. In the previous MTFP report to Council in February we referred to a potential income of £500,000 through the Better Care Fund pooled budget, the actual figure agreed with NHS colleagues was £1.16m, creating an additional £660,000 used to fund the increased social care pressures.
5. There was an overspend of £150,000 within community safety in relation to the purchase of equipment to support the digital switchover.

Children's Services

6. Members will be aware of the continued growth in demand relating to Children's Social Care and the ever increasing costs of external residential provision. Alongside many other Council's across the country, we continue to see this be a major challenge for Children's Social care budgets, and there has been a further overspend in the final quarter of the year of £1.4m on external residential costs for Children in our Care.
7. Supported Accommodation costs have increased over those projected by £390,000 due to new placements and higher fee packages as well as £120,000 of additional independent living allowances to support young people.
8. There has also been increase in the number of connected persons carers in the last quarter, resulting in a further overspend on this budget of £130,000.

9. This was offset in part (£600,000) by a one-off technical accounting entry relating to the profit we receive from the joint venture arrangement with Spark of Genius.

Community Services, Environment & Culture

10. There have been a number of smaller movements compared to the projected position across the directorate totalling a movement of £1.05m
- (£100,000) reduction in costs relating to Grounds Maintenance
 - A one-off technical accounting adjustment relating to school meals income of (£280,000)
 - Home to School Transport costs continue to increase relating to more children receiving transport, £80,000
 - A reduction in staffing costs relating to vacant posts (£200,000)
 - (£200,000) saving due to TAL requiring nil additional subsidy in relation to higher energy costs, TAL have absorbed these costs within their own budgets. A previous saving had already been projected earlier in the year of (£300,000), making the total saving for the year (£500,000).
 - There was a slight reduction in waste tonnages compared to the projected position making a saving of (£80,000).
 - (£235,000) relating to a number of minor variances, including additional fees and charges across the directorate.

Finance, Transformation & Performance

11. (£150,000) additional income received from the Hampton by Hilton Hotel dividend.

Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

12. (150,000) movement for the planning service relating to £50,000 more planning income than projected and £100,000 grant relating to Nutrient Migration.
13. £110,000 additional overspend on the shopping centre relating to additional voids and tenants leaving

Corporate Services

14. (100,000) additional income above budget relating to the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) rebate.

Corporate Items

15. Additional income relating to the collection fund (£200,000)

Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block

16. Schools, Early Years and Special Educational Needs (High Needs) provision are funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The grant is awarded by the Department for Education on an annual basis and the amount is determined by a national formula. Members will be aware that we are experiencing growing demand in services for pupils with Special Educational Needs. This is also true of many Councils across the Country.
17. The growth in demand has increased sharply during 2024/25, creating significant financial pressure on the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant. During the year there was growth in 17% children with an EHCP. The opening deficit at 1st April 2024 was £3.8m,

this has increased by £2.9m during 2024/25, leaving a closing deficit at 31st March 2025 of £6.7m.

18. Details of any variances above £200,000 against budget incurred during the year 2024/25 are

- £990,000 overspend on placing children with special educational needs in privately ran schools. This is due to a lack of capacity within maintained schools and academies.
- £640,000 overspend on placing children with special educational needs in maintained or academy schools out of the area
- £910,000 overspend on additional top up funding allocated to academies to support children with special educational needs within their settings.
- £1,030,000 overspend relating to children who have been excluded, costs for education either at home or in alternative provision
- (£460,000) underspend against the Early Years budget relating to timing of the grant funding and its relationship to census points.
- (£290,000) underspend within the Schools Growth Fund due to marginally lower admission numbers in September 2024 for specific schools resulting from basic need requirements.

19. The dedicated schools grant is accounted for in a separate ring-fenced account and guidance states that any deficit should not be funded from the Council's General Fund. This deficit is therefore not included within the Council's overall budget gap. The Council has worked with the Department for Education as part of the Delivering Better Value Programme to develop a plan to resolve this position over the medium term. As part of this plan, a recent report to Cabinet on 16th January 2025; Additionally Resourced Provision in mainstream Schools – Outcome of EMS Consultation, identified one of the steps to try to address some of the demand and financial pressures we are currently experiencing. There is also a report on this Cabinet meeting agenda looking at increasing capacity within mainstream provision for children with special educational needs.

Collection Fund

20. The collection fund is a ringfenced account which includes the actual amount collected for both Council tax and business rates. In line with statutory requirements the Council forecasts the overall surplus or deficit on the collection fund in January, which is used in budget setting for the following year. Actual performance of the amount of Council tax and business rates collected is not known until the end of the financial year.

21. Members will recall the opening position for the collection fund at 1st April 2024 was a deficit of £591,000. Performance during the financial year in 24/25 has been positive creating a surplus which has cleared the opening deficit, leaving a balanced closing position at the end of the year. The positive performance due to additional council tax growth was reflected in the MTFP projections as part of the MTFP Update and Strategy Report to Council in February 2025.

General Fund Balances and Addressing the Overspend in 2024/25

22. The total General Fund Balances at 31 March 2025 are £8m, in line with the agreed level and as outlined in the report to Cabinet in February 2025.

23. In order to fund the overspend in 24/25, as agreed in the budget report in February 2025, reserves have been used to fund the overspend position £7.447m. The earmarked reserves position has reduced in year from an adjusted opening position of £46.5m to £30.2m. The general fund balances remain at £8m.

Addressing the Budget Gap

24. As described in previous reports, alongside most other Councils, we are experiencing unprecedented financial challenges due to high inflation levels and greater demand for services leading to significantly increased costs to deliver vital services to residents. Members will recall in the budget setting report to Council in February 2024, there is a projected budget gap across the medium term financial plan rising to £8.1m by 2026/27. The latest budget report to Council in February 2025 updated members on the performance against this savings target to date.

25. The Powering Our Futures programme, and in particular the transformation mission has identified savings of £5.8m by 2026/27 to date. The updated savings target is now £1.35m in 2025/26 and £2.256m in 2026/27. The transformation programme, alongside the wider Powering our Futures Programme, will continue to look to address the budget gap, alongside ensuring improvements to services to local residents.

CAPITAL

26. The Capital Programme is summarised below and shown at **Appendix A**.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2027	Current Approved Programme £'000	Programme Revisions £'000	Revised Programme £'000	Completed Schemes 2024/25 £'000	Variances (Completed Schemes) £'000	Revised Programme £'000	New Approvals £'000	Revised Programme £'000
School Investment Programme & Childrens Services	26,590	(324)	26,266	(13,387)	76	12,955	3,126	16,081
Inclusive Growth	19,922	(718)	19,204	(10,212)	2,212	11,204	0	11,204
Regeneration	127,020	624	127,644	(1,761)	2	125,885	20,000	145,885
Transportation	43,972	445	44,417	(21,255)	(54)	23,108	1,175	24,284
Community & Environment, Culture & Leisure	23,468	133	23,601	(4,163)	(39)	19,399	876	20,274
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	7,057	16	7,073	(1,828)	7	5,252	0	5,252
Xentrall ICT	900	0	900	(733)	733	900	0	900
Council Wide	20,000	0	20,000	0	0	20,000	0	20,000
Total Approved Capital MTFP	268,929	176	269,105	(53,339)	2,937	218,703	25,177	243,880

27. Members will note that the programme has been updated to reflect the approvals contained within the 2025/26 Budget Report and to reflect changes to the programme resulting from the sourcing of external funding. The changes are summarised in **Appendix B**. The Programme has also been updated to reflect schemes which have completed in 2024/25.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

28. As part of the process of making changes to policy or delivery of services, we consider the impact on our communities. No changes to policy or service delivery are proposed as part of this report.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

29. None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

30. The report updates Members on the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

31. There are no specific legal implications.

RISK ASSESSMENT

32. This Medium Term Financial Plan update report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

33. N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

34. Medium Term Financial Plan Update & Strategy Report to Council 19th February 2025

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APPENDIX A

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2027	Current Approved Programme	Programme Revisions	Revised Programme	Completed Schemes 2024/25	Variances (Completed Schemes)	Revised Programme	New approvals	Revised Programme	Expenditure Apr 2018 - March 2025
SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME & CHILDRENS SERVICES									
School Investment Programme	24,495,250	(228,357)	24,266,893	(12,049,170)	98,760	12,316,483	3,125,953	15,442,436	8,742,502
Children Investment	2,095,301	(96,116)	1,999,185	(1,337,871)	(22,307)	639,007	0	639,007	642,970
SCHOOL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME & CHILDRENS SERVICES	26,590,551	(324,473)	26,266,078	(13,387,041)	76,453	12,955,490	3,125,953	16,081,443	9,385,472
INCLUSIVE GROWTH									
Inclusive Growth & Development	9,421,909	(968,345)	8,453,564	0	0	8,453,564	0	8,453,564	2,131,843
Office Accommodation	9,500,511	0	9,500,511	(10,212,344)	2,211,833	1,500,000	0	1,500,000	2,912,242
Council Chamber	1,000,000	250,000	1,250,000	0	0	1,250,000	0	1,250,000	1,019,646
INCLUSIVE GROWTH	19,922,420	(718,345)	19,204,075	(10,212,344)	2,211,833	11,203,564	0	11,203,564	6,063,731
REGENERATION									
Stockton Town Centre Schemes	18,964,451	0	18,964,451	(18,446)	1,596	18,947,601	0	18,947,601	1,458,540
Reshaping Town Centres	10,722,460	(250,000)	10,472,460	(1,742,185)	0	8,730,275	0	8,730,275	1,591,064
Billingham Town Centre	10,000,000	0	10,000,000	0	0	10,000,000	20,000,000	30,000,000	266,009
Thornaby Town Centre	33,087,140	(16,217)	33,070,923	0	0	33,070,923	0	33,070,923	9,144,671
Re-Development of Castlegate Site	30,934,381	0	30,934,381	0	0	30,934,381	0	30,934,381	14,286,736
Yarm & Eaglescliffe LUF	23,020,000	889,840	23,909,840	0	0	23,909,840	0	23,909,840	13,591,097
Infrastructure Enhancements, Regeneration & Property Acquisitions	291,717	0	291,717	0	0	291,717	0	291,717	0
REGENERATION	127,020,149	623,623	127,643,772	(1,760,631)	1,596	125,884,737	20,000,000	145,884,737	40,338,116
TRANSPORTATION									
City Regional Sustainable Transport	16,378,679	335,011	16,713,691	(5,153,703)	(29,326)	11,530,662	1,023,121	12,553,783	7,867,389
Other Transport Schemes	25,693,593	56,886	25,750,479	(15,683,684)	0	10,066,795	132,226	10,199,021	1,395,477
Developer Agreements	1,899,109	53,311	1,952,420	(417,393)	(24,054)	1,510,973	20,000	1,530,973	1,013,610
TRANSPORTATION	43,971,381	445,208	44,416,589	(21,254,780)	(53,380)	23,108,430	1,175,347	24,283,777	10,276,476

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE & LEISURE									
Energy Efficiency Schemes	1,232,724	0	1,232,724	(1,227,429)	(5,295)	0	400,000	400,000	96,351
Environment and Green Infrastructure	9,482,984	4,210	9,487,194	(432,541)	(33,428)	9,021,225	26,798	9,048,023	3,736,852
Waste	7,988,465	129,355	8,117,820	0	0	8,117,820	8,119	8,125,939	3,139,475
Building Management	2,787,924	0	2,787,924	(1,976,846)	0	811,078	440,680	1,251,758	1,431,517
Vehicle Replacement	1,975,483	0	1,975,483	(526,268)	(937)	1,448,278	0	1,448,278	526,268
COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE & LEISURE	23,467,580	133,565	23,601,145	(4,163,084)	(39,660)	19,398,401	875,597	20,273,998	8,930,463
ADULTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING									
Adults & Public Health Investment	392,421	0	392,421	(193,123)	2,702	202,000	0	202,000	193,674
Housing Regeneration	1,459,860	0	1,459,860	(9,346)	0	1,450,514	0	1,450,514	9,346
Private Sector Housing	5,204,651	16,388	5,221,039	(1,626,151)	4,306	3,599,195	0	3,599,195	1,846,796
ADULTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING	7,056,932	16,388	7,073,320	(1,828,620)	7,008	5,251,709	0	5,251,709	2,049,815
XENTRALL ICT									
Xentrall ICT Network	900,000	0	900,000	(733,047)	733,047	900,000	0	900,000	1,032,481
XENTRALL ICT	900,000	0	900,000	(733,047)	733,047	900,000	0	900,000	1,032,481
COUNCIL WIDE									
Unallocated council wide invest to save	20,000,000	0	20,000,000	0	0	20,000,000	0	20,000,000	0
COUNCIL WIDE	20,000,000	0	20,000,000	0	0	20,000,000	0	20,000,000	0
Total Approved Capital MTFP	268,929,014	175,966	269,104,980	(53,339,547)	2,936,897	218,702,330	25,176,897	243,879,227	78,076,554

APPENDIX B

Programme Revisions 2024/25

Transport

- £600,000 for works to Newport Bridge has been added to the capital programme, funded from CRSTS Grant and a contribution from Middlesbrough Borough Council.
- The Indigenous Growth Fund money from TVCA is contributing towards the Eaglescliffe Station West Car Park scheme, £358,345.

Regeneration

- Additional funding has been added to the Yarm LUF cycleway scheme from City Regional Sustainability Transport funding and Indigenous Growth Fund money, £880,000

Other

- £2,461,833 added to Accommodation schemes predominately funded from revenue. As the Dunedin scheme completed in year, this is in relation to technical accounting regulations that requires the whole scheme to be capitalised. There is also some prudential borrowing for the Council Chamber within this figure.
- £129,355 has been added the Capital Programme in respect of SBC share of the Joint Waste Management Strategy for Residual Municipal Waste Treatment, funded via loan from TVCA.
- £733,047 added to the Capital Programme for ICT Infrastructure works, completed in year and funded from revenue.

Completed Schemes 2024/25

Schools Capital

- Planned Maintenance Schemes on a range of schools have been delivered in 2024/25.
- Several school expansion projects/phases of projects have completed this year.

Town Centre Schemes

- The Norton regeneration works have completed in year.

Transportation

- £20,837,387 has been spent delivering several transport schemes, including the annual City Regional Sustainable Transport programme for 2024/25.
- Several S278 Access works and S106 schemes have completed in year fully funded via Developer contributions.

Other schemes

- £1,617,651 has been spent on Disabled Adaptations in homes across the Borough.
- Several planned maintenance schemes have been delivered across a range of Council Buildings.
- Several parks and cemeteries schemes have completed in year.
- The energy efficiency works at Ingleby Barwick Leisure Centre have completed in year.
- £458,878 has been spent on the Vehicle Replacement Programme.
- Refurbishment works to the recently acquired children's home has completed this year as part of a larger investment in Children In Our Care services.
- Installation of an upgraded education software system has completed this year.
- Changing places scheme has completed in year, £126,953.

New approvals

School Capital

- Following DFE announcements in March 2025, £2,208,960 of Higher Needs Grant from 2025/26 allocations and £916,993 of Basic Need Grant from 2026/27 and 2027/28 allocations have been added to the capital programme.

-

Transportation

- 2025/26 City Regional Sustainable Transport allocation £978,086 has been added to the Capital Programme for potholes.

Regeneration

- Pathfinder funding linked to LUF Round 3, from MHCLG, has been added to the programme for Billingham Town Centre following the signing of the MOU, £20,000,000.

Other schemes

- £400,000 has been added to the programme for solar panels installation at Billingham Forum, funded from Swimming Pool Support Grant.
- The 2025/26 building planned maintenance programme has been included in the programme.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 JULY 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Lead Cabinet Member - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport, Councillor Paul Rowling

XENTRALL ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

SUMMARY

This annual report allows Cabinet to review the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

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 seventeen 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 seventeenth 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 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 and 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 Finance, Transformation & Performance (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 the retirement in Jun-24 of Ian Miles, the previous Assistant Director (Xentrall Shared Services). Ian Coxon, an Assistant Director at SBC who previously worked alongside Ian Miles in forming and developing Xentrall in its first eight years (2008-2016), took on the role of managing Xentrall upon Ian Miles' retirement. A smooth transition took place between both Ian's and the Xentrall Management Team to ensure business continuity.

CUSTOMERS - INTERNAL

10. 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.
11. The main two-year customer survey was undertaken during 2023/24, resulting in a score of 3.9 out of 5. This is lower than Xentrall's all-time peak scores in 2020/21 during the pandemic (4.5 out of 5) but is still relatively high and consistent with previous results. Xentrall will continue to monitor customer satisfaction in both Councils in future surveys.
12. In addition, each of the Xentrall services seeks customer feedback and satisfaction levels as part of their daily service operations. This instant feedback drives more immediate low level operational service improvement responses on an ongoing basis.

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 £1m from external customers during 2024/25.
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)

I) 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 continues to be a concern, particularly at renewal points in contracts.
17. In 2024/25 Xentrall's core net budget is approximately £6.4m, funded jointly by SBC and DBC. In addition, Xentrall manages approximately £2.6m 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. In 2024/25 all but one of the key performance indicators were at or above target. The one exception, a service efficiency indicator reflecting the timeliness of completing DBC's bank reconciliation, was recovered in time for the financial year end and is the subject to a range of ongoing improvements to ensure performance is within target in future.
21. 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.
22. The Xentrall ICT service successfully maintained certification in both Information Security Management and Quality Management System ISO standards and also was re-certified for continued access to the Government's Public Services Network (PSN).
23. The Xentrall Finance and Xentrall HR services successfully maintained the BACS Accredited Bureau status following a full audit by Pay UK.

SBC & DBC ACHIEVEMENTS

24. 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.

25. Xentrall Design & Print highlights, the production of digital graphics, operational print, marketing, promotional, advertising and signage materials for:

- a. Stockton's new centralised offices and headquarters, Dunedin House
- b. Preparations for elections across both Councils (Local, Police Crime Commissioner, Tees Valley Mayor)
- c. Darlington Hippodrome Theatre
- d. Hopetown Darlington
- e. Stockton International Riverside Festival
- f. Stockton-on-Tees News, and One Darlington Partnership publications
- g. Darlington Jobs Fair and Apprentice Employment Day Stockton
- h. Learning & Skills
- i. Darlington Dolphin Centre and Leisure Services
- j. Development sites including Riverside Road in Stockton, the extension of Preston Hall and the former Northen Echo Building in Darlington.
- k. Both Town Centre and Events Teams for Armed Forces Day, Darlington 10k, Grove Fest, Rhythm & Tunes, Love your local market, Proms in the Park, Stockton Sparkles and Darlington Christmas Light Switch On
- l. Stockton & Darlington Railway 200th anniversary celebrations
- m. A whole range of other regular and recurring high volume printing tasks such as adult social care surveys, council tax bills, rent statements, landlord statements, green garden waste packs, food dietary information stickers and the Print for Post service at Stockton etc

26. Xentrall Finance highlights:

- a. Processed and paid around 70,000 creditor invoices for SBC, DBC and Tees Valley Combined Authority
- b. Over 11,000 sundry debtor invoices worth around £75 million issued
- c. Over £1 billion in cash income transactions posted and reconciled
- d. Procurement exercise for the SBC banking contract completed through NEPO
- e. Contract awarded for SBC cash in transit incorporating collection of cash from the Council car parks
- f. Expansion of Lingfield and Spark Academies, increasing Xentrall income
- g. Successfully implementing system changes and reconciliations on Finance System
- h. Improved procedures in creditors to remove paper records for invoice registering, reducing waste and saving on storage costs
- i. Contract awarded for migration of on-premise Finance System to a cloud-hosted model
- j. Implemented system improvements to the BACS processing system with plans in place to migrate to a cloud hosted system
- k. Maintained our BACS Accredited Bureau status following a full audit by Pay UK

27. Xentrall HR highlights:

- a. Successfully maintained service delivery across more than 145 individual payrolls, covering more than 15,000 employees
- b. Implemented real-time taxation of benefits in kind through payroll, in preparation for the April 2027 mandate
- c. Introduced branding on the self-service HR system portal, MyHR for both SBC and DBC
- d. Enhanced the leavers process, enabling managers to submit leaver forms directly via MyHR, reducing administration for all
- e. Successfully completed the first full calendar year of the Annual Leave module on MyHR for Darlington
- f. Produced key reports for the Office for National Statistics and supported reporting for the School Workforce Census, Social Work England and Gender Pay Gap
- g. Initiated digital document storage for employee records in Stockton via ResourceLink (already in use by Darlington) and began supporting Stockton with the migration of historic HR data.

- h. Progressed towards monthly pension reporting with all providers, improving data quality and reducing the need for year-end files and leaver forms
- i. Enhanced pension year-end processes to improve data accuracy, calculations and reduce manual work
- j. Joined a procurement framework to maintain external income and participate in the tender process for one of our largest existing clients
- k. Carried out a staff review to reorganise teams, increase senior leadership capacity, and enhancing service improvement capabilities

28. Xentrall ICT highlights:

- a. Resolved over 29,000 user incidents and requests, with 94% resolved within target and a happy customer satisfaction rating of 97%
- b. 77% 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
- c. Successfully retained Cabinet Office certification for the PSN (Public Services Network)
- d. Took part in a pilot of the new Cyber Assessment Framework developed by the National Cyber Security Centre
- e. Continued the ongoing programme of device refresh, with nearly 300 replacement laptops for SBC and almost 200 for DBC
- f. Migrated all 5000 devices across SBC and DBC from Windows 10 to Windows 11
- g. Completed 54 separate ICT-related projects including the launch of the new visitor attraction site at Hopetown, the new Stockton Council Chambers within Dunedin House and the refresh of Darlington's CRM "My Darlington+"
- h. Implemented Microsoft Sentinel to give ICT greater visibility of potential suspicious activity across the Council's network as well as the ability to automate security tasks, increasing protection outside of normal working hours
- i. Developed a Cyber Incident Response Plan with backup up by specialist 3rd party support to help mitigate the risk and impact of a cyber incident
- j. Installed Microsoft Defender across all corporate servers, giving enhanced anti-virus and threat detection that enhances our security posture and will help reduce the risk of a cyber incident
- k. Completed the refresh of the WAN (Wide Area Network) across SBC and DBC, with new faster and more reliable fibre connectivity delivered to the Darlington Town Hall, Dunedin House and the 80 remote or satellite sites
- l. Refreshed the Netcall Call Centre solution, the vital point of contact for residents across both SBC and DBC

LOOKING FORWARD

29. 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.

30. 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 solutions they need. The service is looking to reduce the number of prints produced on the printer/copier fleet at both Councils by using alternative bulk printing methods.
- b. Xentrall Finance will continue to work with both Councils have a number of projects planned or underway which include; implementing the migration of the main finance system and income management systems to a cloud-hosted solutions
- 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 with information and technology solutions. The service is planning to implement further cyber security measures and planning further exploitation of the ICT service desk system to improve services to customers.

31. 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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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 July 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET/COUNCIL DECISION

Resources and Transport- Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

Treasury Management Practices Update

SUMMARY

This report provides an update to the delegations for treasury management activities included within the Treasury Management Practices.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Following the recent retirement of the Council's Section151 Officer, the delegations for treasury management activities require updating.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet recommend to Council to approve the updated TMP5 included at Appendix A, including the updated officer delegations relating to treasury management activities.

DETAIL

1. In accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services the Council has regard to the key recommendations when determining the current Treasury Management Strategy.
2. Accordingly, the Council creates and maintains, as the cornerstones for effective treasury management:-
 - A treasury management policy statement, stating the policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management activities.
 - Suitable Treasury Management Practices (TMPs), setting out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, and prescribing how it will manage and control those activities.
3. The Council (i.e. full Council) will receive reports on its treasury management policies, practices and activities including, as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year.
4. The Council delegates responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices to the Audit and Governance Committee and for the

execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the nominated Section 151 Officer (the officer with Responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972) will act in accordance with the organisation's policy statement and TMPs and CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

5. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy was last approved by Council in February 2025 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy Report.
6. The Treasury Management Practices were last approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy Report in February 2023 and cover the following topics

TMP 1 Risk management

TMP 2 Performance measurement

TMP 3 Decision-making and analysis

TMP 4 Approved instruments, methods and techniques

TMP 5 Authority, clarity and segregation of responsibilities and dealing arrangements

TMP 6 Reporting requirements and management information arrangements

TMP 7 Budgeting, accounting and audit arrangements

TMP 8 Cash and cash flow management

TMP 9 Anti Money laundering

TMP 10 Staff training and qualifications

TMP 11 Use of external service providers

TMP 12 Corporate governance

7. TMP 5; Authority, clarity and segregation of responsibilities and dealing arrangements, delegates responsibility for day to day treasury management activities to nominated officers within the finance service. Following the retirement of the Council's existing Section 151 Officer (the officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972), the delegations have been updated. The updated TMP5 is attached to this report at appendix A.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

8. As part of the process of making changes to policy or delivery of services, we consider the impact on our communities. No changes to policy or service delivery are proposed as part of this report.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

9. None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The report is in line with the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices form part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy report to Council 22nd February 2023
2. Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy report to Council 19th February 2025

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TMP5 AUTHORITY, CLARITY AND SEGREGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEALING ARRANGEMENTS

INDEX OF SCHEDULES

- 5.1 Limits to responsibilities/discretion at committee/executive levels**
- 5.2 Principles and practices concerning segregation of duties**
- 5.3 Treasury Management Authority chart**
- 5.4 Statement of duties/responsibilities of each treasury post**
- 5.5 Absence cover arrangements**
- 5.6 Dealing limits**
- 5.7 List of approved brokers**
- 5.8 Policy on brokers' services**
- 5.9 Policy on taping of conversations**
- 5.10 Direct dealing practices**
- 5.11 Settlement transmission procedures**
- 5.12 Documentation requirements**
- 5.13 Arrangements concerning the management of third-party funds**

5.1 LIMITS TO RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1.1 Full Council

- Receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities.
- Approval of the Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy

5.1.2 Audit and Governance Committee

- Approval of/amendments to the organisation's adopted clauses, treasury management policy statement and treasury management practices.
- Budget consideration and approval
- Receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations
- Receiving and reviewing material borrowing and investment decisions.

5.2 PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES CONCERNING SEGREGATION OF DUTIES

The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 will ensure there is always adequate segregation of duties in all transactions, with specific separation of duties between organising the deal and releasing funds for the deal.

5.3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY CHART

The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 The deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972

Strategic Finance Managers

Chief Accountant / Finance Manager - Corporate (Deputy)

Senior Finance Technicians

5.4 STATEMENT OF DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH TREASURY POST

The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 / The deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972

1. The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972/ The deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 will:
 - a) Recommend clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly and monitor compliance
 - b) Submit reports as and when required by Council
 - c) Authorise and maintain TMPs and Schedules
 - d) Set submit and monitor budgets
 - e) Review the performance of the treasury management function.
 - f) Ensure the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function

- g) Ensure the adequacy of internal audit and liaise with external audit
 - h) Recommend the appointment of external service providers where appropriate.
 - i) Approve and authorise investment and borrowing deals (within dealing limits – see 5.6)
2. The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 have delegated powers to take the most appropriate form of borrowing from the approved sources and to take the most appropriate form of investments in approved instruments.
3. Prior to entering into any capital financing, lending or investment transaction, it is the responsibility of the officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to be satisfied, by reference to legal and external advisors as appropriate, that the proposed transaction does not breach any statute, external regulation or the Council's Financial Regulations.
4. The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 may delegate power to borrow and invest to members of staff to conduct all dealing transactions (within limits set at section 5.6). All transactions must be authorised by at least two specified named officers and the Chaps payment released by a third as per the responsibilities set out in 5.4.2 to 5.4.4. Alternatively staff can be authorised to act as temporary cover for leave/sickness.

5.4.1 The Deputy Officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 / Strategic Finance Managers.

1. Approve and authorise investment deals (within dealing limits – see 5.6)
2. Release Chaps payments
3. Determine and approve short term borrowing (within borrowing limits – see 5.6).

5.4.2 Chief Accountant / Finance Manager - Corporate (Deputy)

The treasury responsibilities of this post will be:-

- To assist the officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 in the formation of the Treasury Strategy.
- Identify and recommend opportunities for improved practices
- Maintaining relationships with counterparties and external service providers.
- Supervise Treasury Management staff
- Monitor performance
- Review the performance of treasury management functions
- Implement Treasury Management Strategy
- Approve and authorise investment deals (within dealing limits – see 5.6)
- Release Chaps payments
- Check interest calculations
- Arrange rescheduling or premature repayment of existing borrowings.

5.4.3 Senior Finance Technician

Responsibilities:-

- Calculate daily cash balances
- Enter transmission of monies via Nat West Web Banking system
- Select Brokers from approved list
- Adhere to agreed policies and practices on a day to day basis
- Submit management information reports
- Maintain cash flow projections
- Third party loan confirmation
- Ensure counter party limits are not exceeded
- Ensure there is a clear segregation between officers for negotiating / approving and closing deals.

5.5 **ABSENCE COVER ARRANGEMENTS**

The authority will ensure that there is adequate cover for all absences.

5.6 **DEALING LIMITS**

Dealings can be carried out providing that transactions are within limits determined by the council and the officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 / The deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 as detailed in the table below;

Investment Dealing Limits	
The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972	As per limits set within the treasury management strategy
The deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972/ Strategic Finance Managers	Monetary Limits set within TMS / 365 days and under investment horizon
Chief Accountant / Finance Manager - Corporate (Deputy)	Up to £5m / 6 months and under investment horizon.

Borrowing Dealing Limits	
The officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972	As per limits set within the treasury management strategy
The deputy officer with responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972/ Strategic Finance Managers	Short term Borrowing up to £5m per transactions and 365 days and under borrowing horizon

5.7 **LIST OF APPROVED BROKERS/ONLINE BROKER**

Tullet Prebon Brokers (UK) plc
 BGC International Brokers Ltd
 ICAP Brokers Ltd
 Tradition Brokers
 Martin Brokers
 I Deal Trade (Arlingclose Trading Platform)
 Munix

5.8 POLICY ON BROKERS' SERVICES

The authority will use brokers for its temp transactions. The Chief Accountant will evaluate the services provided by Brokers.

5.9 POLICY ON TAPING OF CONVERSATIONS

The authority will not tape telephone conversations

5.10 DIRECT DEALING PRACTICES

All deals are carried out with brokers with the exception of Bank of England, Money Market Funds, Nat West overnight deposit account or direct with a local authority.

5.11 SETTLEMENT TRANSMISSION PROCEDURES

All payments and repayments resulting from the treasury management function will be made via the authority's bank account using the electronic payment facility (with Nat West Web Banking system). Only authorised officers can transmit, approve or release payments, protected by appropriate passwords and card operated pin number. A manual back up facility will be in place to cover system failure.

5.12 DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Cash dealing sheet
Cash flow summary
Loan Record
Dealing sheet
Brokers confirmation
Counter party confirmation
Invoice signed/coded to budget
Nat West Bankline confirmation sheet
Email approvals covering all of the above if processed electronically

5.13 ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING THE MANAGEMENT OF THIRD-PARTY FUNDS

The authority manages funds under delegated powers for Tees Valley Combined Authority.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 JULY 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

KEY DECISION

**Regeneration and Housing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington
Resources & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling**

Powering Our Future – Regeneration Mission Update

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on activity across the Powering Our Futures Regeneration mission with updates on the delivery of the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint, namely progression of key work strands linked to Care Health Innovation Zone and steps to bring about increased residential development across key sites and initial work to bring about the long term redevelopment of Tees Marshalling Yards under the new term for the area, Tees Central. The report includes updates across the existing committed wide ranging regeneration programme and seeks decisions to enable the demolition of Golden Eagle in Thornaby, future opportunities for use of existing assets in Stockton town centre and progress on agreements to bring about redevelopment of Billingham town centre.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

To enable delivery of the projects and programmes within the Regeneration Powering Our Futures Mission.

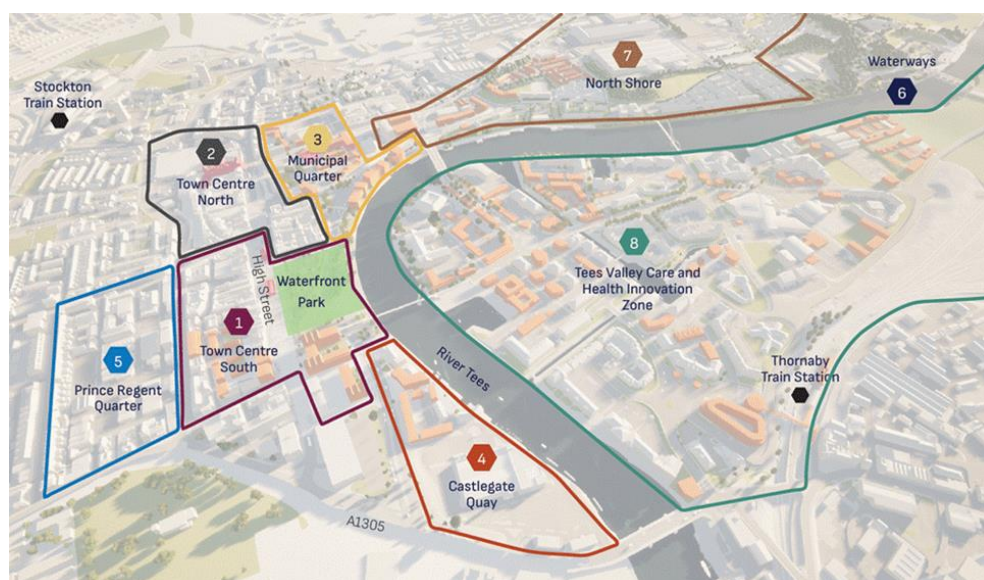
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet approve the initiation of the Tees Central project as part of the Powering our Future Placemaking mission and approve use of previously approved funds of £450,000 allocated to Municipal Quarter to support works to develop proposals within Tees Central project and the delivery of the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint and note the reciprocal reallocation of previously approved £450,000 by Tees Valley Combined Authority for the same purpose.
2. Cabinet approve the use of £550,000 of previously approved funding to support delivery of Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint to support development of proposals within Tees Central.
3. That authority be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing to approve the allocation of the budget of £1.45m set out in recommendation 1&2 to deliver the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint and Tees Central.

4. Delegate the allocation of the previously approved £6.5m to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport to:
 - a. Undertake works associated with Stockton Town Hall to bring it back into active use
 - b. Any costs associated with a food & Beverage operator to taking a lease of The Shambles
 - c. Create an enabling budget to develop options and engage the market in opportunities to bring the former Debenhams building back into occupation
5. Cabinet approve use of up to £1.34m Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) for the demolition of the Golden Eagle and delegate authority to negotiate, agree the terms of and enter, all necessary contracts to enable the demolition of the Golden Eagle to Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing.
6. Cabinet note the detail of Yarm public realm scheme and programme as set out in paragraphs 74-80.
7. Note the change in commercial approach to the acquisition and demolition of Queensway South in Billingham town centre as set out in para 51-52.

DETAIL

1. In July 2024, Cabinet approved a Blueprint which sets out an exciting and innovative vision for the future development of Central Stockton and North Thornaby Areas. The blueprint outlines transformational change over the next 25 years by creating prosperous, vibrant places, fit for future generations by delivering modern, mixed-use neighbourhoods and a thriving town centre, helping to make sure it is a safe and welcoming place where people want to work, live and visit. It focuses on eight key intervention areas in Central Stockton and North Thornaby (illustrated below):



2. This report provides an update on interventions across the blueprint area and sets out next steps to progress specific sites and opportunities in relation to the redevelopment of the Tees Marshalling Yards, the delivery of Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone and the delivery of town centre living and commercial opportunities for existing council land and assets.

3. Given the scale and significance of this regeneration opportunity, and to raise its profile at both a regional and national level, it is proposed that all future work will be delivered under the name 'Tees Central', which reflects both its geographic location and the scale of inclusive growth opportunity in the heart of the Tees Valley.

Tees Marshalling Yards

4. The Marshalling Yards is 67 Ha former railway sidings, straddling the boundary of two local authorities, in both Thornaby and Middlesbrough, is one of the largest and most significant rail-connected, brownfield regeneration opportunities in the country. The site remains in active rail use and is circumnavigated by both freight and passenger lines. To develop the site, rationalisation of rail use must take place and vehicular and pedestrian access secured for residential and commercial redevelopment.
5. Work has focussed on the rationalisation and improvement of rail connectivity and the development of a high-level master plan to establish the quantum of development that could take place. The site is large enough to accommodate 2-3,000 homes and a large quantum of commercial space, but no fixed uses have yet been established. The site provides a huge opportunity for the expansion of the economic growth aspirations for Stockton on Tees and would greatly increase the GVA of the Tees Valley economy and create large number of new jobs. It also supports the development of the Care and Health Innovation Zone, through enhanced linkages to existing developments on Teesdale and provides a potential platform for significant investment in new clinical facilities at the heart of the Tees Valley.
6. Early engagement with stakeholders is underway to understand the future of rail on this site with large parts of the site being under-utilised or disused. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of the site will remain in use and continue to support the future needs of rail stock, there is an opportunity to redevelop an underutilised site into a new community at the centre of the Tees Valley.
7. Partnership working with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) continues to explore funding opportunities to facilitate the next stages of work. The recent announcement of the Transport for City Regions (TCR, formerly referred to as City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 CRSTS2) funding from TVCA which will see £140m of funding commitment to strategic transport interventions to open up the site. This demonstrates the level of ambition for the project. In addition to this, the TCR programme also commits £10m to deliver smaller-scale improvements to Thornaby Station, to create a multi-modal hub and better connect the station with the surrounding area.
8. Further detailed discussions will take place with landowners and key stakeholders to set out the next stages of collaborative work to develop a more detailed case of investment in the site. This process will include the establishment of a strategic project board which will engage all land-owning parties as well as SBC, Homes England and TVCA.

Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone (TVCHIZ)

9. Alongside the work associated with Tees Central, there has been an evolution of work on the Tees Valley Care & Health Innovation Zone (TVCHIZ). The Council, working with colleagues from the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), has engaged with partners across the health, care and education to explore opportunities to support the care and health sector. Whilst there will remain a strong focus on the spatial area of the original TVCHIZ, there is a recognition that a broadening of that geography will lead to increased opportunities and better alignment with the move towards community based and neighbourhood health.
10. Work to date has focussed on exploring opportunities to provide opportunities to increase research, development and innovation activity across the sector, as well as workforce

development, skills development, and particularly developing career pathways. This has led to the creation of a dedicated Care and Health Coordinator officer to support recruitment and retention in the sector. In addition, the Council and TVCA have jointly commissioned CPI, a leading independent technology innovation centre, to undertake a feasibility study to explore opportunities for health and care-based innovation across the zone.

11. The delivery of a Medical School is a key component of TVCHIZ and a major commitment within the MOU between the Council and Teesside University. Work will begin on a detailed feasibility study in partnership with Teesside University to establish the basic principles and requirements spatially and functionally for a Medical School and associated servicing and residential requirements which can be considered in the context of wider residential provision set out in following sections of this report.

Stockton Waterfront

12. Work is progressing at pace across the entirety of the Waterfront development site following the smooth transition to a full working site after the closure of Riverside Road in May. Notable works in recent weeks have seen the removal of the old Riverside Road, installation of the first beams to form the land bridge deck and further installation of paving across the northern section of the park. Work is on track to complete on this transformational development in Spring 2026.
13. In March, the Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) became operational and has continued to increase patient capacity month by month since opening. The scheme is an outstanding example of strong partnership working between public sector bodies to bring about completion of the largest new build CDC in England.
14. There were some unresolved issues between the NHS and contractor on site that had prevented completion of the Car Park to the rear of the building. In recent weeks the Council has taken steps to complete the works, minimising disruption and ensuring that the new car park and roundabout were complete and open (30th June) as soon as possible.

Town Centre Living

15. The Blueprint identifies opportunities to develop a series of residential led developments across the waterfront and former post office site between the High Street and West Row, Municipal Buildings and adjacent sites including Riverside Car Park.
16. It is proposed that these sites, along with the Dairy Car Park site, form part of a portfolio of development sites in the Stockton town centre area and that the council procures a development partner to bring forward residential led redevelopment on these sites. This will include an assessment of commercial use types including, mixed tenure housing including affordable housing, student residential and residential needs linked to growth in the Care and Health sector, build to rent and hotel and aparthotel beds. All these use types will contribute to increased town centre vibrancy, support economic growth and assist with scheme viability.
17. The anticipated outcome of this exercise will be the selection of a preferred partner and the development of detailed site proposals, a delivery structure and detailed business case(s), working closely with stakeholders to maximise use of publicly owned land and assets. A future report will be brought to Cabinet before any development is then agreed.
18. A variety of detailed development briefs, feasibility studies, site investigation and professional advice and support is required to develop detail and understand the financial and commercial structures required to bring development forward.
19. The council and TVCA have already agreed a delivery partnership approach to the development of the Municipal Quarter, with TVCA and SBC contributing £450,000 each to develop a delivery

proposition. Taking the inter-relationship between residential sites in the town centre into account and the redefining of the blueprint area into Tees Central, it is proposed that the previously approved funding for the Municipal Quarter area is used to support work across the Central Stockton and Tees Central area. The commitment from TVCA to enable broadening of the scope for their match funding sum has already been confirmed.

20. Given the scale and breadth of further work required, it is also recommended that £550,000 from the previously approved budget to support delivery of the Central Stockton and North Thornaby blueprint allocated in September 2024 be allocated to fund the development of masterplans, business cases and delivery proposals as described above.
21. On the basis of the multi-faceted approach to direct housing delivery agreed at June Cabinet, SBC have been selected to be one of 5 councils contributing to an LGA programme to develop best practice advice and support for Councils undertaking their own house building. It is hoped that this programme will both provide useful support and advice for our own delivery programme as well as showcasing the innovative approach SBC is taking.

Stockton Town Centre Commercial opportunities

22. The Blueprint identifies several opportunities for reuse of existing Council assets to drive growth, create investment opportunities and add to the vibrancy and attractiveness of Stockton town centre.

The Shambles

23. The Shambles is a Grade II listed building situated on Stockton High Street. The building currently operates as a market hall setting with eleven self-contained lock-up retail units, seven of which are currently occupied under a licence to occupy. The council-provided public toilet facilities are also located within the building. The public toilets, offering facilities for male, female and disabled users, are open to the public daily and are staffed by SBC attendants. The facilities were installed some years ago and do not meet modern standards.
24. The market hall is currently designed to provide small retail units on the High Street, enabling businesses to test their model, grow and eventually move to their own larger town centre units. In practice, this model has not worked well for several years with several retailers remaining in the Shambles for prolonged periods, some over ten years. Other retailers have occupied the remaining units for varying periods; however, they have not relocated to High Street units, and the building is no longer serving its purpose of supporting business growth and Town Centre viability.
25. The occupiers of the retail units are generally small, independent local businesses. They hold a licence to occupy as opposed to a lease, and the rent payable includes utility costs. The total operational costs associated with the running of the entire building are approximately £165,000. The figure comprises utilities, repairs and maintenance, materials, council staff, and external property management costs. The building generates minimal business rates income as the retail units are assessed individually and all fall below the Small Business Rate Relief threshold. The current passing rent is c£45,000 per annum; therefore, the asset currently runs at a significant loss.
26. The council is also responsible for all repairs and maintenance to the building. A recent condition survey highlighted several condition issues with the building that will need to be addressed within the next five years.
27. The environment around the Shambles has changed since it was first established as a market hall. Following the acquisition and demolition of the Castlegate Shopping Centre, the

environment around the building is no longer retail-focused and the blueprint identified the Shambles as an ideal location to establish a new food and beverage offer in the town centre given its proximity to Waterfront Park and prominent location on the High Street. The building is therefore a key town centre asset that can complement the new park facility and the town centre.

28. It is therefore proposed to market the Shambles as a food and beverage opportunity and to lease the entire building on a full repairing basis.
29. To facilitate a food and beverage operator, the existing retailers will need to relocate, and the public toilet facilities will no longer be provided from the building. A new modern public toilet building is to be constructed within the Waterfront Park, approximately 50 metres from the Shambles building. The existing toilet provision within the Shambles will remain open until the new toilets are operational. Public toilet provision remains available at Wellington Square and Stockton Central Library, along with a Changing Places facility at The Arc.
30. The vacant possession strategy and programme will need to be agreed to ensure timelines align with the Waterfront Park opening and a food and beverage operator target opening dates. The Council will work closely with existing retailers within the Shambles to provide business support and advice and support the sourcing of alternative accommodation options.
31. There is an expectation that the council will be required to carry out a schedule of landlords works to the building if satisfactory lease terms can be agreed upon with a food and beverage operator. Some of these works would need to be undertaken in any event, which would involve business interruption.
32. The extent of the landlords works required will be confirmed following further discussions with a prospective tenant. The council intends to appoint specialist external advisors to guide any relocation and vacant possession, whilst giving consideration, and being sensitive to, the existing businesses and their operations as well as the 'Landlord Works' element to ensure value for money is achieved.
33. Subject to Cabinet approval, council officers will market the building for a food and beverage use, with such terms to be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport.

Stockton Town Hall

34. In July 2023 Cabinet approved the appointment of architects to develop outline design proposals to relocate the Registrars service within Stockton Town Hall. Space Architects were commissioned to produce plans to the end of RIBA Stage 2 and in July 2024, Cabinet approved detail design works to the end of RIBA Stage 4 with an indicative final scheme cost of £6.5m.
35. During the early stages of the detailed design phase of works, it became apparent that due to the constraints of delivering a scheme within a Grade II* listed building, alongside the accessibility and statutory needs of the Registrars service, the Town Hall could not be adapted to fully meet all of the functions of the registrar's service.
36. It is however essential that this Grade II* listed building which is a key focal point in the heart of the town is brought back into use and that any future use will celebrate its history and attractive civic setting. It is therefore recommended that options to restore the building for its original civic use should be explored alongside other ground floor use opportunities which better compliment the wider retail, leisure and cultural offer of the town centre.

37. It is proposed that this includes using the Council Chamber for civil partnership, wedding and civic ceremonies, maintaining its grandeur and civic function. The options appraisal will assess the potential for a series of flexible rooms at both ground and first floor level, which could be used by front facing council services and or operational staff. This could include but is not limited to; consultation rooms, meeting rooms, exhibition space, and touch down spaces. Works and designs done to date will inform final designs and it is proposed that the final design and commissioning of works is delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport to be funded from the £6.5m budget already allocated for this purpose.

Debenhams

38. The former Debenhams department store building was historically in two separate ownerships. The 'rear' part of the building is included within the Wellington Square Shopping Centre ownership boundary, which the council acquired in 2019. The 'original' main building, fronting onto the High Street, was privately owned but transferred into the hands of receivers in 2018 whilst Debenhams were in occupation as leaseholders.
39. The building services, utilities, fire alarms etc were all located in the front part of the building which did not have any impact when Debenhams were operating the building as one.
40. Debenhams went into administration and ceased trading in January 2020. The property has remained vacant since that time. The property was marketed for sale shortly after it became vacant.
41. The property was then offered for sale at auction in October 2023. Given that the rear portion of the building could not be let without access to building control systems located in the front portion the council agreed a purchase price with the auctioneers in advance of the auction date and completed the purchase in November 2023 to make the building into one asset.
42. Due to the scale of the building (circa 90,000 square feet), there is limited demand for a building of this type in its current form. This trend has been observed nationwide. In recent years, retailers such as Debenhams, BHS, House of Fraser, and Wilko's ceased trading, resulting in 771 vacant properties. As of January 2024, 75% of those properties remained vacant.
43. The building occupies a prominent position at the northern end of the High Street, next to The Globe, with a separate entrance in Wellington Square. This is a key town centre asset to be brought back into use for the benefit and vitality of the town and its community.
44. The blueprint identified the former Debenhams as an ideal location to enhance the town's already thriving daytime and nighttime economies by offering accommodation that a wide range of potential users can occupy, complement the existing user mix in the town centre and maximise its commercial sustainability. This could include, but not limited to, a creative and digital "hub", market food hall, community health facilities, and leisure uses.
45. Other significant benefits could be achieved by bringing the building back into use, including job creation, private sector investment, increased visitor spend, and enhanced footfall.
46. To support the re-use of these existing assets and deliver on the agreed blueprint, it is recommended that the previously agreed allocation of £6.5m for redevelopment of Stockton Town Hall now be used to:

- a. Undertake works associated with Stockton Town Hall to bring it back into active use

- b. Any costs associated with a food & Beverage operator to taking a lease of The Shambles
- c. Create an enabling budget to develop options and engage the market in opportunities to bring the former Debenhams building back into occupation

47. It is proposed that the final allocations between the three schemes be delegated to the Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport to develop a business case and designs for potential future uses.

Splash

48. Tenders for initial design stages will be finalised in autumn 2025 with an anticipated delivery timeline of January 2027 onwards on site due to operational pressures on Tees Active as work takes place in other centres.

49. The parking impact of town centre developments and changes of use will be considered in the round as development proposals are brought forwards.

Regeneration Programme Update

Billingham – Levelling Up Fund

50. As reported to Cabinet in May 2025' a signed funding agreement for the £20m Levelling Up Fund grant was received in April 2025. Since the last update to Cabinet, the final details of legal agreements between the Council and Evolve are being finalised to enact the decisions taken at Cabinet in June 2024 in regard to the acquisition of part of Queensway South, West Precinct and former Library site of the centre and the key principles of relocation of tenants and demolition to enable residential-led redevelopment alongside commercial investment by Evolve.

51. The approach presented to Cabinet in June 2024 saw the Council acquire part of Queensway South at vacant possession and then undertake demolition of the building. As drafting of legal agreements has progressed, the opportunity for Evolve to manage demolition of Queensway South prior to the partial disposal to the Council has been proposed. This approach will make for a more efficient demolition process as Evolve manage a single contractor on their land, as opposed to the more complex approach of the Council undertaking demolition and requiring access across Evolves land at different points.

52. This approach represents a deviation from the position previously reported to Cabinet and Cabinet are therefore asked to endorse this revised approach and allow for it to be reflected in drafting legal agreements that are already delegated by Cabinet in June 2024.

53. Feasibility work is also underway to explore options for repurposing the disused Council office, Wynyard House, as a public sector hub. The feasibility work has been funded through One Public Estate and is expected to conclude in autumn 2025.

54. The next stage of the project will be to develop plans for residential development on the cleared site, in line with the principles of the agreed masterplan. Options for securing a development partner for the West Precinct and former library and clinic site will be explored, including exploring the opportunity to broaden a partnership with Evolve to enable wider redevelopment, potentially incorporating, where appropriate Council assets within and adjacent to the town centre as a means of increasing investment, unlocking residential growth and safeguarding existing and traditional town centre uses. Discussion with other stakeholders in the vicinity of the town centre will also take place to explore additional opportunities to increase redevelopment potential in the area.

Thornaby Town Deal

Pavilion Pool, Gym and Golden Eagle

55. The town centre element of the Town Deal Fund allocated an overall budget to purchase and demolish the Golden Eagle, enable development on the cleared site and bring about the redevelopment of the Phoenix House site. The Town Deal Fund application process required costings up front and allocations to individual elements were therefore provisional with an understanding that the build of the final cost profile would be iterative as we progressed through acquisition, design and procurement phases to achieve cost certainty.
56. Detailed design work on the new swimming pool, gym and Pavilion Leisure Centre is progressing following planning approval for the scheme in December 2024 and the appointment of contractor, Galliford Try in April 2025. Final stages of design will be completed in late summer, with work due to commence in autumn 2025 on this exciting enhanced, modern addition to the existing leisure offer in Thornaby town centre.
57. Following the report to Cabinet in June 2024, the acquisition of the leasehold interest in the Golden Eagle and the surrender of both leases on the property were finalised in October 2024.
58. From October into early 2025, several pre-demolition surveys were undertaken throughout the building to comprehensively understand the structure and fabric of the building and gauge the level of asbestos and any other hazardous materials within the building. This was needed to inform tender documents that were issued in March 2025. The intrusive, pre-demolition surveys that could only be undertaken once the building was in the Council's ownership identified significant levels of asbestos throughout the building, applied in a manner that would very likely impact the demolition methodology, requiring area by area and in some instances room by room specific method statements and monitoring, which add to the complexity and cost of works. One surveyor identified the level and nature of contamination as one of the worst he had encountered.
59. The total Council budget for interventions in Thornaby Town Centre approved at Cabinet in June 2024 was £17.7m including professional and management fees. That budget was apportioned as £14.25m for enhanced swimming pool and gym provision, based upon early design stage cost estimate at the time. £1m on demolition of Thornaby Baths and Phoenix House and £1m fees and an allocation of £1.45m for acquisition, demolition, surveys and fees for the Golden Eagle based upon:
- valuations and purchase price approved at Cabinet in June 2024,
 - a demolition estimate of circa twice the cost of the demolition of the adjacent Phoenix House building in 2023 (in recognition of the fact that no surveys were permitted pre acquisition and no asbestos information was made available by the leaseholder)
60. Four tenders were received and evaluated, with a preferred contractor identified. The winning tender (and the lowest priced) is £1.52m, which exceeds the initial allocation from the overall budget allocated above (£600,000). The other elements of the scheme still require funding, including a reasonable contingency given that the final tender cost has yet to be confirmed.
61. To progress with awarding the demolition contract and begin work on site there is a requirement to allocate money to meet the cost (and contingency sum) of the demolition works.
62. There are several options to supplement the initial Town Deal budget from existing funding streams. These include consideration of descoping cycleways, redirecting money from LUF/Town Deal allocations for other areas or using the budget for the demolition of Thornaby Pool. Consideration has been given to the impact of moving money between budgets on project benefits and outcomes as well as the time limited factors associated with some external funding streams none of these are recommended, due to the impact upon other schemes and other

areas. There remains an unallocated balance in the Indigenous Growth Fund. This scheme meets the strategic IGF funding criteria to 'support the remediation/regeneration of vacant and derelict land and property.

63. Having considered the above options and to maintain the scope of works on the pool it is recommended that allocating £1.34m from the Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF), be approved. This is a time limited fund (must be spent by 31st March 2026), and the demolition of the Golden Eagle would meet the funding criteria, namely to 'support the remediation/regeneration of vacant and derelict land and property'.
64. The allocation of £1.34m from IGF, when added to existing budgets will provide for the contract sum and a robust contingency, noting some of the increased actions the Council will have to take to satisfying the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive given the extensive invasiveness and application of asbestos within the building. This will enable the appointment of a demolition contractor in late July with work beginning on site in August 2025 though until Spring 2026.

Cycleways

65. Since the last report to Cabinet in June 2024, detailed design and cost planning work on the provision of a joined-up network of cycle infrastructure in Thornaby identified higher than anticipated costs. As a result, the cycleways design has been revised and elements of the route removed to fit within the available budget envelope.
66. Procurement of a contractor is well underway and is expected to complete in July with a start on site in September 25, subject to all necessary match funding agreements being in place. Statutory consultation on the Traffic Regulation Order needed to implement the scheme was completed in February 2025 and no objections were received. The construction programme is expected to complete in summer 2026.
67. A common experience of many local authorities who successfully bid for Town Deal funding was the difficulty in accurately estimating costs for schemes which were in the early development stages, against very short bidding deadlines, at a time of high construction cost inflation. In future funding rounds, where bids must be made at a very early stage of project design and development, it may be judicious to add significant optimism bias to any bid sums if there is no future opportunity to revise bid totals as cost certainty is firmed up.

NETA

68. The construction of a new skills facility in Thornaby will see the existing NETA training facility relocate from its current location near Portrack Lane into a purpose built, modern facility as part of a redeveloped Stockton Riverside College site. Working in partnership with the Education and Training Collective (ETC), with input from the Town Deal Board and Council officers, the circa 5,000sqm bespoke training facility will create a modern learning environment and maximise access to further education and skills development for residents.
69. With regards to the programme, Phase 1 (Enabling Works) completed construction of a new 162 space car park in February 2025, which is now operational. The contractor appointed for the Phase 1, went above and beyond their contractual Social Value commitment, demonstrating the positive benefits to learners of both Stockton Riverside College and the Skills Academy through the project to date.
70. Planning permission for Phase 2 (Main Build) was secured in September 2024, and the preferred contractor is expected to mobilise on-site on 11th July to begin construction of the new build facility. The facility will complete in summer 2026 ready to open to learners at the start of the 2025/26 academic year.

North Thornaby

71. To support the regeneration and economic growth of North Thornaby, positive progress has been made in the delivery of a package of social and community interventions. Refurbishment works to improve the public open space and Community Centre are complete in Victoria Park and have been well received by the local community. Investment in 'Safer Streets' has installed 9157 safety measures in 955 properties and is now complete. With regards to improving energy efficiency, 450 energy efficiency measures have been installed in 184 properties demonstrating the high level of interest and resident take up rate in this intervention. For the priority vacant properties, 9 empty properties have been purchased and are either undergoing repairs or are now in occupation, which will contribute towards providing good quality housing provision in the local area.

Yarm Eaglescliffe and Preston Park – Levelling Up Fund

72. Extensive works to transform Preston Park Museum and Grounds and strengthen its position as a cohesive, modern visitor attraction are nearing completion. Through investment of £13.5m, the scheme is delivering a package of interventions for families to come together, play, learn and explore our rich heritage. This includes the creation of a new exhibition space as an extension to the existing museum, which will be celebrated with an official opening in September 25. Improvements to the central area will provide a new focal point to the park and will open to the public in July 25. This includes the refurbishment of the café, demolition and re-provision of the existing toilet block, playground improvements and works to retain and reuse the aviary structure. Works to improve parking provision were completed in April 2025.
73. Work to refine proposals for the future of South Lodge will be undertaken with a view to submission of a new application to reflect the concerns raised at Planning Committee in early June when planning permission was refused.
74. A package of works to enhance Yarm and surrounding areas will focus on introducing new public spaces on the High Street, enhancing links to and along the River Tees and upgrading Snaith's Field Playground. The scheme will be delivered through a phased programme of works by the Council's Community Services teams, commencing in May 25 completing in summer 2026. This is likely to come in significantly under budget due to SBC direct delivery.
75. The first phase focuses on improving accessibility along True Lovers Walk by resurfacing the existing footpath and repairing root damage as well as removing the two existing fishing pontoons along the route. However, further evaluation will take place to understand the potential cost and deliverability of replacing the damaged pontoons. Works started on site on 8 May and will last approximately 12 weeks.
76. The second phase of works will deliver upgrades to Snaith's Field playground including new and existing play equipment, provision of new seating and footpath resurfacing works. Works are due to start on site in September for approximately 8 weeks.
77. The final High Street scheme was presented to the public in May 25 and will create six new public spaces that separate pedestrian areas and large sections of car parking through seating and planting, as well as improve accessibility to public transport. There will be high-quality spaces for people to sit and enjoy their surroundings, as well as new cycle parking. The scheme will include references to Yarm's history and heritage and interactive play items.
78. Following publication of proposals and in response to some concerns raised regarding the appearance of the proposed planters, a revised design has been undertaken to incorporate a more subtle and refined finish to the planter material, in keeping with the character of the High Street.

79. Works will be delivered in phases to minimise disruption to users of the High Street. The first phase will start in September and complete in October. before Yarm Fair. The second phase will start on site after Yarm Fair and complete in November before the site de-mobilises to accommodate the run up to the Christmas break. Completion of the remaining public realm phases will re-commence in January 26 and final completion will be in summer.
80. Details on all phases of High Street work will be communicated in the coming weeks, and the Council will also be engaging with directly impacted residents and businesses to explain how the first phase of construction will be delivered on-site. During the works, access to businesses and properties will be maintained at all times and working arrangements will be co-ordinated on-site to minimise disruption as far as possible.

Norton High Street

81. A series of improvements to create high quality, safe and accessible public spaces on Norton High Street completed in December 2024 for residents, businesses and visitors to enjoy. The improvements have included creation of a northbound one-way system at the southern section of Norton High Street along with public realm improvements such as new seating and landscaping to create a more pedestrian friendly environment. The scheme has created more flexible spaces which will support and enhance Norton's growing daytime and evening economy along with six additional car or taxi spaces on the High Street.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Proposals in this report have been the subject of an Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

There are no corporate parenting implications in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations in this report look to update allocations of the £20m borrowing approved in July 2021 and subsequently retained to support future investment as set out in the report to Cabinet in July 2023. The MTFP report in December 2023 committed £1m, followed by approval of £450,000 in July 2024 to support work in municipal quarter and the subsequent £18.45m of allocations in September 2024.

The full £20m can now be broken down below:

Project	Allocation £'000
Splash	£8,500
Town Hall / Debenhams / Shambles	£6,500
Stockton Waterfront and Community Diagnostic Centre	£1,750
Dunedin House Democratic Space / Council Chamber	£1,250
Regeneration Blueprints and Masterplans	£1,000
Tees Central and Stockton Masterplanning	£1,000
TOTAL	£20,000

The allocation of the £1.34m IGF funding completes the final allocation of this funding and there are no further funds available to allocate.

The £550,000 required to support masterplanning in Tees Central and including the TVCHIZ is taken from the allocation outlined for future work in the September 2024 Cabinet report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal advice will be sought throughout the projects to ensure that all financial and property agreements (eg leases) and contracts are lawful, meet the Council's requirements and follow the Council's governance procedures.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The matter in this report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report To Cabinet Thornaby Town Deal June 2024

Report To Cabinet Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint September 2024

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th July 2025

REPORT OF DIRECTOR of COMMUNITY SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE

CABINET DECISION

Environment, Leisure and Culture - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke

Activ8 Billingham Forum Gym Expansion

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the redevelopment and expansion of the Activ8 gym at Billingham Forum. The proposal includes increasing gym capacity, upgrading facilities, and improving service quality to meet growing demand. The expansion is critical to sustaining Activ8's financial performance and supporting public health objectives.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet is being asked to approve the recommendations in this report for the following reasons:

- Billingham Forum is a very well used and highly valued asset for the local community and this investment will improve facilities and enable more residents to access the gym facilities.
- Financial modelling demonstrates a strong return on investment and long-term sustainability.
- The project aligns with council priorities for providing the best services possible and supporting the health and wellbeing of residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the report are as follows:

1. That Cabinet approve the proposed redevelopment of the Billingham Forum gym.
2. That Cabinet approve the use of prudential borrowing of up to £650,000, from the £20m Council Wide Investment Fund approved at Council in February 2025.
3. That authority be delegated to the Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture to make the specific contract award decision and any subsequent contract variations as necessary to support effective delivery of the project.

DETAIL

Background

1. The Council has leisure facilities across the borough; Billingham Forum, Billingham Forum Theatre, Thornaby Pavilion, Thornaby Pool, Splash and Ingleby Barwick Leisure Facility, Tees Barrage International White Water Course Centre. These are managed and operated on behalf of the Council by the Leisure Trust; Tees Active Limited. Activ8 Health and Fitness is the membership name operated by Tees Active Limited.
2. These assets offer a varied range of activities and experiences to local residents and visitors including swimming, ice skating and gym provision.
3. The UK fitness sector has shown strong post-COVID recovery, with Activ8 outperforming national trends. Billingham Forum is a very well used and highly valued asset by local residents, however the gym is now constrained by gym capacity. Billingham Forum gym is operating at full capacity. The current Members Per Station (MPS) ratio will limit further and impact upon service quality.
4. The gyms across all of the Council's leisure facilities are well used and highly regarded by residents and visitors. The Council has a proven track record of investing in leisure assets to maintain and improve high quality assets for the local community. The Council is currently investing in Stockton Splash and Thornaby Pavillion. Options have been considered to address the capacity and improve the gym provision at Billingham Forum.

Option	Summary
1. Do Nothing	No investment: gym remains at current capacity. This avoids costs but limits growth, reduces customer satisfaction, and risks income decline due to overcrowding and competition.
2. Minor Upgrade	Refresh equipment without expanding space. Improves user experience slightly but doesn't solve capacity issues or enable significant growth. Financial benefits are limited.
3. Full Expansion (Preferred Option)	Expand into underused areas to increase capacity. Supports long-term growth, improves service quality, and offsets rising costs. Requires capital investment but is projected to yield a net financial gain. Break-even is achievable with modest membership growth.

5. The preferred option is a full expansion of the gym into underutilised areas (Studio 3 and dry-side changing rooms) to increase gym floor space and equipment provision. The new layout includes:
 - Additional exercise stations
 - Two free weight/plate-loaded zones
 - Upgraded cardio and resistance equipment
 - Dedicated small group training and personal training areas
6. The estimated total project cost is £900,000, comprised of £650,000 relating to the internal building works and £250,000 relating to new equipment. The Council will fund the works to the internal fit out at an estimated project cost of £650,000 and TAL will fund the new equipment.

7. It is proposed that the Council's investment will be funded by up to £650,000 of prudential borrowing, drawn down from the £20m Council Wide Investment Fund approved by Council as part of the Medium Term and Financial Plan Update and Strategy Report in February 2025, with allocations from that fund delegated to Cabinet.
8. The prudential borrowing repayments (£48,000 p.a.) will be covered by Tees Active Limited through the additional income generated.
9. Billingham Forum has a proven history of successful expansions, with income growing by 41% and 35% in 2017 and 2020 after previous expansions. Since opening Ingleby Barwick leisure Facility the gym has also been hugely popular here too.
10. This proposed expansion will increase the number of exercise stations as well as introducing new training zones aligned with current fitness trends.
11. The proposal is in line with the Stockton on Tees Plan, in particular aligning with the Healthy and Resilient Communities priority. It also supports Tees Active's long-term growth strategy to meet community needs, and mitigates financial risk from rising operational costs and competition from other privately operated facilities.
12. The redevelopment will create additional capacity with minimal disruption, leading to a very brief gym closure period, planned for when the facility is traditionally at it's quietest period of the year.
13. This project is expected to grow membership by around 20% over a 5 year period, with additional income generated used to fund the prudential borrowing. This investment will greatly enhance a prominent and well loved asset, contributing to the wider regeneration of Billingham town centre.
14. The full expansion option offers the an improved and larger gym facility within Billingham Forum, allowing more local residents to enjoy access to the gym, as well as improved experience for existing gym members.

Timescales

15. The proposed timeline for the Billingham Forum gym expansion is strategically designed to ensure completion by mid-December, enabling a pre-Christmas reopening and promotional launch. This timing is critical to capitalise on the annual January surge in gym memberships, which is consistently the busiest period for new member sign-ups across the fitness industry.
16. Timescales for the redevelopment is as follows:
 - Finalise design and borrowing agreement
 - Tender and contractor appointment
 - Mobilisation and site works (Sept–Dec 2025)
 - Gym closure for 2–3 weeks in November for flooring and equipment installation
 - Reopening and relaunch in December 2025
17. Failure to complete the Billingham Forum gym expansion by December 2025 presents several financial risks:

- Delays could result in abortive costs associated with re-tendering, reprogramming, and re-engaging design and construction teams.
- These costs would not be recoverable and would reduce the overall value for money of the project.
- Deferring the project to Summer 2026 would likely expose the Council to increased construction and material costs due to inflation and market volatility.
- This could result in a significantly higher capital outlay, requiring additional borrowing or budget reallocation.
- Capacity constraints at Billingham Forum may lead to customer dissatisfaction, reduced retention, and reputational damage.

18. Meeting these timescales will ensure that the following key objectives are met:

- Seasonal Demand: January sees a significant spike in gym memberships due to New Year's resolutions and increased health awareness. Tees Active report that one third of people join their gyms in the post-Christmas period.
- Revenue Maximisation: Launching in December allows for pre-sales and marketing momentum, ensuring the facility is fully operational and visible during the peak demand window.
- Customer Retention: A refreshed, expanded facility will attract new members and re-engage existing ones, reducing churn and boosting revenue.
- Operational Readiness: Completing works before the holiday period avoids disruption during the busiest time of year and ensures staff are trained and systems are in place.

19. Delaying completion beyond December would result in a missed opportunity to leverage the most lucrative period of the year, potentially delaying return on investment and weakening the impact of the expansion.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

16. An EPIA has been completed, with no adverse impacts identified. The project promotes equality by catering to diverse user needs, including health-based programmes and emerging fitness trends. The expansion supports public health by increasing access to affordable fitness provision. It also enhances the borough's wider leisure offer.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The estimated project cost to the Council is £650,000, which covers the internal building works. In addition to this TAL will acquire and fund the equipment costs estimated to be £250,000. The £650,000 will be funded by prudential borrowing from the £20m Council Wide Investment Fund approved by Council as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy Report in February 2025, with allocations from that fund delegated to Cabinet.
18. The borrowing will be taken out over 25 years with repayments of £48,000 per annum, which will be funded by TAL. The gym expansion is estimated to generate approximately £50,000 additional income after accounting for additional running costs and prudential borrowing repayments. This income will be used by TAL as part to offset increased running costs across their venues, including, but not limited to, higher staffing costs due to National Insurance and National Living Wage rises.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. The proposal complies with relevant statutory requirements. Legal Services have reviewed the borrowing arrangement and procurement process. Final approval is subject to Cabinet sign-off.

The Council have taken independent advice to satisfy themselves that the arrangement does not constitute a breach of subsidy control legislation.

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. The project carries moderate risk due to its scale and financial commitment, but these are well mitigated through robust planning, SBC experience of project management, historical performance data, and strategic alignment with Tees Active's long-term goals. A more detailed risk assessment can be found in Appendix B.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

21. Billingham wards are directly affected. The Portfolio holder for Environment, Leisure and Culture and the Deputy Leader have been consulted and support the proposal.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy report to Council 19th February 2025

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th July 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET KEY DECISION

Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke

Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025

SUMMARY

Following the Scrutiny Review of Outdoor Play Provision, in April of 2024, the Crime and Disorder Select Committee (now renamed) recommended that officers should prepare a strategy (later approved by Cabinet) which includes the following elements:

- The Council's aims in relation to the provision of outdoor play spaces.
- The locations and assessments of existing and outdoor play provision, as well as any planned developments.
- The key challenges associated with providing these spaces.
- How the Council will seek to address these key challenges (including guiding principles).
- Timelines for action and who will be accountable.

Following extensive consultation with officers and evidence gathering the initial sections of the Strategy for Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 have been prepared (attached).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet is asked to consider approval of the initial sections of the strategy and the principles contained within. This will enable officers to undertake a detailed analysis of the Borough's play provision based on those agreed principles and taking account of the budget allocations. This information will be presented to Cabinet as a final version of the strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet approve the first stage strategy document including the principles set out in Chapter 5 of the strategy document.
2. That Cabinet note the requirement of additional revenue funding of £150,000 per annum from 2026/27 onwards. This would enable the Council to retain approximately 30-35 play areas in good condition, in addition to the new play area at Stockton Waterfront urban park. Approximately 7 to 12 play areas would be subject to removal of play equipment at end of life and repurposing of sites for recreational open space. Funding will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan Update & Strategy report to Council in February 2026.
3. That Cabinet agree to consider, at a later stage, a second report and final version of the strategy. This will include an assessment of play provision (adopting the principles and overall approach outlined in this first stage strategy) and make recommendations for specific sites.

DETAIL

The Borough currently has 56 play areas which are available for the public to use free of charge at all reasonable times:

- 40 are owned and managed by Stockton Borough Council,
- 9 are owned by town / parish councils but managed by the Borough Council.
- 7 are owned and managed by housing developers / management companies.

There are currently plans for a further 12 play areas to be delivered over the next few years (3 to be provided by the Council and 9 to be provided by housing developers) although this is subject to change.

Following the Scrutiny Review of Outdoor Play Provision, in April of 2024, the Crime and Disorder Select Committee (now renamed) recommended that officers should prepare a strategy (later approved by Cabinet).

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to the management and development of outdoor play provision owned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. It aims to:

- Maintain a range of good quality play areas and informal sport facilities
- Achieve a fair and equitable distribution of outdoor play provision across the Borough
- Deliver welcoming, accessible and inclusive play spaces, while acknowledging that not all sites can cater for all needs and abilities
- Ensure the overall scale of provision is at a level which is sustainable in terms of Council resource

By allocating an additional £150,000 pa to the parks, open spaces, cemeteries and allotments budget, the council will be able to retain approximately 30-35 play areas in addition to the new play provision planned for the Stockton Waterfront urban park. Approximately 7-12 sites would be subject to phased de-commissioning.

Recommendations for specific sites will be included in the final version of the strategy following detailed analysis of play provision using data referenced in Chapter 6 (page 19) of the first stage strategy document.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

By adopting the principles outlined within the strategy document the council will 'aim to achieve an equitable distribution of play sites, informed by need and at locations likely to serve the most users.'

The council also aims 'to have a network of outdoor play provision which, taken as a whole, provides play opportunities to all our residents (including consideration of age group relevance and physical/sensory accessibility).'

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To enable the recommendations in this report, the allocation of resources is required which will be fully reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan report which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. The additional investment required is estimated to be £150,000 per annum from 2026/27 onwards.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council is under no legal obligation to provide outdoor play provision (excluding some sites funded by developer contributions).

RISK ASSESSMENT

A comprehensive risk assessment will be considered at the final stage of strategy preparations.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

All wards.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council outdoor play provision 2025.

All other background papers are identified within the attached first stage strategy document.

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Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of this strategy

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to the management and development of its outdoor play provision in the Borough. It aims to:

- **Maintain a range of good quality play areas**
- **Achieve a fair and equitable distribution of outdoor play provision across the Borough**
- **Deliver welcoming, accessible and inclusive play spaces, while acknowledging that not all sites can cater for all needs and abilities**
- **Ensure the overall scale of provision is at a level which is sustainable in terms of Council resource**

1.2 Scope

The strategy focuses primarily on Council-owned outdoor play areas which can be accessed free of charge by the public and which are generally available for use during daytime and evenings. However, it also takes account of other play provision which is freely available for public use, including play areas managed by third parties and informal sport facilities (e.g. multi-use games areas) managed by the Council or third parties. It is important to consider the location and nature of Council-owned play areas in the context of this alternative provision.

While play areas are used predominantly by children and young people, it is important to recognise that there are some facilities which can be enjoyed by adults too. It should also be highlighted that other outdoor environments such as parks and natural green spaces can have a high play value, even though no play equipment may be present.

Privately operated play facilities, and equipment within school grounds or other areas not accessible to the public, are not within the scope of the strategy, but these do provide additional opportunities for play in some communities.

1.3 What is play and why is it important?

Through play children and young people develop social, physical and cognitive skills, resilience and creativity, as well as learning to make decisions and manage risk. Play England's Charter for Play describes play as 'what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons'. Under this Charter, Play England also summarises the many benefits of play, highlighting that "recent research suggests that children's access to good play provision can:

increase their self-awareness, self-esteem and self-respect

improve and maintain their physical and mental health

- give them the opportunity to mix with other children
- allow them to increase their confidence through developing new skills
- promote their imagination, independence and creativity
- offer opportunities for children of all abilities and backgrounds to play together
- provide opportunities for developing social skills and learning
- build resilience through risk taking and challenge, problem solving, and dealing with new and novel situations
- provide opportunities to learn about their environment and the wider community.”¹

1.4 The value of outdoor play provision

Play areas and informal sport facilities provided by the Council and others provide opportunities for many different types of outdoor play.

Outdoor play benefits children and young people in many ways:

- It allows children and young people to learn physical skills that may be difficult to practice at home. This could include jumping, climbing, cycling, skating, or informal team sports.
- It encourages independence and decision-making. Because outdoor play typically has less structure than indoor activities, children can direct their own activities.
- Compared to home or school a play space is a relatively unfamiliar environment, so children have to think creatively about play. They may use their imagination to invent games that make use of the space.
- When playing with others, children have to learn how to cooperate with each other. For example, they may have to work together to decide how to share equipment and space, and which games to play.
- Being in an outdoor environment enables children to use a wide range of senses. They can experience natural elements through touch, smell, sight and hearing, stimulating sensory development and awareness

¹ Play England (2018): [Charter For Play — PlayEngland](#)

Children can challenge themselves and learn to assess and navigate minor risks. This builds confidence and helps them develop skills needs to handle different situations.

A well-deigned play space can offer a wide range of play experiences in a relatively small, safe and stimulating environment, and unlike some other leisure facilities, most play areas are located within areas of public open spaces meaning they can be accessed free of charge by the whole community. In addition to their play value, they often deliver wider benefits; for example, they provide places where children and adults of different ages and backgrounds can interact, and they add to the overall value of the Borough's parks and green spaces, encouraging people to visit and enjoy these spaces.

Finally, we shouldn't overlook the play value of other outdoor settings, such as green spaces areas of public realm. Locations in the Borough such as the water feature in Stockton High Street, areas of amenity grassland and woodlands are all provide stimulating play environments, whether that is paddling in summer, sledging in winter or enjoying all kinds of games and activities throughout the year.

1.5 Strategic context

There is no legal requirement for a local authority to provide outdoor play areas or informal sport facilities. However, councils obviously have a very long history of providing outdoor play spaces and there is a public expectation that they should do so. The way that this Council develops and manages outdoor play provision can help to deliver against a number of priorities set out in the Council Plan 2024², including:

- **Creating a fairer Stockton-on-Tees and reducing inequality³** - e.g. by targeting resources at those areas in greatest need and helping to ensure all our children ensuring that
- **Improving population health outcomes** – e.g. by providing good quality play spaces which promote physical and mental health and wellbeing
- **The best start in life to achieve big ambitions** - e.g. by creating safe and inclusive play spaces which families can enjoy and which help to improve the health and development of children and young people.
- **A great place to live, work and visit** - e.g. by working with partners and communities to improve the places and spaces that impact people's lives.

² [Our five priorities - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)

³ [A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework 2021 to 2031 \(PDF\) \[1MB\]](#)

CURRENT AND PLANNED OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION

2.1 Quantity and types of provision

Play areas

The Borough currently has 56 play areas which are available for the public to use free of charge at all reasonable times⁴:

- 40 are owned and managed by Stockton Borough Council,
- 9 are owned by town / parish councils but managed by the Borough Council.
- 7 are owned and managed by housing developers / management companies.

There are also plans for a further 12 play areas to be delivered over the next few years (3 to be provided by the Council and 9 to be provided by housing developers) although this is subject to change.

Existing and planned play areas are listed and mapped at **Appendix A**.

Play areas vary in size from very small sites with a limited amount of equipment, through to large sites which offer a diverse range of equipment and play environments. Most are located in parks or other areas of green space. This strategy categorises play areas as follows, based mainly on the scale of provision measured in 'Play Units' (see **Appendix B** for details of how these scores are calculated) and other characteristics of the site:

- Destination play areas
- Neighbourhood play areas
- Doorstep play areas

These classifications relate closely to those developed by Fields In Trust⁵ which are often used in the planning system and by some local authorities and housing developers.

Further details and examples are shown below. As these illustrations show there can be significant variations in the scale of provision within these categories. Also it should be noted that Play Unit scores are only an indicator of the relative size and scale of play areas and are not a true indicator of 'play value' or how inclusive or accessible a site is; those issues are covered in **Section 2.3**

⁴ Data from March 2025

⁵ Fields in Trust recognise a further category which captures sites that are smaller than a Doorstep Play Area or 'LEAP'. This is defined as a Local Area for Play or 'LAP' and may contain no play equipment at all but includes "demonstrative features indicating that play is positively encouraged" (Fields in Trust⁵). However, this strategy does not take into consideration such sites.
[Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play | Fields in Trust](#)

Destination play areas (currently 4 with 1 planned)

- offer an extensive range of equipment, equating to over 45 Play Units
- may offer a range of play environments.
- generally designed to meet the needs of all age ranges, from toddlers (5 years or younger), to juniors (aged 5-11) and teenagers.
- always located within a larger green space or park with supporting infrastructure including toilets, catering and car parking.
- may be used by accompanied and unaccompanied children
- serve a large catchment area

Examples of destination play areas:



Preston Park (64 play units)



John Whitehead Park (49 play units)

Neighbourhood play areas (currently 16)

equates broadly to Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play or 'NEAP' as defined by Fields in Trust)

- offer a moderate range of equipment, equating to 20 or more Play Units
- may offer a range of play environments
- generally designed to meet the needs of juniors (aged 5 to 11 years), although they may also cater for toddlers and teenagers too.
- often located within a larger green space or park and may have some supporting infrastructure (e.g. seating, car parking)
- may be used by accompanied and unaccompanied children
- serve a moderate catchment area

Examples of neighbourhood play areas:



Victoria Park (36 play units)



Windmill Park (27 play units)

Doorstep Play Areas (currently 36 with 11 planned)

Equates broadly to Locally Equipped Area for Play or 'LEAP' as defined by Fields in Trust)

- offer a limited range of equipment, equating to fewer than 20 Play Units
- generally do not offer a range of play environments
- generally designed to meet the needs of toddlers (aged 5 years or younger) but may cater for some older children too.
- usually not part of a larger green space or park and with very limited supporting infrastructure (e.g. seating)
- normally only used by accompanied children
- serve a small catchment area

Examples of doorstep play areas:



Hazeldene (18 play units)



Hartburn (9 play units)

Informal sport facilities

While this strategy is primarily focused on the provision of play areas, it is important to take account of existing and planned informal sport facilities since these add to the overall play 'offer' across the Borough. Furthermore, in many cases informal sport facilities are located immediately adjacent to play areas, so this may be a factor when considering how sites are used and managed.

The Borough currently has 25 sites with informal sport facilities which are available for the public to use free of charge at all reasonable times (excluding goal posts on areas of green space) ⁶:

- 21 sites are owned by Stockton Borough Council,
- 1 owned by a town / parish council
- 3 owned by housing developers / management companies

There are also plans for a further 4 informal sport facilities to be provided over the next few years (1 to be provided by the Council and 3 by housing developers), although this is subject to change.

Existing and planned informal sport facilities are listed and mapped at **Appendix C**.

The facilities at these sites range in scale from large wheeled sport facilities through to small kick walls. Some sites have more than one type of facility and as with play areas, most informal sport facilities are located in parks or other areas of green space.

The Borough has four main categories of provision:

- Multi-use games areas (MUGAs)
- Kick walls / other surfaced games areas
- Wheeled sport facilities
- Outdoor gyms / trim trails

Further details and examples are shown in **Appendix D**.

⁶ Data from March 2025

2 Distribution and access to play provision

The plans at **Appendix E** show indicative 'catchment areas' for current and planned play areas and informal sport facilities, based on the distances residents are likely to travel to access the categories of provision as shown in the following table. These distances are derived from local research carried out part of the Stockton-on-Tees Open Space Assessment and Strategy, 2017⁷. The catchments represent true walking distances using roads and footpaths.

<p><i>Destination play area</i></p> <p>Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 2400m (a 30 minute walk time), although people may also cycle, drive or use public transport and travel from a wider catchment area.</p>
<p><i>Neighbourhood play area</i></p> <p>Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 1000m (a 12½ minute walk time), although people may also cycle, drive or use public transport and travel from a wider catchment area.</p>
<p><i>Doorstep play area</i></p> <p>Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 400m (a 5 minute walk time). It is not anticipated that many people would travel longer distances by car, cycle or public transport specially to access these sites.</p>
<p><i>Informal sport provision</i></p> <p>Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 1200m (15 minute walk time), although larger or more specialist facilities such as the skate park at Preston Park attract users from a much wider catchment area. Conversely, users are unlikely to walk 15 minutes to access a small kick-wall or single basketball net.</p>

Of course the distances people travel to specific facilities will vary greatly due to individual circumstances and the characteristics of each site. But applying these standard catchment areas provides an indication of which areas may be well-served or poorly-served by existing and planned play provision.

The plans also indicate where they may be some potential duplication in provision where catchment areas overlap. However, this catchment mapping does not take account of the quality and exact nature of the facilities available, so overlapping catchment areas does not necessarily reflect duplication of provision; e.g. a community may be located within the catchment of both a small Doorstep Play Area and a larger Neighbourhood Play Area, but they may have a totally different range of equipment and may serve different age groups.

⁷ These distances are derived from local research carried out part of the Stockton-on-Tees Open Spaces Strategy, 2017: [Stockton-on-Tees Open Space Assessment Report Part 1 March 2017](#) [Stockton-on-Tees Open Spaces Strategy Part 2 March 2017](#)

3 Play value, inclusivity and accessibility

Play value

The Council commissions RoSPA to undertake Play Value Assessments for all existing play areas and at the design stage for any planned provision. Detailed assessment criteria are set out under the following headings, and a full list of criteria is included at **Appendix F**:

- Site overall (excluding equipment)
- Ambience
- Provision for toddlers (if applicable)
- Provision for juniors (if applicable)
- Provision for teenagers (if applicable)

Many play areas, especially ‘doorstep’ sites and smaller ‘neighbourhood’ sites have not been designed to be used by all age ranges, and most ‘doorstep’ sites are targeted at younger children. So these assessments only calculate the play value for those age groups for which the site is designed. Total scores are then calculated for relevant age categories, resulting in an overall rating of excellent, good, average, below average or poor.

While some play areas may not be designed for (and therefore not assessed by) juniors or teenagers, some sites may also include informal sport facilities which do cater for those age ranges.

Informal sport facilities are not assessed in this way but tend to be used more by juniors and teenagers.

Inclusivity and accessibility

The Sensory Trust defines ‘inclusive play’ as providing opportunities for all children to play ‘regardless of ability and background’⁸. It is stressed that “Inclusive play doesn’t mean that every element is accessible to everyone, but it does mean that the combination of experiences adds to something equally great for each child. Some children can’t climb to the top of a rope, some don’t want to, others really need to. The same is true with quieter, more creative activities. Diverse and flexible opportunities are needed”.

There has been no overall assessment to determine how inclusive or accessible existing play areas are to children and young people with disabilities, but the design and location of equipment, and surfacing in and around play areas, will restrict access for some and prevent some children and young people from playing alongside others. 24 Council sites (from a total of 40) contain equipment which is deemed to be ‘inclusive’, enabling children with a wide range of abilities to use it, although it is accepted that not all equipment will be accessible to all people. Examples of such equipment are shown in **Appendix G**.

⁸ [Guide to inclusive play - Sensory Trust](#)

9. CHANGES IN OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION

The Borough's outdoor play provision has evolved over several decades; some play areas being subject to several phases of renewal while in other cases the equipment or layout has not changed for many years. Some sites have been decommissioned when it hasn't been possible to replace failing equipment or when other alternative facilities have been provided.

In recent years any new play provision, or improvements to existing sites, have been delivered through one of the following mechanisms (or a combination of these):

- Through new housing developments, with new play areas or informal sport facilities being integrated into the new development or by contributing to 'off-site' provision delivered by the Council and funded through Section 106 agreements⁹.
- External funding secured through various grants or central government funding¹⁰.
- Local authority funding, through the Borough Council and town/parish councils.

Most current schemes are delivered through the following process:

- If the project is to be delivered in a new location (as opposed to improvements to an existing site) an options appraisal is carried out to determine a preferred site which is both feasible and eligible under the terms of the available funding (e.g. Section 106 funds must be allocated to a site within reasonable proximity to the housing development it is designed to serve). A final site is agreed in consultation with the relevant ward councillors.
- A design brief is developed in liaison with relevant officers, partner organisations and in consultation with ward councillors. This sets out the broad aspirations for the scheme, which will generally aim to achieve a RoSPA play value rating of 'good' or 'excellent' for the target age range. The brief also confirms the available budget.
- Potential suppliers are invited to submit costed designs in accordance with the design brief
- Designs are reviewed by officers and, if acceptable, forwarded to members of the Stockton Parent Carer Forum for comment
- Designs are also submitted to RoSPA to undertake a play value assessment
- The preferred design is forwarded to ward councillors for comment.
- Once agreed, planning consent is sought if required.
- An order is placed with the preferred supplier to implement the scheme.

New play areas and informal sport facilities which form part of a housing development are approved through the formal planning process. In the past the Council often agreed to the title-transfer of these sites from the housing developer, with a requirement that a commuted lump sum was paid to the Council to cover on-going management and maintenance costs. However, in recent years most developers have chosen to appoint private management companies to maintain these sites rather than transfer to the Council.

⁹ Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken.

¹⁰ This includes a total of £1,119,903 capital funding (and £44,673 revenue funding) received by the Council between 2008 and 2011 through the government's Playbuilder programme.

Most recent improvements to Council-owned play areas have been funded primarily through Section 106 contributions. This has included major refurbishments at sites such as Ropner Park (see **Figure 2**), Redbrook Park and Harold Wilson recreation ground.



Figure 2: New equipment and safety surfacing installed at Ropner Park in 2024

As at March 2025 a number of schemes are being developed to increase or improve play provision across the Borough, and all planned schemes are listed in **Appendices A and B**. This includes new play areas in south Billingham and south Norton, both aimed at addressing current gaps in provision

The most significant scheme is the development of the Stockton Waterfront Urban Park (due to open 2026), where play provision is fully integrated into the entire design (see **Figure 3**). The upper park will have a large, dedicated play area comprising a wide range of play equipment and features. This will include two towers, incorporating slides and other play elements. These are to be connected by accessible walkways, allowing interactive play below, within and above the structures. There will be smaller 'totter trails' for younger children as well as a water play extension and a swing structure.

Children will be taken on a journey of discovery throughout the wider park with 'play on the way' features including a large six metre slide down the amphitheatre, making the most of the descent between High Street and riverside. Provision of play features in the lower park, closest to the river, are aimed at older children with climbing boulders, swings and hammocks.

Across the main play space and the wider park there will be a total of nine swings including various seat types for all ages and abilities. There will also be opportunities for children to engage with waterplay and loose fill material such as sand.

There has been a focus on designing a park and play area which is both accessible and inclusive, ensuring it is a space that everyone can enjoy. The play provision has been assessed by RoSPA and rated 'excellent' for play value. When complete it will become the Borough's largest 'destination' play area.



Figure 3: Examples of play provision within Stockton Waterfront Urban Park, due to open 2026

8. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

4.1 Inspections, repairs and maintenance

The Council has a legal responsibility to ensure all play areas and informal sport facilities are safe to use¹¹. Regular inspections and maintenance of facilities are carried out to ensure compliance with the British and European Standards for playground equipment and surfacing. BS EN1176 sets out standards for “good practice in the design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of playground equipment in public spaces. The standards recognise that ‘good risks’ are an important part of children’s play and the main aim is to reduce ‘bad’ risks – which are those that children and their parents (or other carers) cannot realistically foresee or avoid¹².

Inspections for play areas and informal sport facilities are carried out as follows:

Scheduled routine (visual) inspections carried out by council staff	Weekly or fortnightly (depending on levels of use and how prone it is to damage and vandalism)
Scheduled detailed inspections carried out by council staff	Quarterly
Independent inspections (in line with BS EN1176), usually undertaken by RoSPA	Annually
Reactive inspections	When required

These inspections identify any equipment, safety surfacing or other items which require maintenance or repair. Such repairs are funded through the Council’s revenue budget for parks, open spaces, cemeteries and allotments and represent a significant pressure on that budget (£114,000 in 2024/25). Due to those budgetary pressures it is sometimes necessary to remove equipment rather than repair or replace items.

The Council also has service level agreements in place to undertake inspections on a number of sites owned by town and parish councils. Those costs, and the costs for any necessary repairs, are recharged to those councils.

Unfortunately, in addition to normal ‘wear and tear’ there are occasions when facilities are subject to deliberate damage which can be very costly to repair. For example, damage to the play area at Newham Gange Park in 2023 led to entire sites being temporary closed until repairs costing over £31,000 could be implemented. Other sites are prone to repeated smaller-scale damage which represents an on-going drain on limited resources, and in some cases results in equipment being removed as illustrated in **Figure 4**.

¹¹ Relevant legislation includes the Health & safety at work act 1974, management of health and safety at work reg 1999 and the Occupier’s liability act (revised 1984)

¹² [childrens-playground-stds-hi-res.pdf](#)



Figure 4: Swings permanently removed due to repeated damage at Bishopsgarth Park

Irrespective of normal wear and tear and deliberate damage, all equipment, safety surfacing and infrastructure has a limited lifespan and generally needs to be replaced after a period of 15 to 25 years. Given that a number of our play areas were created or improved with funding under the government's Playbuilder programme between 2008 and 2011 it is anticipated that a high proportion of the equipment installed at that time is likely to reach the end of its natural lifespan in the next 10 to 15 years. However, often it is only feasible to replace these assets if external capital funding can be secured through one of the mechanisms identified in **Section 3**, and it is not possible to secure funding for all sites in this way.

4.2 Grounds maintenance and cleansing

In addition to the maintenance of play equipment, safety surfacing and informal sport facilities the Council also commits resources to associated grounds maintenance and cleansing operations. The Council undertakes these activities on parish and town council sites as well, but unlike inspections / repairs of play provision, these costs are not recharged to the respective town/parish councils with the exception of a service level agreement which covers Yarm Town Council's Layfield play area.

4.3 Safety and security

The Council's Community Services maintain records of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in and around play areas and informal sport facilities. Many sites are monitored by CCTV cameras.

5. PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION

5.1 Principles guiding the distribution, range and quality of outdoor play provision

Principle 1: We aim to have a network of outdoor play provision which, taken as a whole, provides play opportunities to all our residents (including consideration of age group relevance and physical/sensory accessibility).

Principle 2: Larger 'destination' and 'neighbourhood' sites will be prioritised over small 'doorstep' sites because of cost effectiveness and the increased likelihood that they can incorporate features that are accessible to a wide range of users.

Principle 3: We will prioritise quality and 'play value' over quantity of provision.

Principle 4: We aim to achieve an equitable distribution of play sites, informed by need and at locations likely to serve the most users.

Principle 5: New or improved play facilities should only be considered where there are significant 'gaps' in provision, or where existing sites have poor play value.

Principle 6: We aim to limit the overall scale of provision to a level which is sustainable in terms of Council resources for management and maintenance

5.2 Principles underpinning the design, development and management of play provision

Principle 7: Play provision should be designed and maintained to be as welcoming, accessible and inclusive as possible, but we recognise that individual sites cannot meet all needs.

Principle 8: The Council will only support the development of new play provision if:

- it aligns with our strategic aims (in accordance with Principles 4 to 6)
- external capital funding can be secured
- it will achieve 'good' or 'excellent' play value (based on RoSPA assessment)

- funding is secured to cover inspection and maintenance for the anticipated lifespan of the equipment (e.g. a commuted lump sum if the site is to be title-transferred to the Council).

Principle 9: We recognise that demand and Council resources can change and we should not assume that play areas are necessarily permanent. All sites will be subject to a review of viability and suitability every ten years (this is in addition to safety and maintenance inspections)

Principle 10: When considering the creation of a new play area or the removal of an existing one, we will consult and engage local communities to fully understand the impacts of the change

Principle 11: Where resources allow we will seek to deliver measures that enhance the value of existing provision, such as improved toilets and changing places, landscaping and improved access and security

Principle 12: Where feasible we will implement other measures which encourage outdoor play, aside from the provision of play areas and informal sport facilities. For example, creating play environments in areas of public realm and 'natural' play spaces in parks and green spaces.

6. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PLANNED PROVISION

To address the key aims of this strategy a comprehensive analysis of existing and planned play provision is required. Based on the principles set out in **Section 5.1** this will inform the future scale, nature and distribution of play provision in the Borough. A key purpose of this analysis is to identify priority sites for retention, as well as sites that may need to be decommissioned in order to achieve an overall level of provision which is sustainable in terms of Council resource.

The analysis takes into consideration the following data and information, with a site-by-site summary provided in **Appendix I**:

- a) *Play needs index* – which provides an approximate indication of the need or demand for outdoor play provision. It is calculated by combining three data sets, to generate a single value:
 - Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)
 - Proportion of population under 16 years of age
 - Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) health data
 The play needs index values are mapped against existing and planned play provision in **Appendix H**.
- b) *Scale of existing provision* - based on the 'play unit' scores for each site (see **Appendix B**).
- c) *Number of 'inclusive' play items* – the number of pieces of equipment which are assessed as 'inclusive', enabling children with a wide range of abilities to use them (see **Section 2.3** and **Appendix G**).
- d) *Number of households in catchment areas* - based on both 400m and 1000m catchments as mapped in **Appendix E**. Both catchment sizes have been applied to all sites (irrespective of whether they have been categorised as 'neighbourhood' or 'doorstep' sites) because this may help to determine whether there are any small doorstep sites which have the potential to serve a wider area, and whether any neighbourhood sites are primarily serving a more local area.
- e) *Play value for different age ranges* based on the RoSPA assessments (see **Section 2.3** and **Appendix F**).
- f) *Vandalism* - sites have been assessed by Community Services to identify those which are most prone to vandalism
- g) *Life expectancy of equipment and estimated replacement costs* - this provides an indication of when some or all the equipment and safety surfacing is likely to need replacing and the estimated costs for doing so based on current prices.
- h) *Provision of any informal sport facilities at the site* – whether the play area is located immediately adjacent to a multi-use games area, kick wall or other surfaced games area, wheeled sport facility or outdoor gym / trim trail. The presence of such facilities may have a bearing on how the play area is used and managed.

Proximity to other play areas - other play areas within a 1000m catchment of a give site are listed, along with the walking distances between the two locations. This gives an indication of where there may be a duplication of provision in a given area, although it is possible that two sites are offering very different play experiences.

Based on the above analysis Council-owned play areas will be categorised as follows:

Category		Detail
1	Priority site to be retained / New site planned or under development	Sites which the Council will prioritise for maintenance and replacement of equipment, safety surfacing and other infrastructure. In most cases we will seek to maintain or improve current play value.
2	Retain subject to availability of resources	Sites which will be maintained in a safe condition but where equipment will only be replaced if resources allow
3	Phased decommission and re-purpose site	Sites where we will remove individual items of play equipment once they require repairs or would need to be replaced. The entire site may be decommissioned at an earlier stage subject to local consultation. In all cases once approximately 75% of play units are removed it is recommended that the entire site is decommissioned.
4	Sites to be reviewed in parallel	One site to be priority for retention / one for phased decommission

7. PROPOSED ACTIONS – BY LOCATION

To be completed following the adoption of principles.

8. PROPOSED ACTIONS - DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY PROVISION

The following cross-cutting actions will complement the site-specific proposals set out in **Section 7**.

- 1) We will continue to adopt the Play England's 10 principles for creating successful play spaces¹³, i.e. Successful play spaces:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ are 'bespoke' ○ are well located ○ make use of natural elements ○ provide a wide range of play experiences ○ are accessible to all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ meet community needs ○ allow children of different ages to play together ○ build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ are sustainable and appropriately maintained ○ allow for change and evolution
--	--	--
- 2) We currently engage with Stockton Parent Carer Forum when planning and developing new sites but we will increase our community engagement with a particular focus on involving our children and young people in the design and development of play spaces.
- 3) In line with the principles set out in **Section 5** we will seek to secure funding (e.g. through town / parish councils, external grants and ward-based budgets) and work with partners to address any remaining 'gaps' in the current network of provision, or to improve existing sites. We will prioritise those areas in greatest need for outdoor play provision.
- 4) Where funding is secured to improve existing play areas we will seek to achieve good or excellent play value, as assessed by RoSPA.
- 5) We will design sites in ways which will minimise future maintenance costs, and which are resistant to damage and mis-use.
- 6) Where feasible we will consider whether the provision of 'natural' play environments provides a suitable alternative to the provision of formal play areas.
- 7) We will seek opportunities to add value to existing play provision through the development of other infrastructure and services (e.g. provision of catering, toilets, changing places and so on).
- 8) We will encourage housing developers to design play areas which achieve good or excellent play value.

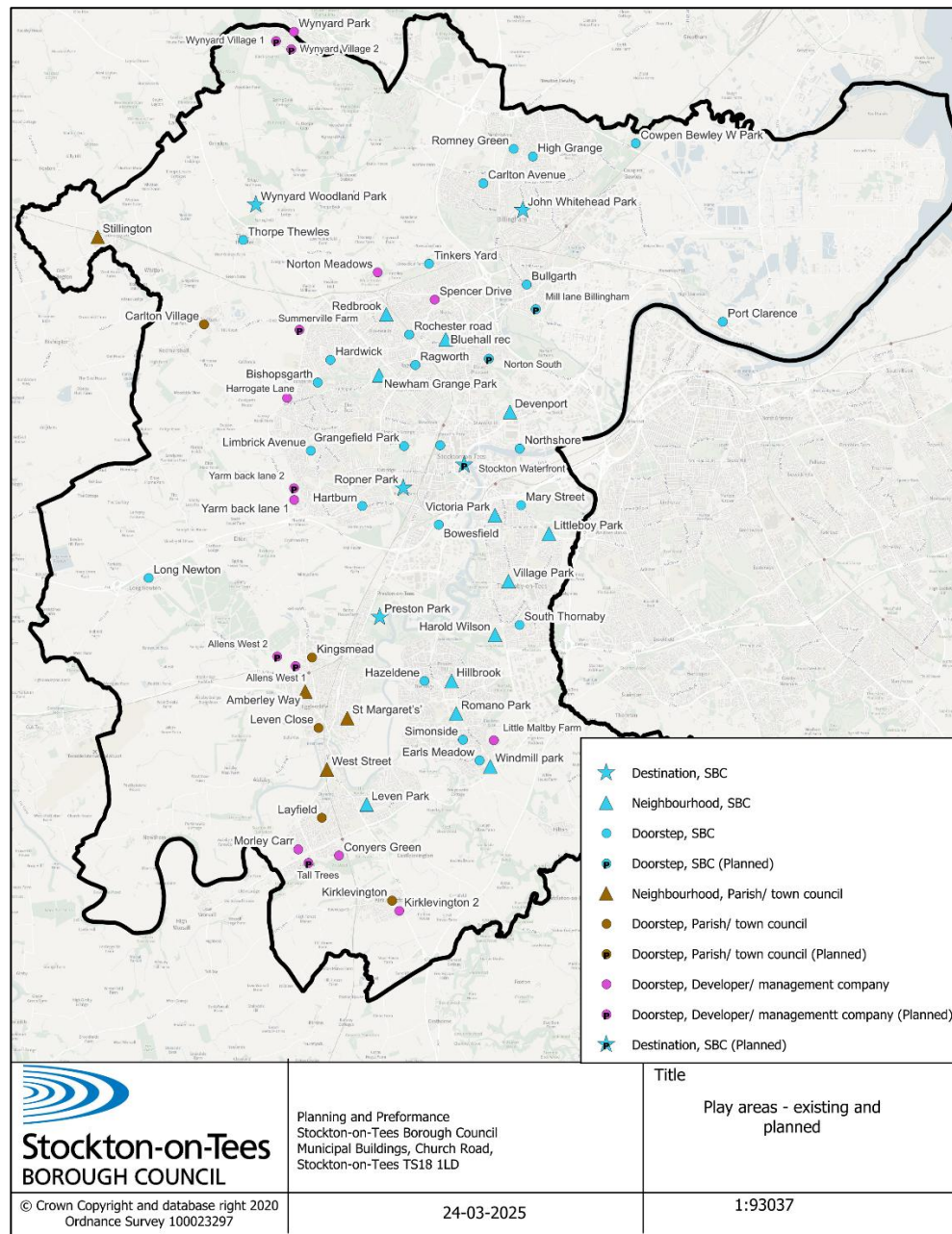
¹³ Play England - Design for play [Design for Play — Play England](#)

9. PROPOSED ACTIONS - MANAGEMENT OF PLAY PROVISION

The following cross-cutting actions will complement the site-specific proposals set out in **Section 7**.

- 1) We will explore the possibility of parish / town councils or other third parties contributing to the cost of maintaining play areas, in addition to those councils which already adopt this approach.
- 2) If feasible we should seek to strengthen links to local residents, businesses and users to create a greater sense of community 'ownership' of sites and facilities. This may help to reduce some of the damage which is a significant drain on our limited resources. We also want to engage people in decision-making regarding the future of a site as equipment needs to be removed.
- 3) As we reduce the number of sites to be retained we will introduce a more proactive approach to carrying out repairs and maintenance of remaining assets.

Appendix A: Existing and planned play areas (March 2025)



Site (planned sites in italics)	Ward	Town/ Village	Designation	Play units	Owner
Amberley Way	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Neighbourhood	20	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Bishopsgarth	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton	Doorstep	13	SBC
Bluehall Rec	Norton Central	Stockton	Neighbourhood	23	SBC
Bowesfield	Eaglescliffe East	Stockton	Doorstep	4	SBC
Bullgarth	Billingham South	Billingham	Doorstep	6	SBC
Carlton Avenue	Billingham West	Billingham	Doorstep	12	SBC
Carlton Village	Northern Parishes	Carlton	Doorstep	N/A	Carlton PC
Conyers Green	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park	Billingham East	Billingham	Doorstep	11	SBC
Devonport	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Neighbourhood	23	SBC
Earls Meadow	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	8	SBC
Grangefield Park	Grangefield	Stockton	Doorstep	16	SBC
Hardwick	Harwick & Salters Lane	Stockton	Doorstep	18	SBC
Harold Wilson	Village	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	37	SBC
Hartburn	Hartburn	Stockton	Doorstep	9	SBC
Hazeldene	Ingleby Barwick North	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	18	SBC
High Grange	Billingham North	Billingham	Doorstep	12	SBC
Hillbrook	Ingleby Barwick North	Ingleby Barwick	Neighbourhood	28	SBC
John Whitehead Park	Billingham Central	Billingham	Destination	49	SBC
Kingsmead	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Doorstep	23	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Kirklevington	Yarm	Kirklevington	Doorstep	16	Kirklevington & C L PC
Kirklevington 2	Yarm	Kirklevington	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Layfield	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	15	Yarm TC
Leven Close	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Doorstep	13	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Leven Park	Yarm	Yarm	Neighbourhood	20	SBC
Limbrick Avenue	Fairfield	Stockton	Doorstep	1	SBC
Littleboy Park	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	29	SBC
Long Newton	Eaglescliffe West	Long Newton	Doorstep	6	SBC
Mary Street	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby	Doorstep	4	SBC
Mill Lane - Stockton	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Doorstep	15	SBC
Morley Carr	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Newham Grange Park	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton	Neighbourhood	20	SBC
Northshore	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Doorstep	9	SBC
Norton Meadows	Norton West	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Port Clarence	Billingham South	Billingham	Doorstep	19	SBC
Preston Park	Eaglescliffe East	Eaglescliffe	Destination	64	SBC

Ragworth	Roseworth	Stockton	Doorstep	8	SBC
Redbrook	Roseworth	Stockton	Neighbourhood	26	SBC
Rochester Road	Roseworth	Stockton	Doorstep	5	SBC
Romano Park	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Neighbourhood	57	SBC
Romney Green	Billingham North	Billingham	Doorstep	4	SBC
Ropner Park	Ropner	Stockton	Destination	68	SBC
Simonside	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	4	SBC
South Thornaby	Stainsby Hill	Thornaby	Doorstep	15	SBC
Spencer Drive	Norton North	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer
St Margaret's	Eaglescliffe East	Eaglescliffe	Neighbourhood	35	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Stillington	Northern Parishes	Stillington	Neighbourhood	23	Stillington PC
Thorpe Thewles	Northern Parishes	T Thewles	Doorstep	14	SBC
Tinkers Yard	Norton North	Stockton	Doorstep	15	SBC
Victoria Park	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	36	SBC
Village Park	Village	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	25	SBC
West Street	Yarm	Yarm	Neighbourhood	22	Yarm TC
Windmill Park	Ingeby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Neighbourhood	27	SBC
Wynyard Park	Northern Parishes	Wynyard	Doorstep		Developer / management company
Wynyard Woodland Park	Northern Parishes	Thorpe Thewles	Destination	50	SBC
Yarm Back Lane 1	Hartburn	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company

Planned play areas (March 2025)

Site	Ward	Town/ Village	Designation	Play units	Owner
Allens West 1	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Allens West 2	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Harrogate Lane	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Little Maltby Farm	Southern Villages	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Mill Lane - Billingham	Billingham South	Billingham	Doorstep	N/A	SBC
Norton South	Norton South	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	SBC
Stockton Waterfront	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Destination	TBC	SBC
Summerville Farm	Harwick & Salters Lane	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Tall Trees	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Wynyard Village 1	Northern Parishes	Wynyard	Doorstep		Developer / management company
Wynyard Village 2	Northern Parishes	Wynyard	Doorstep		Developer / management company
Yarm Back Lane 2	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company

Appendix B: Play unit scores

Individual items of play equipment are allocated a play unit score based on the approximate number of people who can use the equipment at the same time (1, 2, 3 or 4 or more), e.g.



2 users = 2 play units



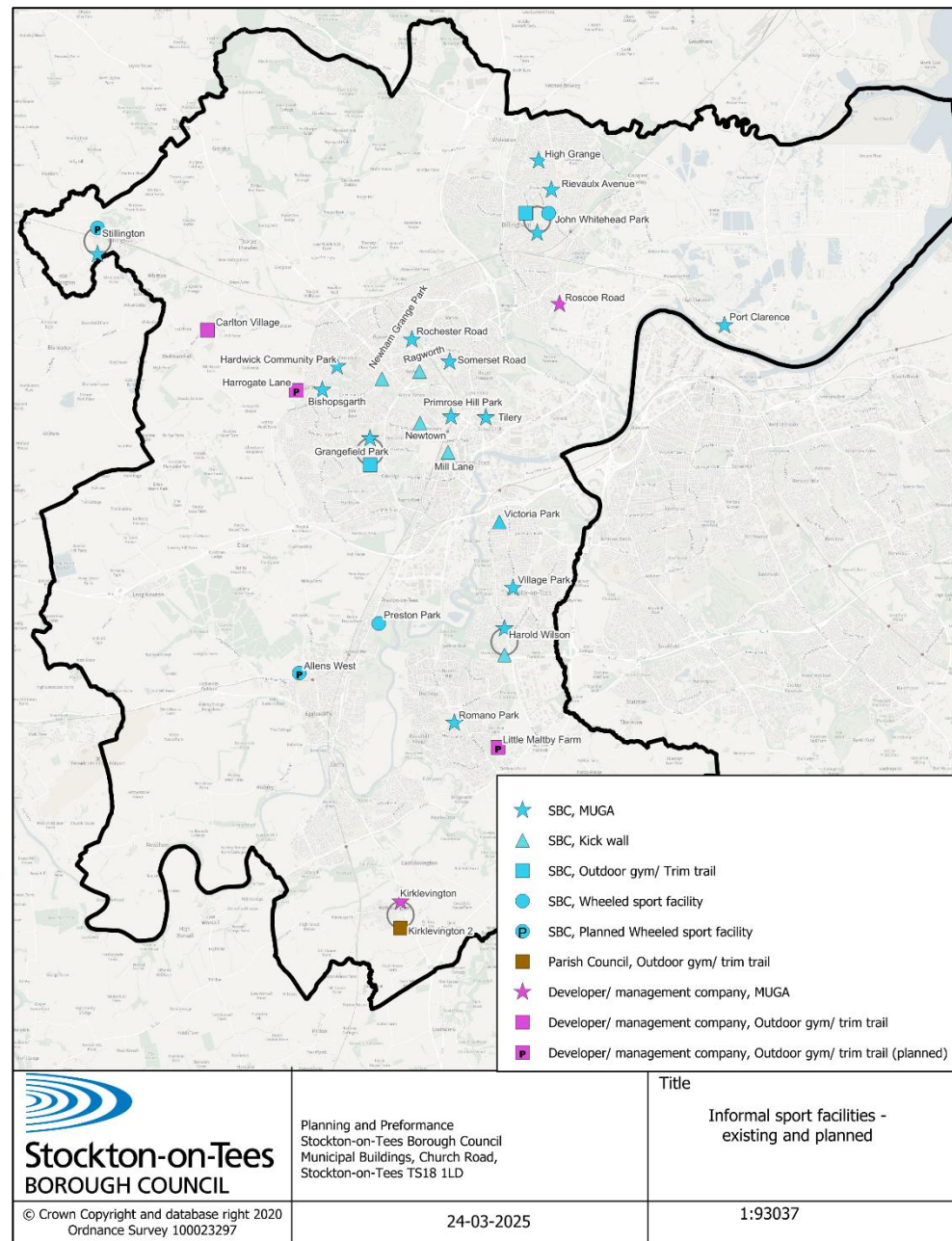
3 users = 3 play units



4 users or more = 4 play units

Appendix C:

Existing and planned informal sport facilities (March 2025)



Existing informal sport facilities (March 2025)

Site	Ward	Town / Village	Type:				Owner
			Wheeled sport facility	Multi use games area	Kick wall / other surfaced games area	Outdoor gym / trim trail	
Bishopsgarth	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton		✓			SBC
Carlton Village	Carlton	N Parishes				✓	Housing developer / management company
Grangefield Park	Grangefield	Stockton		✓		✓	SBC
Hardwick Comm Park	Hardwick	Stockton		✓			SBC
Harold Wilson	Village	Thornaby		✓	✓		SBC
High Grange	Billingham North	Billingham		✓			SBC
John Whitehead Park	Billingham Central	Billingham	✓	✓		✓	SBC
Kirklevington	Yarm	Kirklevington				✓	Kirklevington & C L PC
Kirklevington 2	Yarm	Kirklevington		✓			Housing developer / management company
Mill Lane	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton			✓		SBC
Newham Grange Park	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton			✓		SBC
Newtown	Newtown	Stockton			✓		SBC
Port Clarence	Billingham South	Billingham		✓			SBC
Preston Park	Eaglescliffe East	Eaglescliffe	✓				SBC
Primrose Hill Park	Newtown	Stockton		✓			SBC
Ragworth	Roseworth	Stockton			✓		SBC
Rievaulx Avenue	Billingham Central	Billingham		✓			SBC
Rochester Road	Roseworth	Stockton		✓			SBC
Romano Park	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick		✓			SBC
Roscoe Road	Billingham South	Billingham		✓			Housing developer / management company
Somerset Road	Norton Central	Stockton		✓			SBC
Stillington	Northern Parishes	Stillington		✓			SBC
Tilery	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton		✓			SBC
Victoria Park	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby			✓		SBC
Village Park	Village	Thornaby		✓			SBC

Planned informal sport facilities (March 2025)

Site	Ward	Town / Village	Type:				Owner
			Wheeled sport facility	Multi use games area	Kick wall / other surfaced games area	Outdoor gym / trim trail	
<i>Allens West</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe West</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe</i>		✓			<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Harrogate Lane</i>	<i>Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree</i>	<i>Stockton</i>				✓	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Little Maltby Farm</i>	<i>Southern Villages</i>	<i>Ingleby Barwick</i>				✓	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Stillington</i>	<i>Northern Parishes</i>	<i>Stillington</i>	✓				SBC

Appendix D: Types of informal sport provision

Multi-use games area (currently 17 with 1 planned)

- Offer surfaced and fenced areas for playing a variety of ball games such as football, basketball and cricket



e.g. Multi use games area at John Whitehead Park

Kick wall / other surfaced games area (currently 6)

- Offer surfaced areas playing a variety of ball games such as football, basketball and cricket, but may not be fenced



e.g. Surfaced games area at Victoria Park

Wheeled sport facility (currently 2 with 1 planned)

- Can generally accommodate users with BMX bikes, skateboards, inline skates and skateboards



e.g. Skate park at Preston Park

Outdoor gym / trim trail (currently 4 with 2 planned)

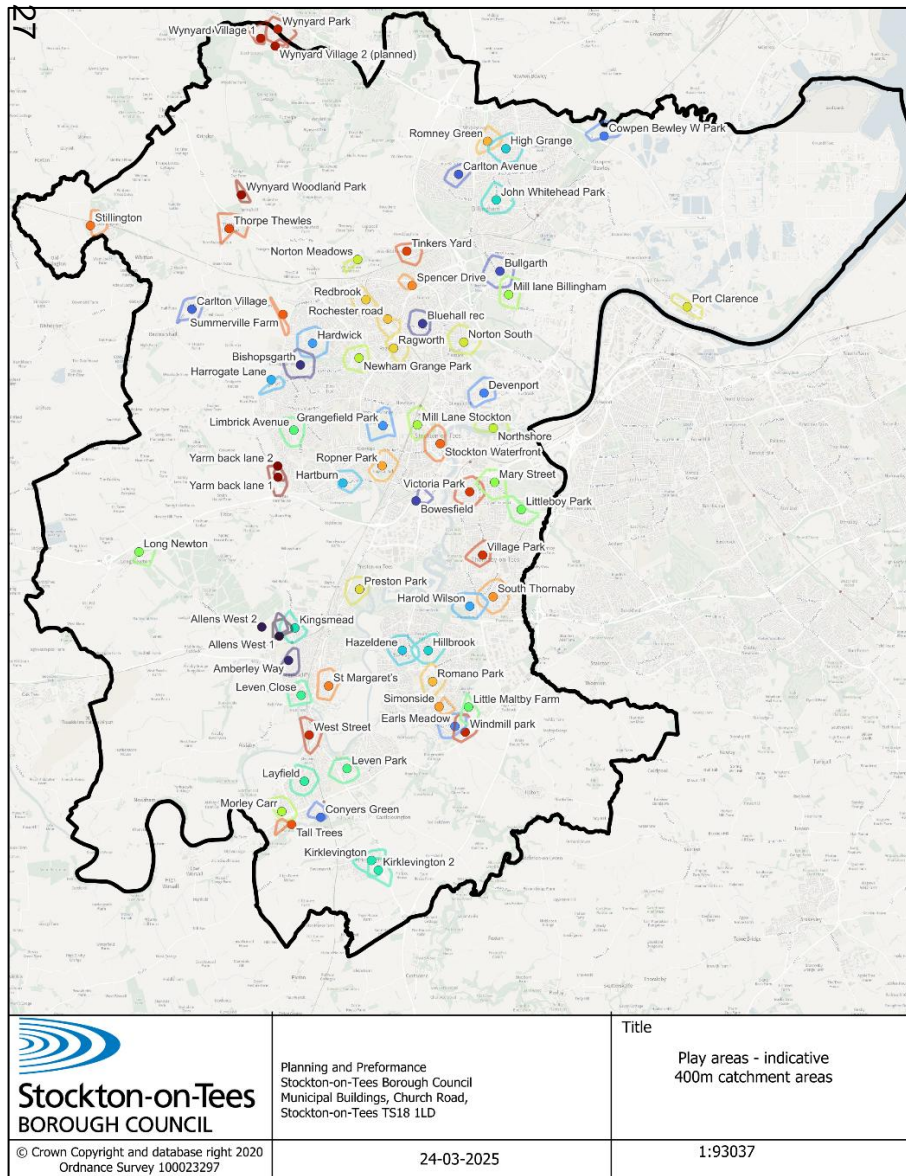
- Offer a range of equipment enabling users to exercise in the outdoors



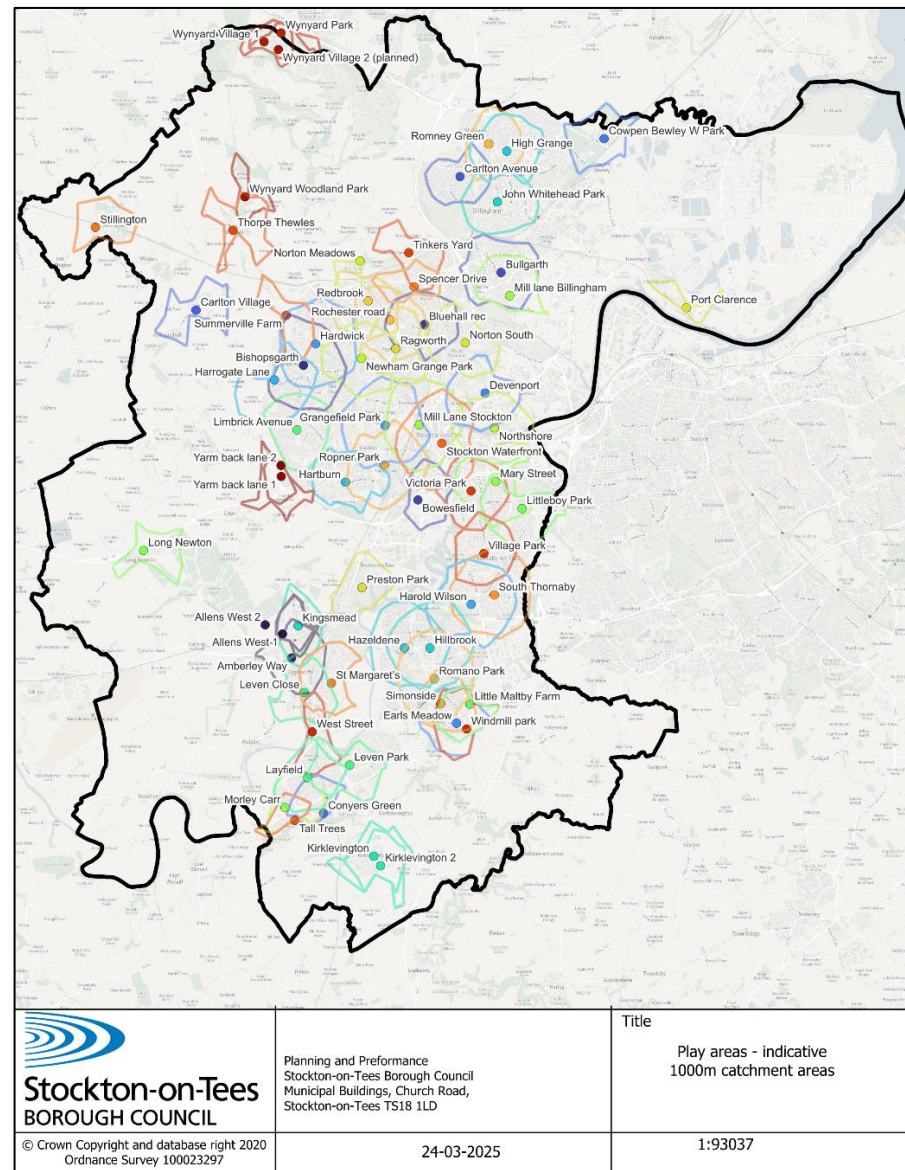
e.g. Outdoor gym at John Whitehead Park

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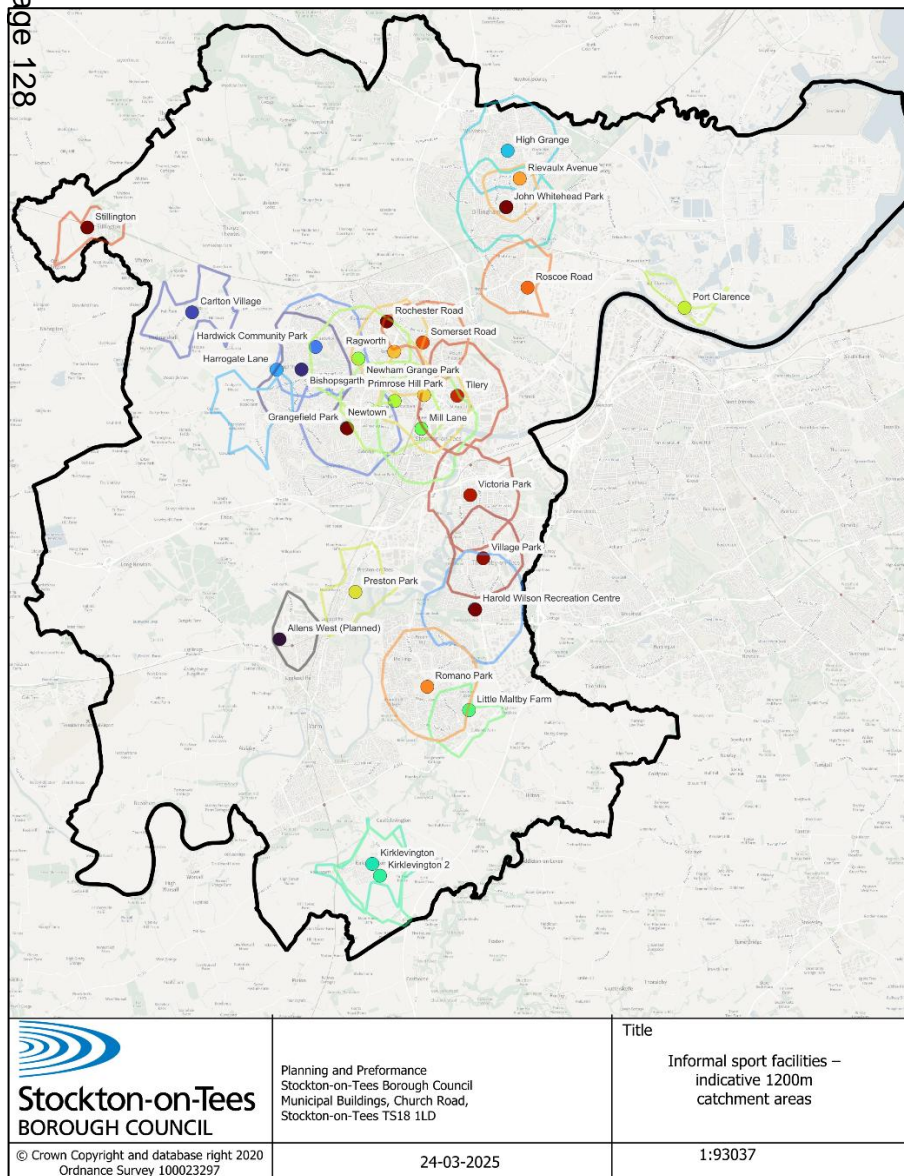
Appendix E: Indicative catchment areas for existing and planned play provision



Play areas: 400m catchments



Play areas: 1000m catchments



Informal sport facilities: 1200m catchments

Appendix F: RoSPA play value assessment criteria (worked example)

PLAY VALUE ASSESSMENT

Site: Littleboy Park Play Area

Date: 29.02.2024

The Play Value of each element of the site should be looked upon individually and assessed against the purpose that the operator has designated for the site (ie Toddler, Junior, Mixed, Teenage etc). The Operator should aim for a minimum rating of Good for: the Site Overall, Ambience, and for those age groups for which the site is designed. As can be seen from the indicated maximum score some elements have greater play value than others.

SITE OVERALL (Ignoring Equipment)		
	Max	Score
Social Safety	4	4
Physical safety	4	4
Pollution free	1	
Noise free	2	
Min of Two gates (Pedestrian) – Area 1 has 2 gates & Area 2 has 1 gate	3	3
Gates suitable for wheelchairs	2	2
Vehicle access gate	1	
Emergency vehicle access	2	1
Age Separation	4	2
Ground Contours	3	1
Shade present	1	1
Shelter (all ages)	2	1
Access for disabled – path leads to both areas and the grass inside	3	3
Suitability	2	2
Quality	3	3
Adult Seats (score extra 1 if arm rests)	1	1
Suitable litter bins	1	1
Environmental suitability	2	2
Locally related	3	
Ethnic	3	
Use of planting	2	1
Wild Flowers	3	2
Trees	3	1
Long Grass	3	3
Orientation	1	1
Appropriate signage	1	1
Colour suitability	2	2
Open Space – outside fenced area	3	3
Wheelchair friendly surfacing linking items – grass between units	4	4
TOTAL	69	48
Excellent = 47+	Good = 36-47	Average = 29-35
Below Average = 20-28		
Poor = <20		
OVERALL SITE ASSESSED AS EXCELLENT		

Ambience		
	10	7
Visual appeal	2	2
Condition (litter and graffiti)	2	2
Layout	2	2
TOTAL	14	11
Excellent = 10+	Good = 8-10	Average = 6-7
Below Average = 4-5		
Poor = <4		
OVERALL AMBIENCE ASSESSED AS EXCELLENT		

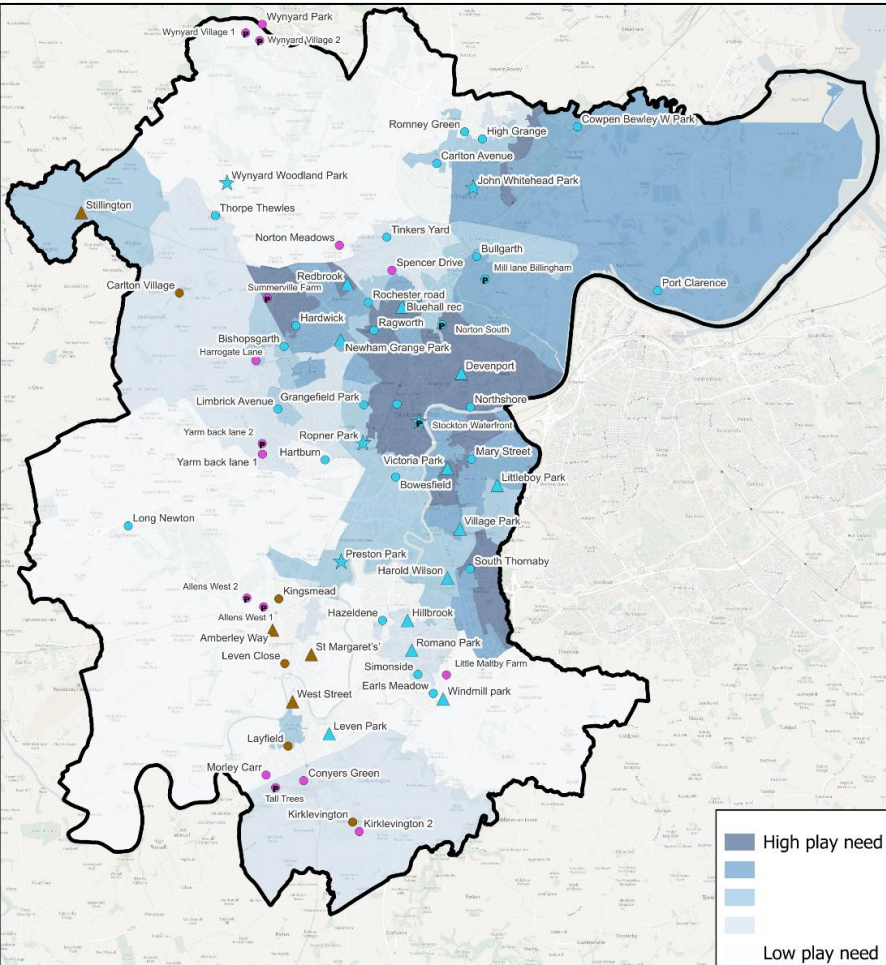
Toddlers		
Balancing	1	1
Crawling (short tunnels etc)	1	1
Rocking	1	1
Rotating	1	1
Sliding	1	1
Swinging	1	1
Sand Play	6	
Water Play	6	
Sensory Items	3	2
Textural variety	2	1
3+ Primary Colours	2	2
Toddler seating	1	1
Imaginative play (Area lending to use of child's imagination)	5	4
Interactive ability (Items encouraging group play)	2	2
Parental Seating (in Toddler section)	1	1
TOTAL	34	19
Excellent = 22+	Good = 18-22	Average = 13-17
Below Average = 9-13		
Poor = <9		
OVERALL TODDLER ASSESSMENT = GOOD		


Juniors		
Balancing	2	1
Crawling (Short tunnels)	1	1
Rocking	1	1
Rotating	1	1
Rotating (Multi User ie roundabouts etc)	2	2
Rocking and rotating (Mobius, Waltz etc)	4	2
Sliding conventional (ie slide etc)	1	1
Sliding (firemans pole etc)	1	1
Swinging (Single)	1	1
Swinging (Group)	2	
Gliding (Aerial runways etc)	2	
Hanging	1	
Climbing	2	2
Gymnastics	1	
Agility (Clatter bridges etc)	2	1
Ball Play (Basketball/netball/football) – open space, basketball & cricket wicket	4	
Sand Play	4	
Water Play	4	
Sensory items	2	1
Textural variety	2	1
Wheeled Play (for bikes, skateboards etc)	6	
3+ Primary colours	1	1
Interactive ability (Items encouraging group play)	4	3
Junior Seating	1	1
Imaginative play (Area lending to use of child's imagination)	4	3
Educational Play (abacus etc)	1	
Ground Graphics (Hopscotch etc)	2	1
TOTAL	59	25
Excellent = 40+	Good = 32-40	Average = 26-31
Below Average = 15-25		
Poor = <15		
OVERALL JUNIOR ASSESSMENT = BELOW AVERAGE		

Appendix G: Examples of inclusive equipment and surfacing

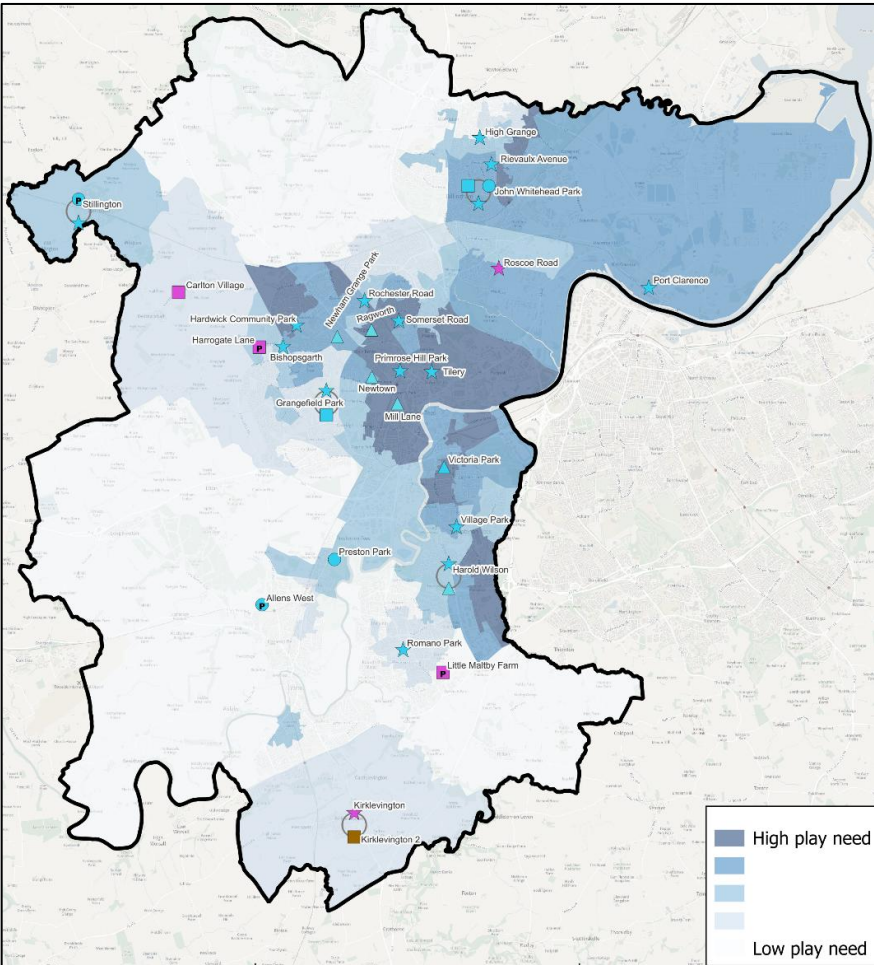



Examples of inclusive play equipment and surfacing (left: basket swing at Romano Park / right: flush carousel at Victoria Park)



 Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL	Planning and Performance Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD	Title
		Play areas mapped against play needs index
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Play areas



 Stockton-on-Tees BOROUGH COUNCIL	Planning and Performance Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1LD	Title
		Informal sport facilities mapped against play needs index
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Informal sport facilities

Appendix I: Analysis of existing and planned play areas

Site	Owner	Town/ Village	Play Needs Index	Classification / play units	No. inclusive play items	No. households in 400m catchment	No. households in 1000m catchment	Play value					Vandalism	Estimated replacement costs £			Informal sports facilities on site	Other play area within 1000m catchment	Proposed Actions (SBC sites only) Further details in Section 6.2
								Overall site Rating	Ambience Rating	Toddlers Rating	Juniors Rating	Teens Rating		0 to 4 years	5 to 10 yrs	10 yrs +			

Play needs index
5 = Very high
4 = High
3 = Medium
2 = Low
1 = Very low

Classification
Destination: 45 or more play units
Neighbourhood: – 20 or more play units
Doorstep: 1 to 19 play units

No. inclusive play units
1 = no units
2 = 1-2 units
3 = 3-4 units
4 = 5-6 units
5 = 7 or more units

No, Households in 400m catchment
1 = Very Low
2 = Low
3 = Medium
4 = High
5 = Very High

No, Households in 1000m catchment
1 = Very Low
2 = Low
3 = Medium
4 = High
5 = Very High

RoSPA Play Value score
1 = Poor
2 = Below average
3 = Average
4 = Good
5 = Excellent

Vandalism (current – not historical)
1 = High incidence
3 = Medium incidence
5 = Low or or zero incidence

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE: 17 JULY 2025

REPORT OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford

Powering our Future – Transformation Review: Children in our Care – Fostering Service

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present a proposal for modernising our fostering service in Stockton-on-Tees following a comprehensive review, options appraisal and development of a business case. The objective is to address the declining number of foster carers and the increasing number of children in external private provider care, to support better outcomes for children in our care, and help give them the best start in life. The proposal aims to build sufficiency within the mainstream fostering service by encouraging new foster carers, retaining existing ones, and meeting the diverse needs of children in care.

Proposals in this report are an important part of our approach to reduce inequality by prioritising Early Help and Prevention, supporting more children to live within safe and inclusive communities.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet is recommended to note the findings and agree the recommendations to ensure that the Council continues to deliver its commitment to the Powering Our Future Missions; to address the financial challenges we face at the same time as improving outcomes for communities. These include:

- **Early Help** – keeping children safe in families and communities, preventing demand for other services
- **Empowering communities** - increasing individual, family and community level activities
- **Improved Outcomes:** Keeping children within the local area supports their identity, community ties, and educational stability.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Modernising the fee structure and providing enhanced support to foster carers will reduce reliance on expensive external providers.
- **Enhanced Support:** Providing training and therapeutic services will help foster carers manage complex needs and reduce placement breakdowns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to approve the following proposals:

1. **Introduce a New Fee Structure for Foster Carers:** The proposed new fee structure for foster carers includes four levels ranging from £100 per week to £450 per week for carers providing care for children with the most complex needs. This structure aims to make our offer more competitive, attract new foster carers, and retain existing ones by recognising and rewarding the varying levels of care required. The maximum current fee a foster carer can receive is £125 per week. The new fee structure will be implemented from September 2025.

In addition, the introduction of an annual appreciation fee to recognise and reward foster carers for their commitment and efforts. This is subject to a successful annual review and the completion of a minimum of three training courses. The fee is set at £500 per household, aiming to show appreciation and encourage continuous professional development among foster carers. The new annual appreciation fee will be implemented from September 2025.

2. **Enhanced Package of Training and Support:** Provide a wider training offer, including Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) training, establish an additional Mockingbird constellation to support foster carers, commission therapeutic services from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and increase capacity within the fostering team by appointing an additional social worker. The enhanced package of support will commence from October 2025, in a staged process.
3. **Targeted Recruitment Campaigns:** Conduct intensive marketing campaigns to recruit specialist foster carers for children with complex needs and profile individual children to ensure long-term matches based on their needs. Campaigns will commence in September 2025.
4. **Reunification of Children:** Reunify children from external residential and Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements back into mainstream foster care. The process of matching children with long term foster carers will begin once specialist foster carers have been identified to meet their needs.

DETAIL

1. The Council's Mission Statement and wider Powering Our Future Programme, prioritises Early Help and prevention, supporting more children to live in safe and inclusive communities that provide them with opportunities to thrive. This means working differently with communities, to harness the strengths that exist to build resilience and independence.
2. In April 2024, Cabinet agreed to a review of Children in our Care as part of phase 1 of the Transformation Programme. This provided clarity on the scope and objectives for the review, in alignment with the Council's Mission Statement.
3. The review has led to a comprehensive understanding of challenges making use of research, data and intelligence. Findings and drivers for change along with options and proposals are summarised below.
4. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council faces challenges with a high number of children in care (564 as at 10.04.25) and a reducing number of in-house fostering households (81 as at 10.04.25), This has led to a reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and external residential care, which are costly and often place children outside the borough.
5. The costs associated with using external providers are extremely high compared to mainstream fostering. Additionally, the lack of local placements means social workers must travel long distances to visit children, increasing workloads and reducing the frequency of contact. External providers often serve short notice on placements, causing instability and escalating children's needs, which leads to a cycle of increasingly complex needs and higher costs.
6. Due to the shortage of foster placements, emergency placements sometimes result in unregulated care arrangements, which are unlawful and require additional risk management. This practice has brought scrutiny from Ofsted, the Department for Education, and the Children's Commissioner, highlighting the urgent need for more regulated foster care options.
7. As of 10th April 2025, 69% of the 564 children in care were in foster care placements, with 104 children placed with SBC Foster Carers, 102 with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) and

183 with Connected Carers. The remaining 173 children were in residential care, regulated supported accommodation or other placements.

8. The number of mainstream foster carers has steadily decreased since 2019, with 70 leaving the service and only 40 approved to replace them. The main reasons for resignations include retirement, ill health, and foster carers entering paid employment.
9. The current profile of in-house foster carers is insufficient, with difficulties in recruiting individuals who can develop the requisite skills to care for children with complex needs. Our payments to foster carers are lower than those offered by neighbouring Councils and IFAs, leading some carers to seek paid employment, reducing their availability. The proposal suggests introducing a new fee structure to encourage foster carers to improve their skills and care for children with more complex needs, making our offer more competitive.
10. Recent national, regional and local research by Newton Europe validates the need for additional fostering placements, especially for children with complex needs. The average weekly cost for residential care has increased significantly between 2020 and 2024 from £4,000 per week to £6,000 per week, while external fostering costs increased by 20%. The proportion of children in residential care has risen, and there is a notable increase in children entering care aged 10 and older. Most children currently in residential care were previously supported in fostering, indicating a need for more suitable foster carers.
11. The findings of the review and appraisal of options highlight the urgent need for modernising the fostering service to address the declining number of foster carers, high costs, placement instability, and the need for enhanced support and training.
12. Several options were appraised as detailed below:

Option 1: Do Nothing

This option involves continuing without investment therefore risks fewer carers, higher costs, unstable placements, and poorer outcomes for children

Option 2: Modernise the Current Fee Structure and Support Package (Recommended Option)

This option proposes introducing a new, tiered fee structure for foster carers, particularly those caring for children with complex needs. It includes an enhanced support package with additional training (e.g., DDP), a new Mockingbird constellation, therapeutic services via CAMHS, and an extra social worker to support increased demand. It also introduces an annual appreciation fee. This option is expected to improve recruitment and retention, reduce reliance on external providers, and has the potential to generate savings. The annual cost of the proposal will depend upon the actual number of new foster carers recruited and the needs of the children. Financial modelling has been undertaken and the estimated additional cost based on current numbers is £770,000 per annum.

Option 3: Align with a Neighbouring Local Authority's Fee Structure

Similar to Option 2, this option involves modernising the fee structure and support offer but aligns specifically with the higher rates offered by an outstanding neighbouring authority. It includes the same support enhancements as Option 2 but requires a larger investment (£1.6 million per annum). While it offers a competitive package, the higher cost makes it less financially favourable than Option 2.

Option 4: Partnership with an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)

This option explored forming a strategic partnership with an IFA to leverage their expertise in recruitment, training, and support. While it could bring in specialist knowledge and resources, it presents significant risks, including potential legal challenges, loss of control over placement quality, and complications with existing foster carers and staff. It also raises concerns about long-term sustainability and alignment with the council's values and goals.

13. The options were evaluated based on their potential to address the key issues, financial implications, and overall impact on the fostering service and outcomes for children. Option 2: To modernise the current fee structure and support package is recommended as the proposed option due to its balanced approach to investment, support, and expected savings for the following reasons:

- An improved package of fees for all carers that moves us closer to the fees paid by NE Local Authorities. This will encourage our current cohort of foster carers to remain with the council and attract new foster carers to the service.
- More children will be supported in family-based care that meets their needs.
- Offers a competitive fee for either existing or new carers to foster children with complex needs providing two higher fee rates than is currently available. To offset the introduction of these new fees, the council intends to undertake intensive recruitment campaigns to target new foster carers through the profiling of individual children to ensure long term matches are achieved based on their needs.
- The introduction of an appreciation fee, paid on an annual basis, will reinforce the council's commitment to its current and future cohorts of foster carers. Knowing they are valued and respected for their commitment to children in our care will help to retain existing and future foster carers.
- Provides a comprehensive package of support. Whilst our current cohort of foster carers rate the support and training offered by the council highly (foster carer consultation feedback), the complexity of needs of some children in care are challenging and can risk placements breaking down without having recourse to a proficient level of support. The introduction of an additional Mockingbird constellation, therapeutic responses from CAMHS and the opportunity to access DDP training with residential care staff will help build resilience of foster carers to enable them to conduct their fostering role.
- An additional social worker post will provide capacity within the team to address the expected increase in the number of referrals, applications, and approvals for new foster carers.
- Whilst the introduction of these new measures to recruit and retain foster carers will require investment, this will be offset through savings made from the re-unification of children from external residential and from IFA placements back into mainstream foster care. The financial savings associated with this reduction on expensive external placements is estimated to be £2.5 million per annum by year 4. It will also achieve better outcomes for those children who are currently in residential care despite their permanence plans identifying that the most appropriate placement to meet their needs is in a fostering placement. Further savings should also be achievable through cost avoidance of future placements, where children are supported in in-house fostering rather than external placements, modelling has indicated this could be a further £990,000 by year 4.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

14. The Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment identified the recommended option of modernising the fostering service through a revised fee structure and enhanced support has a positive impact on equality and poverty, particularly for children currently placed in Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) or external residential care.

15. Key Impacts include:

- **Improved Placement Matching:** Children whose permanence plans indicate a need for long-term fostering will benefit from being matched with appropriate in-house foster carers. This ensures their needs are met in a stable, family-based environment.
- **Local Placements:** By increasing local fostering capacity, more children can remain within Stockton-on-Tees, maintaining access to their family, education, and social networks—factors that are crucial for emotional well-being and social inclusion.

- **Enhanced Support for Carers:** The proposal includes better training, therapeutic support, and appreciation payments, which will help foster carers manage complex needs more effectively. This supports placement stability and reduces the risk of breakdowns, which disproportionately affect vulnerable children.
- **Support Networks:** Enhanced support for foster carers will strengthen community resilience and foster carer networks.
- **Addressing Inequality:** The initiative aligns with the Council's design principles to reduce inequality, prioritise prevention, and protect residents from the impacts of inequality. It aims to ensure that all children, regardless of background or complexity of need, have access to high-quality, stable care.
- **Poverty Reduction:** By offering more competitive fees and support, the proposal makes fostering a more financially viable option, potentially attracting carers from a wider socioeconomic range and reducing financial strain on existing carers

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

16. As Corporate Parents the Council has high aspirations for children and young people in the borough, The ambition for children in our care is the same as the ambition for all children and young people, that they live in safe, secure, and loving environments and are happy and healthy. Being a good corporate parent means we:

- Accept responsibility for children in the council's care and care leavers,
- Make their needs a priority, and
- Seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The financial implication of the preferred option is provided in the table below, reflecting an updated timescale for implementation and assuming part year impact in 2025/26:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Additional Cost:				
Introduction of new fee model				
New Fees - In-House Foster Carers	£163,000	£326,000	£326,000	£326,000
New Fees - Connected Carers	£104,000	£209,000	£209,000	£209,000
Introduce Appreciation Fee	£34,000	£68,000	£68,000	£68,000
Support & Training Offer	£0			
Additional Mockingbird Constellation	£23,000	£47,000	£47,000	£47,000
Additional Social Worker Capacity	£29,000	£57,000	£57,000	£57,000
Additional Training Offer	£1,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Additional CAMHS Support	£30,000	£60,000	£60,000	£60,000
Sub-Total additional cost	£384,000	£772,000	£772,000	£772,000
Estimated Savings:				
Move existing children from Independent Fostering Agency placements to In House Fostering		(£50,000)	(£66,000)	(£66,000)
Move existing children from External placements to In House Fostering		(£1,267,000)	(£1,873,000)	(£2,424,000)
Sub-total estimated savings	£0	(£1,317,000)	(£1,939,000)	(£2,490,000)
Overall Financial Saving	£384,000	(£545,000)	(£1,167,000)	(£1,718,000)

Future Cost Avoidance				
In House Fostering instead of Ext. placements	£0	£0	£0	(£993,000)
Potential Available Saving	£384,000	(£545,000)	(£1,167,000)	(£2,711,000)

18. The table above illustrates that an estimated £0.5m savings could be achieved in 2026/27, rising to £1.2million by 2027/28 and £1.7m in 2028/29, which can contribute to the remaining Transformation Savings Target. Further savings could materialise through costs avoided of replacing future external placements with in-house fostering placements, which could help mitigate growth in the service in later years.
19. The additional cost shown in the table above is the cost of introducing the new fee structure and strengthening the support and training offer for existing carers with the aim of securing those placements and preventing placement breakdown. The estimated savings are net of the foster carer fees per child.
20. Following the introduction of the new fee structure, it will take some time to recruit new carers and prepare children to move, therefore there is an estimated cost in 2025/26 of £384,000. This will be funded through the transformation reserve.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to deliver safeguarding arrangements for children in their area including the requirements for the provision of care for children unable to live in the family home. Legislation that covers these provisions are:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

The implications associated with the recommendations are set out within the risk-assessment section of this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Financial Risks

- **Cost of Transition:** There is a risk that whilst fostering fees are increased it does not lead to an increase in the number of specialist Foster Carers available to provide care for our more vulnerable children. This could lead to a continued reliance on expensive external unregulated placements whilst impacting on the outcomes for those children. Mitigation: As potential foster carers are referred from Foster with North East, their existing skills, knowledge and experience is assessed, and they being identified for potential specialist foster caring roles if they meet the relevant criteria. In addition, targeted recruitment campaigns based on individual profiling of children with complex needs will be undertaken to attract foster carers with specific skills, knowledge and experience. There are processes in place to monitor performance against Children's services activity, and we will measure the recruitment activity of foster carers locally. In addition, Foster with North East provide performance information via dashboard monthly, which monitors activity from initial enquiries to referrals onto Local Authority Fostering Services.
- **Implementation costs** – Fees are increased for existing foster carers but there is a failure to recruit additional foster carers to provide specialist fostering for children with complex needs. Mitigation: The targeted recruitment campaign will focus on profiling the needs of individual children to attract people with the right level of skills to meet the needs of the child.

Organisational Risks

- **Change management** - The implementation of the new fee structure is delayed which could result in the loss of more foster carers from the current cohort. Mitigation: communication, openness and transparency re the new fee structure and the implementation of an enhanced support package to encourage the retention of existing fostering carers, whilst SBC undertakes a targeted recruitment campaign to attract new foster carers.
- **Operational changes** – The rise in fees may cause an initial significant rise in enquiries regarding fostering, increasing the pressure on the Fostering team until the new social work role is filled. Mitigation: initial enquiries are screened through Foster with North East who carry out the first level of assessment. This acts as a filtering service which means that the Fostering team who carry out the more comprehensive assessments can focus on those who are more likely to progress through the fostering recruitment stages.
- **Contractual changes** – the negotiations with the CAMHS service to provide therapeutic support may become protracted. Mitigation: SBC Fostering service will continue to provide support through existing mechanisms until contracts are in place to stabilise any presenting issues where foster carers require support, for example through already established Mockingbird constellations.

Service User Risks

- **Meeting a Child's Needs:** There is a delay in recruiting specialist foster carers for children placed in unsuitable or distant placements, which can impact their outcomes. Mitigation: The proposal mitigates this by increasing local placement availability, improving matching through child profiling, and enhancing support for carers to reduce placement breakdowns. These changes aim to provide more stable, nurturing environments that better meet a child's assessed needs.

Political Risks

- **Policy Alignment:** The changes must align with national and local policies. Mitigation: Regularly review and adjust plans to ensure compliance with policy directives.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

21. Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- PID - Children in Our Care - updated 22.02.24 (Annexe 1)
- Business Case – Options Appraisal - Fostering April 2025 (Annexe 1)

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ANNEXE 1 - EXEMPT PAPER

BUSINESS CASE/OPTIONS APPRAISAL – FOSTERING

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th July 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

KEY DECISION

Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford, Cabinet Member of Children & Young People

SCHOOLS CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the allocation of capital funding to support two priority projects under the Council's School Investment Strategy: the refurbishment of pupil toilet facilities at Northfield School and funding for final stages of the development at Oxbridge Primary School.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet approval is required for the following reasons:

- Both projects involve significant capital expenditure. In accordance with Council governance procedures, Cabinet approval is necessary to authorise the approval and investment of the required funds.
- These investments are integral to the delivery of Stockton's wider education strategy, addressing condition, capacity, and accessibility.
- Approval at this stage will enable project teams to proceed with delivery, ensuring that works are completed in a timely manner and started before the next academic year where possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agree to invest an additional £500,000 of capital funding to complete the building works at Oxbridge Primary School
2. Agree to invest £1.16m of capital funding to install additional toilet block facilities at Northfield School & Sports College.
3. Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to take all necessary steps to deliver the projects within the approved budgets.
4. Cabinet delegate the transfer of budget caused by cost variations within the approved programme to the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young People.

DETAIL

1. In October 2022, Cabinet approved the revised proposals relating to the school investment strategy of unallocated funds to support investment in Oxbridge Lane Primary School and Bishopton Centre Pupil Referral Unit. Whilst the works on Bishopton Centre completed in April 2024, with the introduction of 20 additional places for children who require alternative provision, the outlined works at Oxbridge Primary School require further investment prior to completion. Further agreed investment at that time, for SEND Provision at Abbey Hill at North Shore and Ash Trees at Billingham South are now complete, operational and running at capacity.
2. In Spring 2025, following allocation of funding by the Department for Education and further funding being obtained, the Council currently have £9.31m of unallocated capital funding from a range of sources (a summary is provided below). Whilst a separate report is being prepared in respect of proposed capital investment relating to required SEND provision, a further request is being made to invest in completion of the Oxbridge Lane Primary School works and for consideration of investment in Northfield School.
 - £1.56m Unallocated Basic Need Grant
 - £3.87m Unallocated High Need Capital Funding
 - £3.88m of Developer Contributions towards education
3. A significant amount of this is proposed to be invested into SEND provision in Stockton and a separate report will be presented to Cabinet to this effect. However, there is sufficient funds available within the £9.31m available to deliver the £1.66m worth of proposals in this report.
4. There are no cost saving or cost avoidance attached to this investment

Northfield School Toilets

5. The current number of pupil toilets at the school falls short of the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines. Based on the existing pupil roll, there is a shortfall of 18 toilets. This deficit is projected to increase to 24 toilets once the school reaches its full capacity, following the agreed increase in the Published Admission Number (PAN) to 1,600 pupils (350 per year group).
6. A particular area of concern is a section of the school where toilet provision is significantly below the required level. At present, both Year 8 and Year 11 students share access to a single set of facilities. This arrangement is suboptimal due to the age difference between the cohorts, the volume of students using the facilities, and the associated challenges in ensuring effective supervision and safeguarding. Currently, 590 pupils share access to only 14 toilets.
7. This situation not only raises safeguarding concerns but also contributes to increased pressure during break times, which may lead to disruption within the school.
8. To address these challenges, it is proposed that a new toilet block be constructed to provide dedicated facilities for Year 11 students. This would alleviate pressure on existing facilities, improve safeguarding, and support better behaviour management during unstructured times.
9. The cost of this solution will cost in total, £1.25m. Northfield school can contribute £90,000 of this from their devolved formula capital, leaving a cost to the Council of £1.16m. This is based on the scheme being designed to RIBA stage 4, with the exception of the mechanical and electrical component.

Oxbridge Primary School

10. Members will recall that the original budget for this project was £7.538m.

11. During demolition works, unforeseen issues with the existing building structure were identified, resulting in the full utilisation of the initial contingency. In response, a scope reduction exercise was undertaken in consultation with the school, enabling the project to ensure cost increases were minimised as a consequence.
12. With 14 months remaining until the scheduled project completion in August 2026, it is proposed that to mitigate any further potential risks that an overall funding envelope of £8.24m would be required. This will provide the necessary flexibility to manage any further unforeseen issues and ensure successful delivery of the scheme.
13. £200,000 has been allocated within the 25-26 Schools Planned Maintenance Programme due to a proportion of this project avoiding maintenance of existing buildings. It is recommended that a further £500,000 is taken from the funding identified in paragraph 4 to ensure the funding envelope is increased to £8.24m in order to allow successful completion.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

14. An EPIA was undertaken as part of planning and no mitigating actions were required.
15. This will benefit the schools and children who attend, through increasing accessibility and facilities within two schools within the borough. which should also increase choice.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

16. This report to does not contain corporate parenting implications

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The £1.66m identified in this report, alongside a further £7.65m identified in the SEND St Johns and Mill Lane Investment report are funded from the £9.31m of resources outlined in paragraph 4.
18. These interventions utilise all available funding. Any new interventions not covered within the current capital programme would require further funding to be identified. Whilst there is the potential for future school capital to be announced there is no certainty on timing or amounts at present This includes no funding being available for the Alternative Provision Free School that is currently pending DfE approval, whereby in order for this to progress the Council would be required to fund the abnormal costs, on which high level estimates of £800k-£1m have been provided.
19. The schemes in both this report and the SEND Capital Investment Strategy are collectively summarised below for completeness.
- 20.

St John the Baptist Primary School	£5,350,000
Mill Lane Primary School	£1,700,000
Mainstream School Investment (not SEND related)	£1,660,000
Additional Scheme Contingency	£600,000
Total	£9,310,000

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The Council as Local Education Authority has a duty under The Education Act 1944 to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the needs of the children and young people resident in the borough.
22. The council must meet its duties under The School Premises Regulations 2012 in respect of ensuring that schools have adequate toilet and washing facilities and follow the guidance on the number of facilities in line with pupil population.

RISK ASSESSMENT

23. This school investment strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

24. No impact to Wards noted
25. Ward Councillor in Ropner, in respect of Oxbridge Primary School have been consulted with in respect of initial plans and commencement of the project in 2024.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Committee: Report of Assistant Director of Inclusive Growth and Development, May 2024

Stockton on Tees Local Plan Adopted 2019

Cabinet Report: An Investment Strategy for Schools, SEN and Early Years, October 2021

Cabinet Report: An Investment Strategy for Schools, SEND and Early Years, October 2022

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th July 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

KEY DECISION

Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford, Cabinet Member of Children & Young People

SEND CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval for capital investment in the development and enhancement of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision across the borough. This funding is required to support two planned projects aimed at increasing local capacity and ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations to children and young people with SEND.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

Cabinet approval is required for the following reasons:

- The scale of the proposed capital expenditure.
- Investment is essential to meeting growing and changing demand for SEND places, fulfilling statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014.
- Increasing local provision will help reduce escalating high needs expenditure on high cost out of area placements and pressures on community transport.
- Timely approval is necessary to meet key deadlines for design, procurement, and delivery to ensure commencement of work to begin in the upcoming academic year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agree to invest £5.35m of capital funding to St John the Baptist Primary School, to undertake necessary building work and essential works to the school to maintain the 24 SEND Unit places and allow for the displaced early years provision to be reunified in the main school building.
2. Agree to invest £1.7m of capital funding at Mill Lane Primary School, to create a SEND Unit for children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to take all necessary steps to deliver the projects within the approved budgets.
4. Cabinet delegate the transfer of budget caused by cost variations within the approved programme to the Section 151 Officer and the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Children's and Young People.

5. Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance Performance and Transformation and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to allocate the contingency of £600,000 if required within the approved programme.

DETAIL

1. The number of children and young people in Stockton with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continues to rise, placing increasing pressure on the borough's existing SEND provision. Through analysis and planning as part of the Deficit Management Plan relating to The Dedicated Schools Grant, Stockton on Tees planned for a 9.8% year on year increase in the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. This is notably higher than the Northeast regional average increase of 7.4% and the national average of 6.1%, however, the demand has outweighed this in the current academic year.
2. It is projected that there will continue to be substantial growth in need overall for our children and young people with SEND, and particularly within speech, language and communication (rising 410 pupils to 698 in 2027) and ASD / Neurodevelopmental needs (rising from 497 children and young people in 2024 to 698 in 2027)
3. The number of EHCPs for school aged pupils is projected to increase from 2,048 in 2024 to 2,503 in 2027. The number of school age pupils with EHCPs attending mainstream schools or academies is projected to rise to from 698 in 2024 to 811 by 2027, followed by a projected increase in maintained special schools or special academies from 685 in 2024 to 758 by 2027.
4. Recent data from the Department for Education (DfE) highlights a continued national increase in the of pupils identified with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) as their primary type of need. As of January 2025, 24.9% of all pupils receiving SEND Support in England were identified with SLCN. In the Northeast region, this figure is slightly higher at 26.3%, reflecting regional pressures on early years and primary provision. In Stockton-on-Tees, the proportion is above regional and national averages, with 28.7% of pupils at SEND Support level identified with SLCN. This upward trend underscores the urgent need to expand specialist and inclusive provision locally, particularly considering increasing complexity of need and the growing number of children requiring early intervention, being identified in the Early Years (0-5)
5. Nationally, the proportion of pupils receiving with EHC Plans for Cognition and Learning (C&L) is approximately 21.3%, while Communication and Interaction (C&I) needs account for 19.6% of all EHC Plans as of 2025. In the Northeast, these figures are slightly elevated, with C&L at 22.8% and C&I at 21.1%, reflecting regional trends of earlier identification and higher levels of need. In Stockton-on-Tees, the demand is higher, with C&L needs representing 24.5% and C&I needs 38.2% of all children with EHC Plans. This local increase in both categories, particularly among children with overlapping need, confirmed a need to redevelop the provision available locally.
6. In response, the Council has undertaken a review of its enhanced mainstream schools and will open additionally resourced provision and SEND Units across the borough from September 2025.
7. Planned investments are aligned with the refreshed Council's SEND and AP Strategy which promotes early intervention, inclusive practice, and high-quality local provision wherever possible. It also encompasses the required mitigations set out in the DSG Deficit Management Plan.

8. The Council currently have £9.31m of available unallocated capital resources comprising the following:
- £1.56m Unallocated Basic Need Grant
 - £3.87m Unallocated High Need Capital Funding
 - £3.88m of Developer Contributions towards education

St John the Baptist Primary School

9. In September 2024, the council opened a SEND Unit for children with communication and interaction difficulties and learning difficulties at St John the Baptist Primary School. This is a 24 placed provision, comprising of three classes for children who are currently reception age. There are currently 24 reception aged children in this provision, and it is full.
10. To effectively meet the children's needs on site and to ensure that appropriate support and space was available, the school temporarily displaced its Early Years Provision into mobile classroom facilities. Investment is therefore required in the building, to ensure longevity of the SEND Unit, including updates to toileting and dining facilities and breakout and intervention space, but also to ensure that children in the Early Years mainstream admissions at the school, are fully integrated into school with access to continuous provision, as required in statutory guidance, for all children who are following an Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.
11. There is a requirement for an urgent decision to be made in respect of this, owing to the tight timescales and building requirements related to the structural updates. To ensure completion of planning, in time for the start of the new academic year in September 2025, works must be agreed no later than July 2025. This also relates to a further temporary classroom being added to site, which must be done during summer holidays and requires a lead in and planning time. The company must allocate this unit within their production schedule imminently to guarantee availability and timely delivery. This is essential to enable the school to decant in line with the agreed programme, with a planned start date of February 2026 for the main phase of works.
12. Any delay or pause at this stage would significantly impact the delivery timeline and may require further negotiation with the school, potentially affecting the broader programme.
13. The costs of this intervention have been derived from outline design to RIBA stage 3. More detailed design work is to be carried out to progress to RIBA stage 4 and a greater degree of cost certainty. If this results in the costs of the scheme exceeding the funding envelope, then a further report will be brought back to Cabinet.
14. Investing £5.35m of capital will save the council a minimum of £1.44m per year on revenue cost avoidance on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. This is based on an alternative of placing 24 children in an out of area independent school at an average minimum cost of £60,000 per year per place. This would be the only viable alternative option (assuming availability).
15. The children placed at St John the Baptist are currently in reception, therefore have 6 years remaining in primary school. Once children are moved to out of area provision it is unlikely that they return and therefore consideration must also be given to secondary school costs and placement. Children placed at St John the Baptist will transfer into SEND Unit or Specialist Secondary provision in the local area.

	Per Child	24 places at primary age
Revenue cost per year out of Area Placement	£60,000	£1,440,000
Revenue cost per year St Johns	£14,000	£336,000
Annual Cost Avoidance	£46,000	£1,104,000

*Average out of area placement cost incurred by the Council.

16. Given the children in the temporary solution at St Johns are currently in reception, they can be expected to stay in place for a further 6 years, thus meaning the £1.104m per annum cost avoidance of this intervention could equate to £6.6m over their time in Primary School.

Mill Lane Primary School

17. Children with speech, language and communication needs is the biggest growth area of need within the borough. Since February 2025 we have now seen a total of 52 additional EHCPs agreed for under 5's, of which 42 are specifically for Speech and Language related.
18. Stockton on Tees currently have 1281 children in primary school with an EHC Plan detailing their primary need is speech, language and communication needs. This is similar to our statistical neighbour averages and national averages.
19. Consultation undertaken in September and October 2024 also established request from both parents and schools to have a dedicated resource and space for children with speech and language needs as part of the ARP & SEND Unit offer in borough.
20. It is therefore proposed that a new ten place speech and language SEND Unit for children aged three onwards is built at Mill Lane Primary School, to provide turnaround intervention enabling children to reintegrate into mainstream provision, maximising usage and capacity of the provision.
21. This setting is for children with significant language delays and language disorders and will mitigate the cost of the increasing demand for private speech and language therapy services, including out of area referrals and school placements out of the borough, which would be independent provision.
22. This placement would initially be for a total of 10 children, but proposed space would admit up to 30 children at one time at maximum capacity and would allow the school additional space for their own discrete class to meet the school's own rising need.
23. Design work has been completed to RIBA stage 4 for all elements of this scheme, with the exception of the mechanical and electrical components. As such there is confidence that these costs are robust.
24. Investing £1.7m will allow for 10 places, with flexibility to plan for up to 30 places. This will provide 3 well-proportioned classrooms, improved changing facilities and intervention spaces, with flow to the outside for supported continuous provision.

25. Running costs from High Needs Funding (Designated School Grant) of £110,000 per year have already been agreed in line with the additional revenue costs agreed by Cabinet in January 2025. This was on the basis that having ten children in this setting will generate a cost avoidance of £49,000 per year per place.
26. Initial placement is for ten children, however, by 2028/2029 this space will allow for up to thirty children to require flexible in and outreach places, meaning that in a 30 place provision could offer provision for up to 90 children a year who require short term intensive speech and language intervention. (Based on three children per year in one place).
27. The unmitigated cost per place is £60,000 therefore the overall saving per child per year is £49,000. This equates to an overall cost avoidance of £490,000 in year one of opening but could rise to £1.47m per annum as capacity increases as the service is slowly built up in a managed way.

	Per Place	10 places (Expected for 26/27)	30 places (Expected by 28/29)
Revenue cost per year out of Area Placement	£60,000	£600,000	£1,800,000
Revenue cost per year Mill Lane	£11,000	£110,000	£330,000
Annual Cost Avoidance	£49,000	£490,000	£1,470,000

General Contingency across the programme.

28. Whilst contingency and inflation are built into the projects, for financial prudence it is suggested that a £600,000 programme contingency be held for the interventions, with approval given by members for this to be allocated as required to the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Finance Transformation and Performance, in line with cabinet's approved delegated responsibilities.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

29. An EPIA was undertaken as part of planning and no mitigating actions were required.
30. Increasing local SEND placements strengthens inclusive communities, improves outcomes for children, and reduces reliance on costly out-of-area provision. It also supports families, creates local jobs, and enhances long term sustainability of services.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

31. In relation to children who are in our care, who have an Education, Health and Care Plan, failure to meet SEND sufficiency destabilises the council's corporate parenting duty to act in the best interests of children in our care, particularly in securing appropriate education and support. It risks legal, ethical, and reputational consequences by failing to uphold statutory responsibilities and equality principles.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

32. The £7.65m identified in this report, alongside a further £1.66m identified in the Schools Capital Investment report are funded from the £9.31m of resources outlined in paragraph 13.
33. These interventions utilise all available funding. Any new interventions not covered within the current capital programme would require further funding to be identified. Whilst there is the

potential for future school capital to be announced there is no certainty on timing or amounts at present This includes no funding being available for the Alternative Provision Free School that is currently pending DfE approval, whereby in order for this to progress the Council would be required to fund the abnormal costs, on which high level estimates of £800k-£1m have been provided.

34. The schemes in both this report and the Schools Capital Investment Strategy are collectively summarised below for completeness.

St John the Baptist Primary School	£5,350,000
Mill Lane Primary School	£1,700,000
Mainstream School Investment (not SEND related)	£1,660,000
Additional Scheme Contingency	£600,000
Total	£9,310,000

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

35. The Council as Local Education Authority has a duty under The Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure sufficiency of suitable educational placements for Children and Young People with SEND
36. Any failure to meet these duties can result in Judicial reviews brought by families or SEND Tribunal rulings against the council, requiring costly out-of-area placements or compensatory education being issued by the Local Ombudsman.
37. Cabinet must also consider any potential breach of rights under the following legislation if sufficient provision for children and young people cannot be allocated within the borough.
- The Children and Families Act 2014.
 - The Equality Act 2010.
 - The Human Rights Act 1998.

RISK ASSESSMENT

38. This SEND investment strategy is categorised medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

39. No impact to Wards noted

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Report: Extended Mainstream Schools Consultation Information Item, September 2024.
Cabinet Report: Additionally Resourced Provision in Mainstream Schools, Outcome of EMS Consultation, January 2025

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17th July 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE
Cabinet Member for Access, Communities & Community Safety

Adoption of The Stockton-on-Tees Air Quality Strategy 2025-2030

SUMMARY

Poor air quality is one of the largest risks to public health and DEFRA now required all Local Authorities to produce an Air Quality Strategy. The purpose of this is to ensure air quality is at the forefront of Council decision making whilst also protecting the health and well-being of those who live and visit our borough.

Within Stockton-on-Tees, Environmental Health are responsible for monitoring the levels of air quality using two automatic sites and 15 diffusion tubes strategically placed throughout the Borough in areas of high volumes of traffic or in locations where concern about the air quality has been raised. The Air Quality levels within Stockton-on-Tees are better than the national standard which means we that we do not need more stringent measures seen in other areas of the country such as Air Quality Management Areas. In fact, over the past five years, since 2019, there has been continuous improvement in air quality levels each of our monitoring locations.

Even though we are seeing improvements locally, we know there is more to do to protect our communities. The purpose of this report is for Cabinet to approval of the draft Air Quality Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees which will be in place from 2025 until 2030. The strategy contains 42 measures which aims to improve our air quality levels further, whilst encouraging behavioural changes from Council operations, residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

The production of the Stockton-on-Tees Air Quality Strategy was mandatorily brought forward by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to coincide with the requirement to report in to central government annually for local air quality standards. This reporting is issued via the Annual Status Report (ASR) and are a key part of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM). This annual report is submitted to the government each year at the end of May.

The production of the Air Quality Strategy aims to improve local air quality standards and as such continue to make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work and visit - a Borough that residents can be proud of. It will be a vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy.

The adoption of the Air Quality Strategy will improve local air quality for the benefit of all residents, businesses and visitors of the borough alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To approve the draft Air Quality Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2025-2030

DETAIL

1. Following the introduction of *The Environment Act 2021*, Local Authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Strategy.
2. The Environmental Health Service have developed an Air Quality Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council following extensive internal consultation and collaboration with many internal departments. A public consultation on the draft Air Quality Strategy also took place in April 2025 which was accessible both online and via paper copies within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council libraries. A summary table regarding the key themes identified from the external consultation is available on the air quality page of our website.
3. The Air Quality Strategy will have no impact on the Councils property portfolio, capital programme or asset management plan.
4. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council will continue to undertake continuous monitoring at its two fixed sites and through the deployment of diffusion tubes; whilst the priorities for the Strategy will focus upon:
 - **Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality** to enable us to expand our air quality network whilst ensuring residents and businesses have access to information about air quality which can lead to behavioural changes.
 - **Strategic measures** will be implemented within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to ensure we are able to improve air quality levels throughout the Borough, leading by example.
 - **Reduce emissions from vehicles** is a key priority as the main source of air pollution within Stockton-on-Tees is from vehicles travelling throughout the Borough.
 - **Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources** as these sources are known to significantly contribute to air pollution levels with domestic wood burning being the UKs largest source of particulate matter air pollution.
 - **New Developments, Construction and Planning** will be prioritised to ensure the design, construction, demolition of new developments can improve our levels of air pollution.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

5. A community impact assessment has not been undertaken for the Air Quality Strategy. The purpose of the Air Quality Strategy is to improve the levels of air quality across the Borough to protect the health of residents. An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment was complete for the draft Strategy and this was approved ahead of public consultation.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

6. The adoption of the Air Quality Strategy will impact on the entire borough as it aims to improve local air quality. It has however no specific impact on corporate parenting as any incremental improvements in local air quality will benefit everyone.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. There is no additional capital or revenue spend associated with approval of this strategy as the key aims and objectives can be met through existing resources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. The adoption of the Air Quality Strategy 2025-2030 will allow Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to continue to comply with its legal requirements for reporting on local air quality management and delivery of improvements via a local strategy.
9. Local Air Quality Management requirements are set out under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. This act requires local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality within their areas and take action to improve it.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. The approval of the Air Quality Strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

11. As this strategy impacts on the entire borough no specific ward is disproportionately impacted over another.
12. A Members briefing paper has been produced which is to be issued subject to Cabinet approval.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment:

13. An EPIA was prepared and submitted 30th January 2025 and approved 5th March 2025.

Appendices / Embedded Documents:

14. Appendix One – Draft Air Quality Strategy 2025 - 2030



Stockton-on-Tees
Borough Council Air

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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Air Quality Strategy

2025-2030

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Foreword

Today poor air quality is one of the greatest risks to public health in all urban areas. Within Stockton-on-Tees we are in the very fortunate position whereby our existing levels of air quality are within National Objectives and as such we do not need to declare Air Quality Management Areas.

Despite our relatively good levels of air quality as an Authority we refuse to rest, and we are working diligently to improve our air quality levels further to protect the health of our residents, businesses and visitors alike. We are undertaking this work through reviewing our operations, working collaboratively with partners and taking enforcement action against those who commit air quality offences.

The 2025-2030 Air Quality Strategy is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of air quality and put measures in place to drive change within our Borough. The new and exciting Council strategy will be fundamental in ensuring that we continue to improve the air we breathe in Stockton-on-Tees and that we deliver a lasting improvement for generations to come.

Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE

Cabinet Member Access, Communities & Community Safety.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Stephenson." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Air Quality Strategy - executive summary

This is Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's first Air Quality Strategy. The Strategy identifies a series of robust measures and commitments which the Local Authority are to implement to ensure we maintain and improve our existing good levels of air quality throughout the Borough.

Stockton-on-Tees maintains good air quality levels across the Borough, with no monitoring locations in breach of the National Air Quality Objectives or Target Levels established by national governing legislation.

The Authority continues to fulfil its legal duties under *The Environment Act 1995*, as amended by *The Environment Act 2021* to monitor for air pollution using both automatic continuous monitoring at fixed locations and diffusion tube monitoring at locations of interest dictated by traffic flow, local issues or resident concerns.

Stockton-on-Tees has good air quality levels. As an Authority we are determined to continually improve the levels of air quality to protect public health and to have a clean environment for everyone to live and work within.

The Strategy takes a holistic approach across the Local Authority and has been produced in conjunction with many departments who are able to contribute to improving our air quality across the Borough. This Strategy takes

significant strides to ensuring air quality is embedded at the heart of the Local Authority and it is a conscious part of the daily functions of the Authority.

The Strategy builds upon existing good practice already undertaken by the Authority and identifies new opportunities for further improvements which are to be focused upon for the lifetime of the Strategy which will be valid from 2025 until 2030. Progress on the actions and measures listed within the Strategy will be reported upon yearly within our Annual Status Report submission to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) which can be requested via our website.

Our priorities for this Strategy are to focus upon:

- 1. Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality** to enable us to expand our air quality network whilst ensuring residents and businesses have

access to information about air quality which can lead to behavioural changes.

- 2. Strategic measures** will be implemented within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to ensure we are able to improve air quality levels throughout the Borough, leading by example.
- 3. Reduce emissions from vehicles** is a key priority as the main source of air pollution within Stockton-on-Tees is from vehicles travelling throughout the Borough.
- 4. Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources** as these sources are known to significantly contribute to air pollution levels with domestic wood burning being the UK's largest source of particulate matter air pollution.
- 5. New developments, construction and planning** will be prioritised to ensure the design, construction, demolition of new developments can improve our levels of air pollution.

1. Policy, legislation and guidance

Air Quality and the protection of public health from air pollution is regulated through various European Directives and domestic legislation. In 1999 the Gothenburg Protocol established ceiling levels to control long-range transboundary pollutants; this was subsequently enacted into UK law via the *National Emission Ceiling Regulations 2018*¹ whilst the *European Directive 2008/50/C*² sets 'limit values' for ambient air quality which must not be exceeded.

Within UK legislation air quality emissions and levels are tightly controlled via a number of key pieces of legislation:

- ***Environmental protection Act (1990)***³ which enables Local Authorities to investigate and abate Statutory Nuisances in relation to Section 79(B) "*smoke emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance*"
- ***Clean Air Act (1993)***⁴ which prohibits dark smoke emitting from the chimneys of any building or industrial trade premises. The legislation also allows Local Authorities powers to designate Smoke Control Areas where smoke can not emit from a chimney unless an authorised fuel or 'exempt appliance' is used. Further information on Smoke Control Areas can be found at [Smoke control areas: the rules - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/smoke-control-areas)
- ***The Environment Act (1995)***⁵ which sets out Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) process including the requirement for Local Authorities to regularly review and assess air quality within their areas.
- ***The Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010)***⁶ Schedule two sets the limit values which pollutants should not exceed, the National Air Quality Objective limit values are displayed in table 1.

¹ [The National Emission Ceilings Regulations 2018](#)

² [Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council](#)

³ [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)

⁴ [Clean Air Act 1993](#)

⁵ [The Environment Act 1995](#)

⁶ [The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010](#)

- ***The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations (2016)***⁷ enacts requirements laid out within the ***Industrial Emissions Directive (2010)***⁸ which regulates emissions from industrial installations and mobile plant using Best Available Techniques (BAT).
- ***Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards (England) Regulations (2020)***⁹ places restrictions on wet wood sales for domestic burning. It also places limits on sulphur and smoke emissions from manufactured solid fuels whilst it also phases out the sale of bituminous coal.
- ***The Environment Act (2021)***¹⁰ sets long-term targets for air pollution as well as a specific targets to be set in relation to PM_{2.5}; these targets are enacted within secondary legislation via ***The Environmental Targets (Fine Particulate Matter) (England) Regulations (2023)***¹¹. The targets are:
 - an annual mean concentration target of 10 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) to be met across England by 2040 for PM_{2.5}.
 - a population exposure reduction target of 35% in population exposure by 2040 (compared to a base year of 2018).

Interim targets are to be achieved by the end of January 2028 which require:

- the highest annual mean concentration in the most recent full calendar year must not exceed 12 µg/m³ of PM_{2.5}.
- compared to 2018, the reduction in population exposure to PM_{2.5} in the most recent full calendar year must be 22% or greater.

The Environment Act (2021) also amended the *Clean Air Act (1993)*, so that from 1 May 2022:

- local authorities can issue a financial penalty for smoke emitting from a chimney in a smoke control area.
- it is an offence to sell controlled solid fuel without taking reasonable steps to notify customers it is an offence to purchase the fuel for use within a Smoke Control Area.
- financial limit on penalties has been removed for the sale of controlled fuels for delivery to a building within a Smoke Control Order.
- local authorities can extend their Smoke Control Areas to include moored vessels.

The Environment Act (2021) also amended the *Environmental Protection Act (1990)* so that:

⁷ [The Environmental Permitting \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2016](#)

⁸ [Industrial Emissions Directive 2010](#)

⁹ [Air Quality \(Domestic Solid Fuels Standards \(England\) Regulations 2020](#)

¹⁰ [The Environment Act 2021](#)

¹¹ [The Environmental Targets \(Fine Particulate Matter\) \(England\) Regulations 2023](#)

- Statutory Nuisance action can be taken for smoke emitted from a private dwelling in a smoke control area in England which is “*prejudicial to health or a nuisance*”.

UK Government published an Air Quality Strategy in 2019¹², along with an Environmental Improvement Plan in 2023¹³ whilst in 2023 the Air Quality Strategy: Framework for Local Authority Delivery¹⁴ was also published.

Guidelines for outdoor and indoor air pollution levels

The World Health Organisation (WHO) published updated guidelines¹⁵ for air quality levels in September 2021 with thresholds and limits for key pollutants that pose a risk to health. Those pollutants included Particulate Matter PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, Ozone, Nitrogen Dioxide, Sulphur Dioxide and Carbon Monoxide.

In relation to indoor air pollution the WHO published guidelines for selected pollutants in 2010¹⁶ and in 2020 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence produced guidance¹⁷ in relation to indoor air quality at home.

¹² [Clean Air Strategy 2019 - GOV.UK](#)

¹³ [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁴ [Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery](#)

¹⁵ [WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter \(PM2.5 and PM10\), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide](#)

¹⁶ [WHO guidelines for indoor air quality: selected pollutants](#)

¹⁷ [Overview | Indoor air quality at home | Guidance | NICE](#)

2. How this strategy links with other key strategies and policies

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Air Quality Strategy links with other key pieces of national, regional and local strategies and plans as illustrated below:



3. Introduction

What is air pollution?

Air pollution is the contamination of the air with a mixture of particles and gases which emit from both natural and man-made sources which can occur in two forms, these are:

Outdoor air pollution

Within Stockton-on-Tees the main sources of outdoor air pollution are from road transport vehicles, industrial and manufacturing processes, heating sources, the construction sector and agriculture activities.

Indoor air pollution

Indoor air pollution also occurs inside vehicles and buildings such as houses, workplaces and schools through dust, dirt, mould and gases¹⁸ which can be caused by cooking, heating systems, fires, solid fuel stoves, cleaning products, building products and tobacco smoke¹⁹.

Health impacts associated with air pollution

The effect of both short-term and long-term exposure to these pollutants which are often odourless and not visible can have a significant impact on the health and life expectancy of the population. Air pollution has been identified as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK²⁰ and estimates suggest that long-term exposure to air pollution accounts for an annual effect equivalent of 28,000 to 36,000 deaths per year in the UK²¹. Whilst air pollution affects everybody there are greater risks of ill-health associated with those who have pre-existing medical conditions affecting the heart and/or lungs, vulnerable members of society such as children, pregnant women and the elderly²² whilst research also suggests there are strong links between greater levels of exposure to air pollution for those living in less affluent areas²³.

¹⁸ [Air pollution at home](#)

¹⁹ [Indoor Air Quality: Air Quality Expert Group \(DEFRA\)](#)

²⁰ [Health matters: air pollution](#)

²¹ [Health matters: air pollution - GOV.UK](#)

²² [Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2022](#)

²³ [Air Quality and Social Deprivation in the UK](#)

Pollutants within the atmosphere

Within the atmosphere there are many pollutants which are contaminating the air we breathe which are produced from various forms of indoor and outdoor sources. These pollutants consist of

- Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)
- Particulate Matter (PM)
- Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)
- Ammonia (NH₃)
- Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds (NMVOCs)
- Ozone (O₃)

Whilst we aim to achieve reductions in all pollutants within the atmosphere; both Nitrogen Dioxide and Particulate Matter are pollutants of concern at a national and local level which we are prioritising.

Particulate Matter (PM)

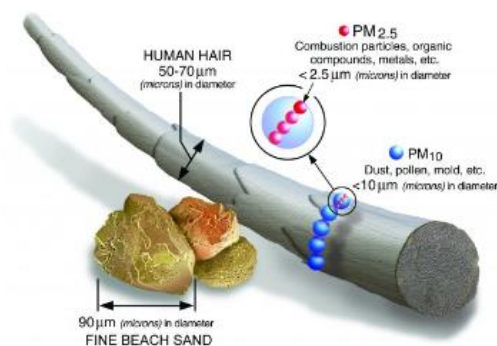


Figure 1: Size of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} particles

Particulate Matter (PM) are fine solid and liquid particles within the atmosphere. The particle size is measured by its diameter and are signified by a numerical value which represents the particle diameter in microns, it is often referred to as:

- coarse particles (PM₁₀) where particles are less than 10 microns in diameter²⁴
- fine particles (PM_{2.5}) where particles are less than 2.5 microns in diameter
- ultra fine particles (PM_{0.1}) where particles are less than 0.1 micron in diameter.

To put these values into context a PM₁₀ particle is typically smaller than the width of a single strand of human hair and a PM_{2.5} particle is a quarter of that width. The danger of such small particles is that due to their size they can enter the lungs and the smaller particles such as PM_{2.5} can pass through the lungs and enter the blood stream where they are transported around the body and can become lodged in the heart, brain and other organs²⁵.

²⁴ [Particulate Matter \(PM\) Basics](#)

²⁵ [Air quality: explaining air pollution GOV.UK](#)

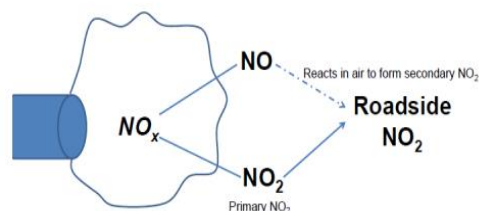
PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are typically associated with domestic wood burners and wear and tear from transport vehicles tyres and break disks, whilst PM₁₀ is also associated with dust.

Particulate Matter is a carcinogen which is a substance capable of causing cancer, notably in this case lung cancer. It is also associated with other health impacts such as causing asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), coronary heart disease, diabetes and there are emerging evidence links between air pollution and dementia.

Data suggests that Particulate Matter is attributable to 5.5% of adult deaths in Stockton-on-Tees which is slightly above the North East Region (5.4%) but below England (5.8%)²⁶. It is estimated that a 1 µg/m³ reduction in fine particulate matter could prevent approximately 50,900 cases of coronary heart disease, 16,500 strokes, 9,300 cases of asthma and 4,200 lung cancers over an 18-year period²⁷.

Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)

Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) is produced when combustion occurs with fossil fuels such as power generation, industrial processes, domestic heating and vehicles. The Nitrogen Oxide then releases into the atmosphere and reacts with other chemicals such as primary Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Nitric Oxide (NO) to produce secondary, roadside Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)²⁸.



Nitrogen Dioxide primarily affects the lungs leading to inflammation (swelling) of the airways, worsened cough and wheezing, reduced lung function, worsening asthma, and increased susceptibility to respiratory infections. Short term exposure at high concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide can also have health effects on the population such as producing coughs, excess mucus and shortness of breath²⁹. Fortunately, since the 1970s there has been an estimated 77% reduction in NO_x emissions from all sectors with approximately 83% reduction in vehicle NO_x emissions due to the introduction of catalytic convertors and tighter vehicle regulations such as Euro Standards³⁰.

Figure 2: The relationship between NO_x and NO₂

²⁶ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

²⁷ [Health matters: air pollution](#)

²⁸ [Draft Revised AQ Plan.pdf](#)

²⁹ [Health matters: air pollution - GOV.UK](#)

³⁰ [Nitrogen Oxides | National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#)

4. Monitoring air quality within Stockton-on-Tees

Air Quality levels within Stockton-on-Tees have been monitored since 1998 and since that time there has been no need to declare an Air Quality Management Area for any pollutant at any location throughout the Borough.

Monitoring is currently undertaken by real time continuous monitoring stations at Stockton A1305 and Eaglescliffe Secondary School as well as passive diffusion tubes fixed to lampposts throughout the Borough.

Continuous Monitoring Sites

The Stockton A1305 continuous monitoring site is dedicated to measuring levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}). The monitoring site at Eaglescliffe Secondary School monitors for Nitrogen Dioxide, Particulate Matter (both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Benzene. Until 2024, a third continuous monitoring site was operational at Cowpen Depot, Billingham; however, its closure was mandated by a decision beyond the control of the Local Authority. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council does not conduct monitoring for ultrafine particulate matter at any location.

These continuous monitoring sites are integral components of the Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN), a nationwide monitoring network in the UK. The sites undergo calibration every two weeks, and the data collected by these continuous monitors is available online on an hourly basis. This data is validated by an independent body and is incorporated into the Authority's Annual Status Report submitted to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The collected data facilitates assessments of hourly, 24-hourly, and annual mean values.

Passive Monitoring Techniques

In addition to continuous monitoring, passive diffusion tubes are used to measure Nitrogen Dioxide levels at 13 strategically chosen locations throughout the Borough, particularly in areas of concern or with high traffic volumes. These tubes are collected and sent to an independent laboratory for analysis, with data being made available on a monthly basis. This data is used to derive annual averages and is also included in the Authority's Annual Status Report.

5. Existing air quality data

National trends

Nitrogen Dioxide

Levels of Nitrogen Dioxide have declined on a national basis for a considerable amount of time, and this can be attributed to technological advances in the transport and energy sectors. At Urban Background sites the annual mean NO₂ concentration in 2023 was 14.2 µg/m³ which is the lowest recorded. Likewise for Roadside sites the national average is 21.8 µg/m³ which is again the lowest level recorded. Whilst Covid-19 resulted in significant improvements in air quality levels throughout 2020 due to travel restrictions, on a national level, NO₂ increased in 2021, followed by year-on-year reductions until 2023 where levels then fell to their lowest recorded level³¹.

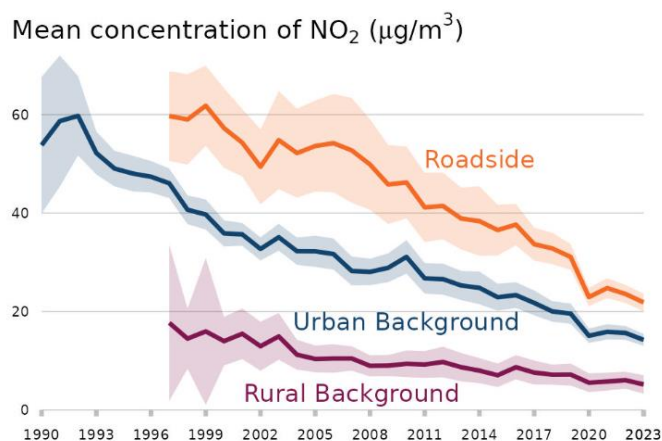


Figure 3: National average Nitrogen Dioxide trends

³¹ [Nitrogen dioxide \(NO₂\) - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/nitrogen-dioxide-no2)

Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ & PM_{2.5})

Levels of both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} have also seen significant reductions throughout the years to the present day whereby levels are continuing to follow downward trends.

The national average long-term Roadside PM₁₀ levels have declined from 36.7 µg/m³ in 1997 to 17.2 µg/m³ in 2015 where they stabilised for a number of years before reducing further in 2020. They increased slightly in 2022 before reducing to the lowest recorded levels in 2023 which was 15.2 µg/m³. The reduction in PM₁₀ is again attributed to reductions in PM₁₀ emissions particularly from road transport sources³².

National average PM_{2.5} levels follow a similar pattern to PM₁₀ levels whereby Roadside sites have reduced from 12.8 µg/m³ in 2009 to 7.7 µg/m³ in 2023 which is again the lowest levels recorded. These reductions are attributed to decreased emissions from road transport sources³³.

Figure 4: National PM_{2.5} trends

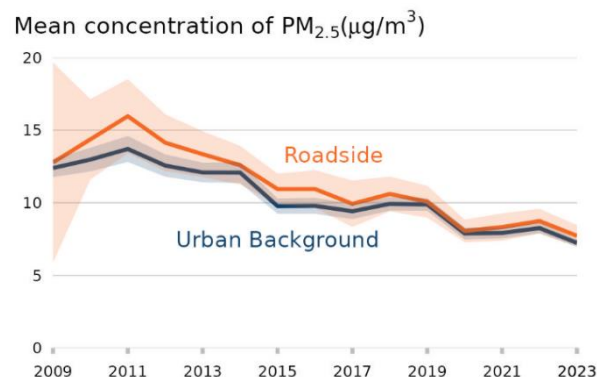
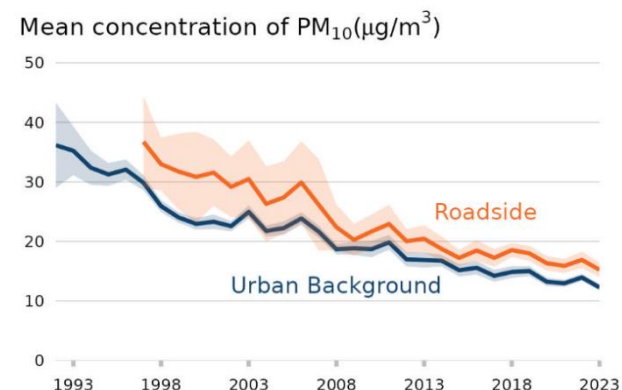


Figure 5: National PM₁₀ trends



³² [Particulate matter \(PM10/PM2.5\) - GOV.UK](#)

³³ [Particulate matter \(PM10/PM2.5\) - GOV.UK](#)

Stockton-on-Tees existing air quality data

Data collected within Stockton-on-Tees indicates a general downward trend in air pollution levels. Over the past five years, with the exception of PM₁₀ at Eaglescliffe, all monitored pollutants across various sites have shown lower values in 2023 compared to 2019. The Authority's 2024 Annual Status Report to DEFRA highlights that PM_{2.5} levels at Stockton A1305 and Eaglescliffe were the lowest ever recorded at these sites.

Additionally, PM₁₀ levels at Eaglescliffe improved compared to the previous year, and 10 out of 13 diffusion tubes demonstrated a reduction in Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations.

The full data set for Nitrogen Dioxide, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, and Benzene collected within Stockton-on-Tees over the past five years is presented in Table 2.

The highest pollution values are typically recorded at sites in close proximity to the A66 dual carriageway, which transects the Borough. These values are closely monitored, but it is important to note that pollution concentrations decrease significantly with distance. Consequently, concentrations at nearby sensitive receptors remain comfortably within legal limits.

The air quality data obtained throughout Stockton-on-Tees complies with all legal requirements and National Air Quality Objectives as outlined in Table 1. As a result, the Authority currently has no need to declare an Air Quality Management Area. The data presented below suggests that, should current trends continue, the Authority is unlikely to need to declare an Air Quality Management Area in the future.

Table 1: National air quality objectives and targets

Pollutant	Air Quality Objective/ Target	Concentration	Measured as:
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)	Air Quality Objective	200 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 18 times per year.	1-hour mean
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)	Air Quality Objective	40 µg/m ³	Annual Mean
PM₁₀	Air Quality Objective	50 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 35 times per year	24-Hour Mean
PM₁₀	Air Quality Objective	40 µg/m ³	Annual Mean
Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)	Air Quality Objective	350 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 24 times a year	1-hour mean
Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)	Air Quality Objective	125 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 3 times a year	24-hour mean
Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)	Air Quality Objective	266 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 35 times a year	15-minute mean
PM_{2.5}	2028 Interim Target	12 µg/m ³	Annual Mean
PM_{2.5}	2040 Legally Binding Target	10 µg/m ³	Annual Mean
Benzene	Air Quality Objective	5 µg/m ³	Annual Mean

Table 2: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Air Quality Data 2019- 2023




Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NO₂ (National Air Quality Objective Level-Annual Average µg/m³)	40 µg/m³				
Eaglescliffe AURN	12.5	9.4	10.7	9.8	10.2
Stockton-on-Tees A1305 AURN	17.8	12.1	14.7	13.4	15.1
Billingham AURN	16.5	13	13	12.9	12.4
Junction Road, Norton (Diffusion Tube)	N/A	14.8	17.6	15	14.8
AQM Eaglescliffe (Diffusion Tube)	12.4	10.2	10.9	9.9	10.1
Thornaby Road, Thornaby (Diffusion Tube)	22.1	18	20.1	18.8	16.8
High Street, Yarm (Diffusion Tube)	19.7	16.1	18	17.6	16.2
Green Lane, Yarm (Diffusion Tube)	N/A	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.3
High Street, Norton (Diffusion Tube)	20.6	15.1	18	16.4	15.9
Marsh House Avenue, Billingham (Diffusion Tube)	19	12.1	16.5	13.4	14.2
A66 Sun Gardens (Diffusion Tube)	34.9	25.8	35.1	28.5	26.4
A66 Yarm Road (Diffusion Tube)	40.4*	31.6	36.2	34.2	33.8
A66 Middlesbrough Road (Diffusion Tube)	34	27.5	29.6	30	27.4
St Johns Crossing, Stockton (Diffusion Tube)	28.9	22.6	25.3	22.6	23.6
Portrack Lane, Stockton (Diffusion Tube)	27	22.4	23.5	22.9	21.5
High Street, Yarm (2) (Diffusion Tube)	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.1	15.1

Table 3 continued: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Air Quality Data 2019- 2023

NO₂ (National Air Quality Objective Level- Annual number of 1-hour means exceeding 200µg/m³)	18				
Eaglescliffe AURN	0	0	0	0	0
Stockton-on-Tees A1305 AURN	0	0	0	0	0
Billingham AURN	0	0	0	0	0
PM₁₀ (National Air Quality Objective Level- Annual Average µg/m³)	40 µg/m³				
Eaglescliffe AURN	13.8	14	13.5	14.4	14
PM₁₀ (National Air Quality Objective Level- (Annual number of 24-hour means exceeding 50 µg/m³)	35				
Eaglescliffe	3	1	0	3	0
PM_{2.5} (2028 Interim Target Level µg/m³)	12 µg/m³				
PM_{2.5} (2040 Legally Binding Target Level µg/m³)	10 µg/m³				
Eaglescliffe AURN	8.4	8.2	8.3	8.6	7.8
Stockton-on-Tees A1305 AURN	8.5	8.4	7.9	8.7	7.1
Benzene (Target Level µg/m³)	5 µg/m³				
Eaglescliffe AURN	0.61	0.439	0.430	0.42	0.61

* In 2019 the A66 Yarm Road diffusion tube exceeded 40 µg/m³ from its position on the highway. Once distance correction was applied to the nearest sensitive receptors the value fall to 22.7 µg/m³ and subsequently did not exceed the National Air Quality Objective level.

6. Our current position in numbers

2 continuous monitoring locations	14 air quality assemblies delivered to over 2,400 Key Stage 2 children since the start of 2024	181,938 'contacts' for Clean Air Day since 2023*	Approximately 89.3% of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils vehicle fleet are Euro 6*	22 public charging points installed within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils district since the start of 2023*	6 electric vehicles 2 hybrid vehicles 1 electric Bus 9 alternative fuel vehicles on our fleet*
13 diffusion tube locations for Nitrogen Dioxide*				4 climate coalitions operating*	
75.18% reduction in carbon emissions since 2010*				Lowest levels of PM _{2.5} recorded in 2023 at both monitoring locations.*	
0 AQMA's declared since air quality monitoring began in the Borough				5.5% fraction of mortality attributed to particulate air pollution in Stockton-on-Tees. England value is 5.8% North East value is 5.4%*	
1 electric bin wagon 2 electric community transport vehicles*					17 anti-idling patrols at primary schools, engaging with over 140 drivers.
Reductions in NO ₂ at 10 out of 13 diffusion tube locations in 2023 compared to 2022*	Over 96% data capture rate for NO ₂ at all continuous monitoring locations for 2023*	0 exceedances of National Air Quality Objectives or Air Quality Targets*	Up to 2024 Approximately 30,000 trees have been planted*	49 Environment Agency & 65 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council regulated industrial processes operate within Stockton-on-Tees*	13 schools signed up to 'Let's Go Zero'

*Data correct up to 2024 Annual Status Report

7. How air quality impacts health within Stockton-on-Tees

The fraction of mortality attributed to particulate air pollution within Stockton-on-Tees is 5.5%; this is currently lower than the overall value for England which is 5.8% but higher than 5.4% representing the North East region. The data trend for Stockton-on-Tees demonstrates an overall improvement from 2018 data (from 5.7% to 5.5%), however since the easing of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in 2020 the data has shown an increase from 2020 to 2022³⁴. As well as impacting mortality, air pollution is a risk factor for multiple health conditions, and whilst there are other risk factors to consider for these conditions, reducing air pollution would reduce the risks for people developing the associated health conditions, and improve the quality of life for people in Stockton-on-Tees. These conditions are evidenced by data from the Public Health Outcomes Framework including:

- **Lung cancer** registrations in Stockton-on-Tees between 2017 and 2019 were 97.4 per 100,000 people, which is above the England rate (77.1 per 100,00) although below the North East region rate (104.7 per 100,00)³⁵.
- **COPD prevalence** which in 2023/24 affected 2.7% of Stockton-on-Tees' population. This is slightly less than the North East region of 2.8% but more than those affected in England (1.9%)³⁶.
- **COPD hospitalisations**. The COPD prevalence resulted in 557 per 100,000 population emergency hospital admissions for COPD in those aged 35 and above. This is higher than those in the North East region (526 per 100,000) as well as England (326 per 100,00)³⁷ highlighting the burden of COPD within Stockton-on-Tees.
- **Coronary heart disease** with Stockton-on-Tees experiencing 462.2 admissions per 100,000 population in 2022/23. This is significantly above those in England (387.1 per 100,000) and one of the highest in the North East. Prevalence data for 2023/24 also shows that prevalence is 3.6% of Stockton-on-Tees's population which is lower than the North East region of 3.8% but higher than the prevalence of England which is 3.0%³⁸.
- **Asthma** rates for 2023/24 for those aged 6 and above are high within Stockton-on-Tees. In 2023/24 the prevalence of asthma in Stockton-on-Tees was 7.6% which is higher than both the North East (7.4%) and England (6.5%)³⁹.

³⁴ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

³⁵ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

³⁶ [Respiratory disease | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

³⁷ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

³⁸ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

³⁹ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

8. Air quality and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's existing Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council launched a 10-year Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy⁴⁰ in 2022 to ensure the Authority achieves Net Zero by 2032. One of the key aspects required to achieve the Net Zero target is to reduce the air pollution emissions produced by the Authority and it is therefore recognised that the measures set out in this Strategy will play a significant role in the Authority working towards its 2032 targets.

Up to 2023/24 there has been a 75.18% reduction in carbon emissions from 2010; with a reduction of 437 tonnes of carbon in 2023/24 alone compared to the previous year. Due to the ongoing work across the Authority to reduce emissions the Authority finds itself in a promising position of meeting the 2032 target as demonstrated in Figure 6. Despite this however the Authority acknowledges that a further 881.5 tonnes of carbon need to be removed from the authority's emissions on a yearly basis.

This strategy identifies several opportunities which will assist in meeting the 2032 target through the reduction of emissions from fleet vehicles, operational service delivery and building assets.

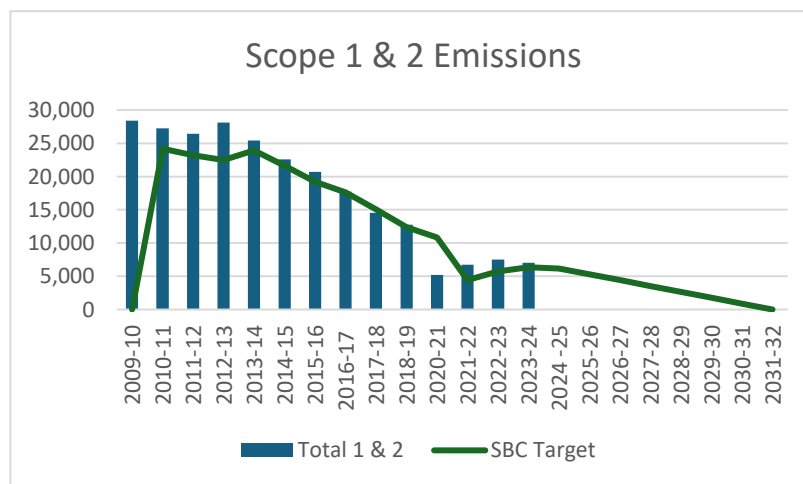


Figure 6: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council emission data and net-zero target

⁴⁰ [Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022 - 2032](#)

9. The Council's approach to this Strategy

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Council Plan 2024⁴¹ sets out five inter-connected priorities that will ensure we work together to overcome our Borough's challenges and achieve our shared vision for our communities:

- *Priority one – The best start in life to achieve big ambitions*
- *Priority two – Healthy and resilient communities*
- *Priority three – A great place to live, work and visit*
- *Priority four – An inclusive economy*
- *Priority five – A sustainable Council*

Improving air quality throughout the Borough will play a significant role in helping the Authority to achieve the aims of the Council Plan as reducing air quality will make the Borough's air safer thus protecting people from harm whilst also ensuring the Borough is a cleaner and more attractive place to live and work.

What will this strategy achieve?

The air pollution which we breathe is typically produced on a local geographical basis; whilst some air pollution can travel many miles and at times overseas, we are usually impacted by the emissions produced within our own Borough. We have therefore produced this strategy to tackle air pollution sources on a local level which if we improve will also have positive implications at a national level. We therefore aim to improve air quality levels throughout the Borough by achieving the following key objectives set out by this strategy.

Leading by example

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council intends to use this Strategy, and the measures listed within it to lead by example in reducing emissions, supporting sustainable practices and reducing our carbon footprint. Whilst the Council is in a strong position to reduce emissions throughout the Borough, a key objective is to raise awareness and promote behavioural changes which in turn will facilitate residents and businesses throughout the Borough to play their part in reducing their emissions which collectively will improve the air quality levels within our Borough.

⁴¹ [Council Plan 2024](#)

A Strategy suitable for the existing air pollution levels within Stockton-on-Tees

The measures selected for inclusion within this strategy are a proportionate response to the existing levels of air pollution experienced within Stockton-on-Tees. Although a series of further measures could be implemented which would have a positive impact on our air quality levels such as introducing clean air zones or commissioning traffic ANPR studies, it is felt that such approaches are currently unjustified at this time and would not provide value for money.

Action plan and responsibility

The Air Quality Strategy has been created following extensive rounds of internal consultation as well as consultation with key partners and members of the public. The Strategy sets out extensive measures to be achieved which is accompanied by an action plan of steps which will be implemented to achieve the measures, the department responsible for each measure and a timescale for implementation over the next five years. The action plan will be subject to on-going monitoring, and it will be the responsibility of our pre-established Air Quality Working Group who meet regularly with key stakeholders across the Authority to ensure measures are implemented in accordance with the Action Plan.

Whilst some measures are already in place there are a wide range of newly identified measures which are to be implemented from the launch of this Strategy. Measures which will have the greatest impact on our air quality levels will be prioritised for early implementation and progress on the action plan and measures will be reported on a yearly basis within our Annual Status Report submission to DEFRA.

Working in collaboration

Our Air Quality Strategy will be delivered by collaborating internally across many departments and work streams as well as externally with local partners and businesses throughout the Borough. Through collaborative working we will achieve the greatest outcomes from this strategy which will ultimately lead to the greatest improvements in air quality and the protection of the health and wellbeing of those who live, work and visit the Borough.

Strategy risks and review

The Council is subject to changes posed by extreme environmental events, economic uncertainty, local and national political landscape as well as technological, social and legal changes. Each of these changes inevitably impacts upon the priorities and commitments of the Council which in turn could impact upon the delivery of some measures listed within this strategy. The risks posed to the strategy will be kept under constant review which will be the responsibility of the Air Quality Working group. The strategy will be reviewed at three and five years to account for changes in government policy and legislation as well as considering any new opportunities.

10. Our Vision, Mission and Priorities for improving air quality



11. Our priorities to improve air quality

The priorities for our Air Quality Strategy cover five key themes. Specific measures are listed within each respective priority and an action plan for how each measure will be achieved are detailed in the action plan section of the strategy.

Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	Strategic measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nitrogen Dioxide, PM2.5 & PM10 will be monitored throughout Stockton-on-Tees We will expand our air quality monitoring network Progress relating to Air Quality levels and actions within the Air Quality Strategy will be reported Annually Our Air Quality website and corporate social media channels will become platforms for sharing data and information We will discuss indoor and outdoor air quality with food businesses when required. We will raise awareness of the risks of poor indoor air quality with best practice advice to be shared We will work with schools to raise awareness and education around air quality and sustainability We will support national campaigns whilst also creating our own air quality campaigns/ awareness sessions We will work with allotment owners to raise awareness of air quality impacts associated with bonfires We will create a training course for residents and businesses in relation to Air Quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will explore ways to reduce our carbon footprint whilst working towards Net Zero emission targets We will develop a corporate travel plan We will expand our Air Quality Working Group to ensure delivery of this Air Quality Strategy We will enhance staff knowledge in relation to indoor and environmental air quality We will apply for external funding for grants relevant to Air Quality We will consider air quality within Joint Strategic Needs Assessments We will take enforcement action and work to tackle fraud or mis-selling cases relating to green energy We will continue to implement and explore new digital technology We will produce a Green Fleet and Sustainable Procurement Strategy A total life cost will be required for vehicles being purchased or leased We will reduce emissions from events

Reduce emissions from vehicles	Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will tackle emissions from idling vehicles • We will promote the use of car lease schemes offering zero and ultra-low emission vehicles internally • We will implement local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy • We will explore ways to incentivise the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade to purchase electric and hybrid vehicles • We will work with bus operators to upgrade their fleet and reduce emissions • We will work with Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop an Electric Vehicle Strategy and implementation plan for the Tees Valley • We will reduce vehicle emissions from our Fleet • We will develop a local implementation plan as a sub-strategy to the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan • We will upgrade Urban Traffic Management Control Systems • We will promote active travel • We will invest, support and monitor the installation of new cycle route infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review Smoke Control Boundaries within the Borough • Allegations of non-compliance within Smoke Control Area will be investigated and enforcement action will be taken where appropriate • We will ensure retailers selling solid fuel for use within domestic properties display the 'Ready to Burn' logo on their products • We will engage with the farming industry to reduce agricultural emissions • We will work to minimise emissions from industrial processes which hold a Part B permit

New developments, construction and planning

- We will implement a new Local Plan with strong links to Air Quality and Environmental Sustainability
- We will utilise the planning system to ensure emissions associated with construction, demolition and operational phases of developments are minimised
- We will develop an Air Quality/ Low Emission Technical Advice Note to accompany the new Local Plan
- We will ensure chimney stacks for wood burners discharge at appropriate heights
- We will follow new national planning guidance to improve air quality

Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality

Within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council we have continuous monitoring sites and diffusion tubes which provided accurate robust data to demonstrate compliance with legal limits and the National Air Quality Objectives which have ensured an Air Quality Management Area has not been required previously.

Despite the good monitoring and good data collection we want to expand our air quality network to ensure we are assessing air quality in as many viable locations as possible throughout the Borough. Doing this will ultimately allow us to have a greater picture on air quality levels throughout the Borough, enabling a greater protection of public health and ensuring greater accuracy amongst air quality assessments by developers when they consider developing within our Borough.

We also believe it is vitally important to increase the awareness of air quality for residents and businesses to encourage behavioural change. We are therefore going to run national and local campaigns and promote air quality information on our website to raise awareness of indoor air pollution in domestic and commercial settings as well as environmental air pollution which will inform residents of the dangers which poor air quality poses to health as well as informing of potential behavioural changes which could be adopted to improve air pollution levels further.

- Nitrogen Dioxide, PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀ will be monitored throughout Stockton-on-Tees
- We will expand our air quality monitoring network
- Progress relating to Air Quality levels and actions within the Air Quality Strategy will be reported Annually
- Our Air Quality website and corporate social media channels will become platforms for sharing data and information
- We will discuss indoor and outdoor air quality with food businesses when required.
- We will raise awareness of the risks of poor indoor air quality with best practice advice to be shared
- We will work with schools to raise awareness and education around air quality and sustainability
- We will support national campaigns whilst also creating our own air quality campaigns/ awareness sessions
- We will work with allotment owners to raise awareness of air quality impacts associated with bonfires
- We will create a training course for residents and businesses in relation to Air Quality

Strategic measures

Within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council we recognise that despite our Air Quality levels being good and below National Air Quality Objectives, we have a responsibility to both lead by example and implement feasible measures to improve both our own air quality levels and those within the Borough. The Strategic measures identified range from implementing additional digital technology to reduce the need for vehicle movements throughout the Borough to producing a Green Fleet and Sustainable Procurement Strategy to reduce emissions from our fleet vehicles whilst another key measure is to enhance our workforce’s knowledge in relation to indoor and environmental air quality to ensure our staff are well informed and able to take appropriate action with regards to air quality whilst going about their day-to-day roles.

We believe that by adopting these strategic measures we will not only improve air quality measures throughout the Borough, but we will also enable further reductions of our own emissions which will assist with us meeting our net zero targets as set out by our 10 year Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy.

- We will explore ways to reduce our carbon footprint whilst working towards Net Zero emission targets
- We will develop a corporate travel plan
- We will expand our Air Quality Working Group to ensure delivery of this Air Quality Strategy
 - We will enhance staff knowledge in relation to indoor and environmental air quality
- We will apply for external funding for grants relevant to Air Quality
- We will consider air quality within Joint Strategic Needs Assessments
- We will take enforcement action and work to tackle fraud or mis-selling cases relating to green energy
 - We will continue to implement and explore new digital technology
- We will produce a Green Fleet and Sustainable Procurement Strategy
- A total life cost will be required for vehicles being purchased or leased
- We will reduce emissions from events

Reduce emissions from vehicles

The main source of air pollution within Stockton-on-Tees is from vehicle movements within our Borough. Although in recent years emissions from vehicle tailpipes have reduced due to tighter European emission standards and improved vehicle technology. Data in 2019 published by DEFRA identified that nationally 12% of all Particulate Matter and 35% of all Nitrogen Oxides are from road transport⁴².

Within Stockton-on-Tees we have identified the need to reduce emissions from vehicles and the measures listed should assist in achieving this priority. Whilst some of the measures listed relate to reducing emissions from our own Council fleet, we will also make improvements to the highways through upgrading Urban Traffic Management Control Systems and we will promoting active travel to reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

As well as emissions from moving vehicles we are also going to prioritise emissions from stationary vehicles through educational awareness campaigns. These campaigns will be undertaken at hotspot locations and where vehicle idling is within close proximity to sensitive receptors such as outside schools. An idling vehicle produces enough emissions to fill 150 balloons in one minute⁴³ and we therefore believe this is an area to be prioritised.

- We will tackle emissions from idling vehicles
- We will promote the use of car lease schemes offering zero and ultra-low emission vehicles internally
- We will implement local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy
- We will explore ways to incentivise the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade to purchase electric and hybrid vehicles
- We will work with bus operators to upgrade their fleet and reduce emissions
- We will work with Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop an Electric Vehicle Strategy and implementation plan for the Tees Valley
- We will reduce vehicle emissions from our Fleet
- We will develop a local implementation plan as a sub-strategy to the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan
- We will upgrade Urban Traffic Management Control Systems
- We will promote active travel
- We will invest, support and monitor the installation of new cycle route infrastructure

⁴² [Air quality: explaining air pollution - GOV.UK](#)

⁴³ [\[Withdrawn\] Idling drivers could face higher fines under new government crackdown - GOV.UK](#)

Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources

Although vehicle emissions are the highest source of air pollution within our Borough, emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources contribute significantly to our air pollution levels.

On a national scale in 2019 DEFRA reported that the overall proportion of:

- Particulate Matter was 38% from wood and coal burning in domestic open fires and solid fuel stoves, 13% from solvent use and industrial processes with 16% from industrial combustion.
- Nitrogen Oxide emissions were 22% from energy generation and 19% from industrial combustion.
- Sulphur Dioxide emissions were 37% from energy generation, 22% from industrial combustion and 22% from domestic burning.
- Ammonia emissions were 88% from farming practices.
- Non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) emissions were 54% from industrial emissions, 14% from agriculture and 8% from domestic and industrial combustion.⁴⁴

Domestic wood burning is a major source of air pollution and is the UK's largest source of particulate matter air pollution⁴⁵. Emissions associated with wood burning are released both into the atmosphere and within properties. In recent years legislative changes via *The Environment Act 2021* have given Local Authorities greater powers to tackle the sale of fuel for wood burning in addition to enhanced powers for non-compliance of the requirements of smoke control areas. To reduce the emissions from domestic burning we will review our existing smoke control areas which will provide greater protection to residents from the release of emissions associated with wood burning.

- We will review Smoke Control Boundaries within the Borough.
- Allegations of non-compliance within Smoke Control Area will be investigated and enforcement action will be taken where appropriate.
- We will ensure retailers selling solid fuel for use within domestic properties display the 'Ready to Burn' logo on their products.
- We will engage with the farming industry to reduce agriculture emissions.
- We will work to minimise emissions from industrial processes which hold a PartB permit.

⁴⁴ [Air quality: explaining air pollution - GOV.UK](#)

⁴⁵ [Air quality: explaining air pollution - GOV.UK](#)

New developments, construction, and planning

The construction sector is a significant contributor to air pollution especially dust emissions which are commonly associated with PM₁₀. At each stage of the construction process there is a significant opportunity for high levels of PM₁₀ to be generated and released into the air, this includes demolition of buildings, construction, earthworks, mud and dust entering the highway. There are further risks of emission to air through the plant and machinery used during the construction period.

We are therefore going to ensure that the levels of air pollution released from construction within the Borough is significantly reduced to protect the health of residents living in close vicinity to construction programmes whilst improving our air quality levels.

- We will implement a new Local Plan with strong links to Air Quality and Environmental Sustainability
- We will utilise the planning system to ensure emissions associated with construction, demolition and operational phases of developments are minimised.
- We will develop an Air Quality/ Low Emission Technical Advice Note to accompany the new Local Plan.
- We will ensure chimney stacks for wood burners discharge at appropriate heights.
- We will follow new national planning guidance to improve air quality

12. Action plan to achieve priorities

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	1	Nitrogen Dioxide, PM _{2.5} & PM ₁₀ will be monitored throughout Stockton-on-Tees.	Air quality levels will be monitored using continuous analysers.	Present to 2030	Environmental Health
			We will review all monitoring locations annually.	Annually	Environmental Health
			Should air quality levels regularly exceed National Objective values we will declare an Air Quality Management Area	Present to 2030	Environmental Health
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	2	We will expand our air quality monitoring network.	Increase the number of diffusion tubes on the air quality monitoring network.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	3	Progress relating to Air Quality levels and actions within the Air Quality Strategy will be reported annually.	Air quality levels will be reported annually within the Annual Status Report detailing current levels and trends.	Annually	Environmental Health
			Progress in relation to the actions within this strategy will be reported annually within the Annual Status Report.	Annually	Environmental Health and Air Quality Working Group
			Annual Status Reports will be publicly available following DEFRA approval.	Annually	Environmental Health

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	4	Our Air Quality website and corporate social media channels will become platforms for sharing data and information.	Information relating to high pollution forecasts and high pollution episodes will be publicised.	2025 to 2030	Comms
			We will promote the locations of Electric Vehicle charging points within our Borough.	2025 to 2030	Highways & Comms
			Hourly air quality data will be accessible via our website.	2025 to 2030	Comms
			We will promote air quality campaigns on our website and social media channels.	2025 to 2030	Comms, Environmental Health & Public Health
			We will make information available on our website relating to air quality.	2025 to 2030	Comms
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	5	We will discuss indoor and outdoor air quality with food businesses when required.	Guidance to be distributed via Environmental Health Officers during routine inspections, as required.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health and Public Health
Monitoring, reporting and increasing	6	We will raise awareness of the risks of poor	We will raise awareness of indoor air quality	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health, Public

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
awareness of air quality		indoor air quality with best practice advice to be shared.	We will work with local housing providers to offer advice, information and guidance about indoor air quality.	2025 to 2030	Health and Comms
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	7	We will work with schools to raise awareness and education around air quality and sustainability.	We will create education projects for secondary schools.	Present to 2030	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
			We will work with schools to encourage the uptake of the Let's Go Zero initiative.	Present to 2030	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
			We will deliver a Key Stage 2 educational package including assemblies, lesson plans and information for pupils and parents regarding anti-idling.	Present to 2030	Environmental Health, Public Health
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	8	We will support national campaigns whilst also creating our own air quality campaigns/ awareness sessions.	We will create and run our own campaigns as well as national campaigns for example bonfire night, anti-idling, indoor air pollution, Clean Air Day etc.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health, Public Health and Comms
			Campaigns will be delivered in-person and/ or on social media.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health, Public Health, Events and Comms

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
			We will raise awareness of the risks associated with air quality, to those who drive vehicles for a living e.g. hackney carriage and private hire driver as well as undertake taxi fleet driver training.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health, Public Health, Licensing and Comms
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	9	We will work with allotment owners to raise awareness of air quality impacts associated with bonfires.	Work with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council allotment sites	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health
			Work with non-Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council allotment sites.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health
Monitoring, reporting and increasing awareness of air quality	10	We will create a training course for residents and businesses in relation to Air Quality.	Create training course relating to air quality to raise awareness and promote behaviour changes.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health, Public Health, Learning & Skills
Strategic measures	11	We will explore ways to reduce our carbon footprint whilst working towards Net Zero emission targets	We will undertake a programme of improvement works on our built assets to reduce running costs and enhance energy efficiency performance.	2024 to 2030	Place Development
			We will continue to promote the use of solar energy in our projects.	2024 to 2030	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
			We will implement measures set out in our <i>Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy</i> .	2024 to 2030	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
			We will run Green Champions workshops to share good practice, promote sustainability in the workplace, reduce carbon emissions and engage other members of staff.	Present	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
Strategic measures	12	We will develop a corporate travel plan	We will develop a corporate travel plan and adopt sustainable transport methods.	2024 to 2026	Highways
Strategic measures	13	We will expand our Air Quality Working Group to ensure delivery of this Air Quality Strategy.	We will expand the Air Quality Working Group to ensure more Council services engage with reducing air quality levels and create sustainable changes for the Authority and residents.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health
			Members of the Air Quality Working group own actions within this Strategy which are to be implemented.	2025 to 2030	All
Strategic measures	14	We will enhance staff knowledge in relation to indoor and environmental air quality.	A mandatory air quality training package will be created for all Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council employees.	2025 to 2030	Env. H, Public Health & Learning and Development
			We will report to Health & Wellbeing Board on key updates relating to air quality.	2025 to 2030	Env. H & Public Health.

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Strategic measures	15	We will apply for external funding for grants relevant to Air Quality.	We will apply for grants such as DEFRA's Air Quality Grant to enhance awareness and/ or monitoring of air quality throughout the Borough.	2024 to 2030	Air Quality Working Group members
Strategic measures	16	We will consider air quality within Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.	We will consider air quality within Joint Strategic Needs Assessments	2024 to 2030	Council Wide, Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Board
Strategic measures	17	We will take enforcement action and work to tackle fraud or mis-selling cases relating to green energy.	We will investigate cases of fraud or mis-selling of green energy such as solar panels or heat pumps. Enforcement action will be taken in accordance with our Enforcement policy.	2024 to 2030	Trading Standards
Strategic measures	18	We will continue to implement and explore new digital technology.	New digital technology will be implemented for staff and service users which will reduce the number of vehicle trips throughout the Borough.	2024 to 2030	Digital Transformation
Strategic measures	19	We will produce a Green Fleet and Sustainable Procurement Strategy.	We will produce a Green Fleet Strategy and Sustainable Procurement Strategy.	2025 to 2030	Fleet and Air Quality Working Group

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Strategic measures	20	A total life cost will be required for vehicles being purchased or leased.	We will request all potential suppliers to submit a total life cost (TLC) for vehicles being purchased or leased.	2025 to 2030	Fleet
Strategic measures	21	We will reduce emissions from events	The Council's Event Service will endeavour to utilise local suppliers, where procurement policies allow, to reduce the carbon footprint.	2025 to 2030	Events
			The Council's Events Service will endeavour where possible to procure technical suppliers that offer the use of Solar and HVO generators to reduce the carbon impact to events delivery.	2025 to 2030	Events
			The Council will request, via the online 'Events on Council Land application' information on how the organisers event, will not adversely affect air quality.	2025 to 2030	Events
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	22	We will tackle emissions from idling vehicles	An anti-idling strategy will be created for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council regarding fleet vehicles and contractors	2025 to 2030	Air Quality Working Group
			Where applicable, new vehicles on Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's fleet will be fitted with anti-idling equipment.	2025 to 2030	Fleet

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
			Large contracts awarded through procurement will include a 'no vehicle engine idling' stipulation.	2025 to 2030	Procurement
			We will work with bus and coach operators to reduce unnecessary vehicle idling.	2025 to 2030	Highways
			We will undertake educational patrols in relation to idling in hotspot locations such as schools, taxi ranks, coach drop off points etc.	2024 to 2030	Environmental Health & Civic Enforcement
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	23	We will promote the use of car lease schemes offering zero and ultra-low emission vehicles internally.	We will promote the use of car lease schemes offering zero and ultra-low emission vehicles internally.	Present to 2030	Human Resources
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	24	We will implement local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy	We will implement local Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which requires the replacement of older vehicles for newer vehicles.	Present to 2030	Licensing
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	25	We will explore ways to incentivise the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade	We will explore ways to incentivise the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade to purchase electric and hybrid vehicles.	2024 to 2030	Licensing

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
		to purchase electric and hybrid vehicles.			
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	26	We will work with bus operators to upgrade their fleet and reduce emissions.	We will work with bus operators to introduce more green/ electric vehicles within Stockton-on-Tees highway infrastructure.	2024 to 2030	Highways
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	27	We will work with Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop an Electric Vehicle Strategy and implementation plan for the Tees Valley	We will work with Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop an Electric Vehicle Strategy and implementation plan for the Tees Valley	2025 to 2030	Highways

Reduce emissions from Vehicles	28	We will reduce vehicle emissions from our Fleet	We will reduce emissions from our fleet by following the five priority measures listed below:		
			1. We will reduce the number of vehicles within our fleet, and we will challenge the need for new vehicles.	From 2025	Fleet
			2. We will increase the number of electric vehicles within our fleet. Where any council department requires a fleet vehicle, they shall have at least one electric vehicle in their fleet by 2030 (if technology available meets the operational needs and budget)	From 2025	Fleet
			3. We will replace Fleet vehicles to the latest Euro Emission Standard if electric vehicle is not an option.	From 2025	Fleet
			4. Diesel vehicles will be purchased or leased if there are no low or zero emission options available that meet operational needs, have appropriate infrastructure available and can be purchased within available budget.	From 2025	Fleet

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
			5. All non-electric/ emission producing fleet vehicles will be subject to a 5% yearly fuel consumption reduction target for each Council department.	From 2025	Fleet
			We will work to remove all diesel vehicles from the Councils fleet where appropriate/ green technology meets operational requirements in-line with the Council's Net Zero and Carbon Reduction Policy.	From 2025	Fleet
			Promote behavioural change, reducing mileage, size of fleet, optimise vehicle resources across departments.	From 2025	Fleet
			We will use technology to carryout checks, audits and inspections to reduce unnecessary journeys.	2025 to 2030	Fleet
			We will consider using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel in our current fleet.	2025 to 2030	Fleet

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	29	We will develop a local implementation plan as a sub-strategy to the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan	We will write and consult on a local implementation plan for Stockton-on-Tees.	2024 to 2025	Highways
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	30	We will upgrade Urban Traffic Management Control Systems	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council will work to upgrade Urban Traffic Management Control Systems which will allow the implementation of traffic management schemes and strategies which reduce traffic congestion and air quality.	Present to 2026	Highways
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	31	We will promote active travel	We will promote active travel to reduce road emissions.	2024 to 2030	Highways, Public Health, Fleet and Comms.
			To continue promoting the work of The Active Travel Hub which supports cycle and walking routes.	2024 to 2025	Highways, Public Health and Comms.
Reduce emissions from Vehicles	32	We will invest, support and monitor the installation of new cycle route infrastructure.	We will invest in and monitor the installation of new cycle routes to reduce road emissions.	Present to 2030	Highways

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources	33	We will review Smoke Control Boundaries within the Borough.	Identify areas where significant development has taken place outside of existing smoke control areas and where necessary either create new smoke control areas or expand existing smoke control areas.	2025-2030	Environmental Health
Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources	34	Allegations of non-compliance within Smoke Control Area will be investigated and enforcement action will be taken where appropriate.	Enforcement action will be followed in accordance with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Enforcement Policy where advice and education is unsuccessful and there is continual non-compliance in relation to the requirements of a Smoke Control Area.	2025-2030	Environmental Health
Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources	35	We will ensure retailers selling solid fuel for use within domestic properties display the 'Ready to Burn' logo on their products.	We will undertake inspections of retailers to ensure the 'Ready to Burn' logo is on solid fuel.	Ongoing to 2030	Environmental Health
			We will take enforcement action in accordance with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Enforcement Policy for repeated non-compliance.	Ongoing to 2030	Environmental Health
Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources	36	We will engage with the farming industry to reduce agriculture emissions.	We will encourage farmers to follow the Code of Good Agriculture Practice for Reducing Ammonia Emissions produced by DEFRA.	2025-2030	Environmental Health

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
Reduce emissions from domestic, industrial and agricultural sources	37	We will work to minimise emissions from industrial processes which hold a Part B permit.	Undertake a programme of inspections and respond to complaints.	Present to 2030	Environmental Health
			Take appropriate enforcement action for repeated non-compliance.	Present to 2030	Environmental Health
			Permits will be reviewed and updated following new "Best Available Techniques" or updated Process Guidance Notes released by DEFRA	When Applicable	Environmental Health
			We will work with industries including those who hold a Part B permit to educate and where required assist with achieving net zero.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health & Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
New developments, construction and planning	38	We will implement a new Local Plan with strong links to Air Quality and Environmental Sustainability	A new local plan will be created which will detail requirements for planning applications for developers in relation to air quality.	2025 to 2030	Planning
New developments, construction and planning	39	We will utilise the planning system to ensure emissions associated with construction, demolition and operational	Low emission strategies for construction sites will be requested to reduce emissions from Non-Road Mobile Machinery during both planning application and/ or Section 61 applications.	2025 to 2030	Environmental Health

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
		phases of developments are minimised.	New developments will incorporate good neighbourhood design to minimise vehicle journeys.	2025 to 2030	Place Development
			We will promote the use of Heat Pumps on new developments via the planning system.	Present to 2030	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
			We will encourage the provision of Electric Vehicle charging points in new developments.	Present to 2030	Env, Leisure and Green Infrastructure
			We will request air quality assessments and mitigation measures for developments and demolitions which will likely impact upon air quality levels.	Present to 2030	Environmental Health
			We will review and update our air quality planning conditions.	Annually	Environmental Health
New developments, construction and planning	40	We will develop an Air Quality/ Low Emission Technical Advice Note to accompany the new Local Plan.	We will utilise local air quality data to develop a Technical Note to accompany the local plan. The note will include the use of shelter belts to reduce emissions of particulates and minimise erosion which may be funded through grants from the Woodland Trust	2025 to 2030	Planning

Priority	No	Strategy action	How will action be achieved?	Timescale	Responsibility
New developments, construction and planning	41	We will ensure chimney stacks for wood burners discharge at appropriate heights.	To assess applications where chimneys are proposed to ensure smoke dispersal at 1 metre above the height of the eaves of a building.	Present to 2030	Environmental Health
New developments, construction and planning	42	We will follow new national planning guidance to improve air quality	We will ensure new developments are considered in accordance with any new national planning policies or guidance relating to air quality.	Present to 2030	Planning

13. Contact us

If you would like a copy of this document in another format or language or require any advice or guidance on Air Quality:

Visit: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6BJ

Call: 01642 526575

Email: Environmental.Health@Stockton.gov.uk

Visit: www.stockton.gov.uk



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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 17th July 2025

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Lisa Evans

UPDATE OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COUNCIL'S HOTEL COMPANY

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval to update the governance arrangements for the Council's wholly owned hotel company, Stockton Hotels Company Ltd, and its parent company, Stockton Borough Holding Company Ltd. The proposed changes are intended to update the Council's role as shareholder, further strengthen board composition through the introduction of independent expertise and establish a single, Shareholders' Agreement to codify key controls and expectations.

The measures will reinforce oversight and reflect good practice in the governance of local authority trading companies.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

The proposals represent a strengthening of the Council's governance of its trading companies. By updating shareholder arrangements and enhancing board capability, the Council will ensure that its hotel company structure remains robust, accountable and aligned with its objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the development of a new Shareholders' Agreement covering both Stockton Borough Holding Company Ltd (HoldCo) and Stockton Hotels Company Ltd (HotelCo);
2. Confirm that the Council's shareholder representative shall continue to be the officer exercising the statutory Section 151 responsibilities, following the retirement of the previous postholder;
3. Approve the proposed enhancement of the HotelCo board through the appointment of independent non-executive directors with relevant commercial or hospitality experience;
4. Agree to appoint Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth as a council appointed director of each company;
5. Delegate authority to the Director of Corporate Services, the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive to finalise the Shareholders' Agreement in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

DETAIL

1. The Council is the sole shareholder in HoldCo, which in turn wholly owns HotelCo. HotelCo operates the Hampton by Hilton hotel at Northshore under a franchise agreement. The hotel is owned by the Council (subject to a 250 lease) and operated by Ambridge (formerly

Interstate) under a third-party management agreement. Since opening, the hotel has performed in line with expectations and remains self-financing. Its primary purpose described in the original repos establishing the Hotel has always been regeneration, anchoring the wider Northshore development, attracting inward investment, and creating local employment.

2. The current governance arrangements have enabled the companies to operate effectively since their establishment. However, as part of the Council's ongoing management of its company structures, the opportunity has been taken to strengthen aspects of the framework by introducing a formal Shareholders' Agreement and considering the addition of independent representation on the board. These changes are intended to improve the effectiveness of the overall governance arrangements, while remaining proportionate and fit for purpose.

Shareholder Role and Representation

3. In accordance with the Council's Constitutional arrangements and company law, the Council acts as the corporate shareholder for both HoldCo and HotelCo. The Section 151 Officer has undertaken the role of shareholder representative on behalf of the Cabinet. It is proposed that this arrangement continue, with the recent retirement of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance, it is proposed that the responsibilities continue to be discharge by the Section 151 Officer, this ensures continuity and reflects established practice across the sector.
4. The shareholder representative is responsible for exercising the Council's voting rights, attending general meetings, and overseeing shareholder-reserved matters. This role is exercised under Cabinet delegation. This approach is consistent with governance models used by other local authorities.

Board Composition

5. Currently, Directors of both companies are appointed by the Council (by Cabinet as an executive function) in its capacity as shareholder or directly by the company boards. While the Articles of Association permit directors to make appointments, the Council retains the right to remove any director which it has appointed directly, or which has been appointed by the company board.
6. Currently, all directors are Council officers. To enhance board capability and introduce external challenge, it is proposed that HotelCo appoint at least one independent non-executive director with relevant sectoral experience.
7. This approach is widely adopted in other council-owned companies and will bring valuable commercial insight to the board. It is proposed that appointments will be made by the shareholder, with costs (if any) met from company resources.
8. Because the shareholder representative cannot also serve as a company director, and the Section 151 Officer role also presents a conflict of interest, the Acting Section 151 Officer has stepped down from the boards of both companies. To ensure continued Council representation, it is proposed that Tracey Carter, Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, be appointed as a director of both companies.

Shareholders' Agreement

9. A new single Shareholders' Agreement is proposed to govern both HoldCo and HotelCo. This agreement will be entered into by the Council (as shareholder of HoldCo), HoldCo (as shareholder of HotelCo), and HotelCo.
10. The agreement will complement the companies' Articles of Association and will define:
 - Shareholder-reserved matters;
 - Business planning and reporting requirements;

- Board governance and director expectations;
- Dividend policy and financial oversight;
- Dispute resolution mechanisms;
- Exit and winding-up provisions;
- Confidentiality and intellectual property protections.

Key provisions will include:

Reserved Matters

- Approval of business plans and budgets;
- Entry into significant financial commitments;
- Director appointments and removals;
- Structural changes or asset disposals;
- Creation of subsidiaries or joint ventures.

Business Planning and Reporting

- Annual business plan submission and approval;
- Quarterly performance and financial reporting;
- Year-end financial statements.

Board Governance

- Appointment and removal procedures;
- Inclusion of independent non-executive directors;
- Standards of conduct and conflict of interest protocols.

Dividend Policy

- Annual review of dividends, subject to financial sustainability;
- Reinvestment priorities to be considered before distributions.

Dispute Resolution

- Structured mechanisms for resolving shareholder-company disagreements.

Exit and Winding-Up

- Asset reversion to the Council;
- Dormancy provisions.

Confidentiality and IP

- Protection of commercially sensitive information;
- Retention of Council-owned intellectual property.

11. These provisions reflect sector good practice and are designed to balance effective shareholder control with appropriate arm's length operational autonomy for the companies.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

12. The proposals set out in this report relate to internal governance arrangements for the Council's wholly owned hotel company and its holding company. The report does not introduce any new service, policy, or change to the delivery of services that would have a direct or differential impact on members of the public or specific communities.

13. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has not been undertaken, as the proposals do not affect service delivery or involve decisions that would engage the Public Sector Equality Duty in a material way.
14. The hotel continues to operate on a self-financing basis under a management agreement and is open to all residents and visitors. There are no changes proposed to the hotel's operations, accessibility, or customer-facing policies as part of these governance updates.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

15. The proposals in this report relate to governance arrangements for the Council's wholly owned hotel company and its holding company. There are no direct implications for the Council's role as a corporate parent, and the report does not affect services or policies relating to children in our care.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The proposals in this report do not entail any new or additional expenditure. Stockton Hotels Company Ltd is already operational and financially self-financing, with no further capital or revenue funding required from the Council as part of the governance refresh.
17. Any minor costs arising from the implementation of the revised governance arrangements – such as legal advice on the Shareholders' Agreement or the appointment of a non-executive director – will be met from within existing resources. Where costs are related to the company's operations, they will be absorbed by HotelCo within its existing revenue budget.
18. There are no implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as a result of this report. No new budget provision is required, and the Council is not exposed to new financial commitments.
19. The governance framework, including the Shareholders' Agreement and the enhanced reporting mechanisms, is intended to support financial oversight and safeguard the Council's investment in the hotel company over the longer term. It provides a platform to ensure any future returns – including dividends or repayment of shareholder loans – are monitored and managed appropriately.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The Council has the legal power to own and operate trading companies under the Local Government Act 2003 (Section 95), supported by the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011. Stockton Hotels Company Ltd and its holding company, Stockton Borough Holding Company Ltd, are both wholly owned by the Council and were established in compliance with these statutory powers.
21. The proposed Shareholders' Agreement is consistent with these powers and will operate alongside the Articles of Association of both companies. It does not alter the companies' legal status but formalises the relationship between the Council (as shareholder) and its companies by clarifying governance arrangements, reserved matters, and decision-making processes.
22. Under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, the exercise of the Council's shareholder rights in a wholly owned company is an executive function, and therefore a matter for Cabinet. The proposals in this report are therefore properly within Cabinet's remit.
23. Legal Services will be involved in drafting and finalising the Shareholders' Agreement to ensure it aligns with company law, the Council's constitution, and public law principles.

RISK ASSESSMENT

24. Stockton Hotels Company Ltd operates as a wholly owned company within the Council's ownership, but at arm's length from day-to-day Council operations. This structure enables the company to function with commercial autonomy while ensuring that the Council retains strategic control through its role as shareholder.
25. The Council's role is not to directly manage the company but to oversee its performance and protect the public interest through defined governance arrangements. The use of a holding company, shareholder reserved matters, and periodic reporting all contribute to an appropriate balance of operational independence and strategic accountability.
26. The periodic review and updating of governance documentation – including the Shareholders' Agreement and shareholder representation – forms part of the Council's broader risk management framework. These arrangements are specifically designed to ensure the Council is appropriately protected from financial, legal and reputational risks arising from the trading activity of its subsidiary.
27. The proposals set out in this report are categorised as **low to medium risk**. The refresh of governance arrangements further reduces risk by providing greater clarity over roles, decision-making thresholds, and escalation procedures. Existing oversight mechanisms and routine management systems remain sufficient to control and mitigate residual risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

28. This report does not relate to a specific geographic ward and therefore does not directly affect any individual ward or its elected members.
29. As the subject matter concerns corporate governance arrangements for Council-owned companies, consultation has taken place with relevant Cabinet Members and senior officers. No direct ward councillor consultation has been required under the terms of the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following documents have been relied on, in preparing this report:

North Shore Hotel – Report to Cabinet, 16 February 2016

North Shore Hotel – Report to Cabinet, 19 May 2016

These documents are available for inspection on the Council's website and at the Council's offices in accordance with access to information requirements.

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 JULY 2025

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio Title - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

Car Parking Charges

SUMMARY

In October 2024, Cabinet made the decision to remove the first free hour of car parking across Council owned car parks in Stockton and Yarm. The decision to remove the free hour was taken with the aim of balancing the need to cover the costs of maintaining and managing car parking, with the desire to ensure our town centres remain attractive to shoppers.

At that October meeting a commitment was also made to reviewing the new arrangements to consider the impact on residents, visitors, and council finances.

At the May 2025 Full Council meeting, a motion was passed which recommended that Cabinet consider reversing this decision in respect of Yarm. As the policy decision applies to both Stockton and Yarm, and as there was an earlier Cabinet commitment to review the impact across both towns, this report sets out the suggested scope for the review of charges, including consideration of impacts to businesses and residents.

The report also outlines the actions taken to mitigate any negative impact and the initial findings in relation to car park occupancy and footfall, as context for the review.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

To enable Cabinet to respond to the motion approved at May 2025 Full Council relating to the removal of the free hour car parking in Yarm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet notes the initial data in relation to parking in Yarm and Stockton and approves the scope of the review of car park charges set out in this report.

DETAIL

Context

1. At the Full Council meeting in May 2025, a motion was presented calling for the first hour charge to be removed in Yarm. According to the Draft Minutes of the May Council meeting Council resolved the following;

'That given the strength of feeling and lack of support for these new parking charges, that the matter is referred to Cabinet to reconsider this matter. Cabinet is requested to consult fully with local businesses on the parking charges to understand the full implication of the parking charge policy on our high street.

Following this engagement, the recommendation to Cabinet is to reverse the new policy and revert back to the original first 1-hour free model.'

2. The decision taken by Cabinet that this resolution relates to, was brought forward as part of a programme of improvement, efficiency and cost saving initiatives within the wider 'Powering our Future programme.
3. Powering Our Future is the Council's Strategic Planning Framework, agreed by Cabinet in July 2023. The Transformation Mission is a key element of this, focused on new and innovative ways of working that are better for communities and more efficient. An initial programme of reviews was agreed by Cabinet in January 2024, which included a review of Fees and Charges.
4. The Transformation Review of Fees and Charges, undertaken in 2024, culminated in the October Cabinet report which made recommendations in relation to School Catering Service charges, Adult Social Care charges and Car Parking Charges.
5. The Car Parking Charges element of the report highlighted the widening gap between the resources needed to maintain and operate car parks, and the income generated through parking charges. To enable investment in car parks and reduce the Council's financial pressures, the reintroduction of charges for the first hour was proposed.
6. Different pricing options were illustrated and the report highlighted comparisons with charges in other parts of the Tees Valley. The proposed charge for the first three hours was predicted to be the lowest in the conurbation.
7. Alongside the charges, there was a commitment to upgrade ticket machines to accept card payments, with the cost of this work being covered by the additional ticket income. The report also set out the commitment to review the impact of the car park charges on residents, visitors and Council finances.
8. Following the approval at Cabinet, the implementation process for the removal of the free hour followed all relevant statutory processes, including the publication of statutory notices and on-site signage. The changes to the car parking charges in both Stockton and Yarm were also publicised through a press release issued to local media and via the Council's social media channels in the weeks leading up to the change.
9. Dialogue with business representatives in Yarm highlighted concerns about the necessity for effective enforcement, reflecting a belief that many people were parking for long periods without paying, occupying spaces that might otherwise have been available for shoppers.
10. In response, after the removal of the free hour, additional enforcement patrols were introduced and all parking machines were upgraded to include card payments. Regular maintenance checks are carried out to ensure these are in good working order and any that are not can be repaired as soon as possible.
11. Concerns were also expressed about the resident parking permits, reflecting a perception that an increase in home working may have resulted in a significant number of the available parking spaces being occupied during weekdays by residents.

12. There are currently two residents parking schemes operational in Yarm town centre: Yarm High Street and Yarm Town Centre West. These zones operate between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Saturday, excluding Bank Holidays. There are currently 76 active Resident Permits and 298 short stay spaces on Yarm High Street. Some additional bays are also being installed in High Church Wynd.
13. There are many short and medium-term factors that might affect visitor and customer behaviours in Yarm and our other towns, such as the dates on which school holidays fall, the weather, road works, events, sales and retailer promotions etc. For these reasons care must be taken when correlating car parking charges with wider perceptions and anecdotal information.
14. The original proposal for the removal of the first hour free parking included a recommended review after a year, to allow a sufficient period of data for the reduction of the affects of short-term changes. However, for the purpose of this report, data has been collated for the 4-month period from the introduction of the charges to the end of May 2025. This period has been compared with the same 4 months in 2024. In some cases it has also been possible to show data for the same 4-month period in 2023.
15. Provisional data on car parking, footfall and dwell time for the period in question is attached in the appendices. Car parking figures are derived from ticket machines and as such is a reliable mechanical record of tickets sold and the duration of tickets purchased. The footfall and dwell time data is provided by Visitor Insights, an independent market intelligence company. The data is derived from GPS information captured via phones, smart watches and similar devices.
16. Footfall and dwell time data has also been collated for all five towns within the Borough, to allow comparisons between the towns that have had changes in car parking charges and those that have remained constant. However, it should be noted that it is not possible to provide data on car parking levels in towns in which Stockton Council doesn't own and run car parks, therefore the use of other towns as a control data set for the parking ticket information is not an option.
17. In summary, the parking ticket data shows a decrease in total tickets issued in Yarm, from c.100,000 tickets in 2024 to c.75,000 in 2025. However, the 2024 total included 66,000 free hour tickets. The number of ticket issued doesn't necessarily equate to number of cars parked as anecdotal reports suggested that some drivers were putting successive free 1-hour tickets onto their cars, rather than paying for a longer parking period.
18. For the same period in Stockton Town Centre, the number of tickets increased from c. 187,000 to c.197,000
19. The footfall data shows that footfall in Yarm and Stockton has been higher in every month since the removal of the free first hour of parking, than in the corresponding month in 2023 and 2024.
20. Dwell time data from the same source shows that dwell time has been lower every month since the removal of the free first hour of parking, than in the corresponding month in 2023 and 2024.
21. When comparing footfall data between Yarm, Stockon and the other towns within the Borough, there is a strong correlation, with all towns showing an overall increase in footfall over the period in question. This would appear to undermine any connection between the removal of the free first hour and town centre footfall as the towns that did not experience any changes in parking charges experienced similar growth in visitor numbers as those in which the free first hour was removed.

22. These provisional findings are included to show the context in which the proposed review is framed, they should not be taken as proof in themselves of any impact, or absence of impact, of changes in car parking charges. A more detailed and extensive review, incorporating feedback from various stakeholders is suggested.

Scope of review

23. In response to the Council resolution that the Cabinet reconsider its earlier decision on parking charges, it is proposed that a review is undertaken of car parking charges. This will relate to those town centre car parks owned and managed by Stockton Council, ie those in Yarm and Stockton.
24. The review should provide an analysis of car parking occupancy levels and ticket income for the period since the removal of the first free hour, compared to the same period in 2023/24(where possible). It should provide an indication of the costs of managing and enforcement for the period and for the sites in question.
25. Taking the same period, where data is available, the review should compare footfall for the town centre shopping areas. Where possible, and reflecting the provisional data already collated, it would be useful to provide bench marking of footfall trends in other local towns over the same period, for comparison purposes.
26. Comparator figures should also be collated for car parking charges in other towns in the Tees Valley and in towns that might be competitors for the customers using Stockton and Yarm businesses.
27. Consultation should be carried out with businesses and those affected by car parking charges across the two sites. This consultation should aim to capture information about trading and anecdotal information that relates to factors that might be perceived to affect town centre viability.
28. The review report will offer options in relation to charging levels and durations, including options for permits.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

29. There are no implications arising from this report, although there may be implications arising from the conclusions and recommendations of the review which is proposed within this report. They will be assessed within the scope of the review in question and outlined in any subsequent report.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

30. There are no implications arising from this report, although there may be implications arising from the conclusions and recommendations of the review which is proposed within this report. They will be assessed within the scope of the review in question and outlined in any subsequent report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

31. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

32. There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report

RISK ASSESSMENT

33. This Car Parking Charges report and the suggested review of the Cabinet's earlier decision to remove the free first hour parking in Stockton and Yarm, is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

34. The Member Engagement was carried out in relation to the Powering our Futures Programme and Transformation Review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Footfall and dwell time data Appendix 1
Car parking ticket information Appendix 2

Petition on Yarm car parking charges
Powering our Future – Programme Update October 2024, Cabinet Report

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Footfall and Dwell Time Data from Visitor Insights

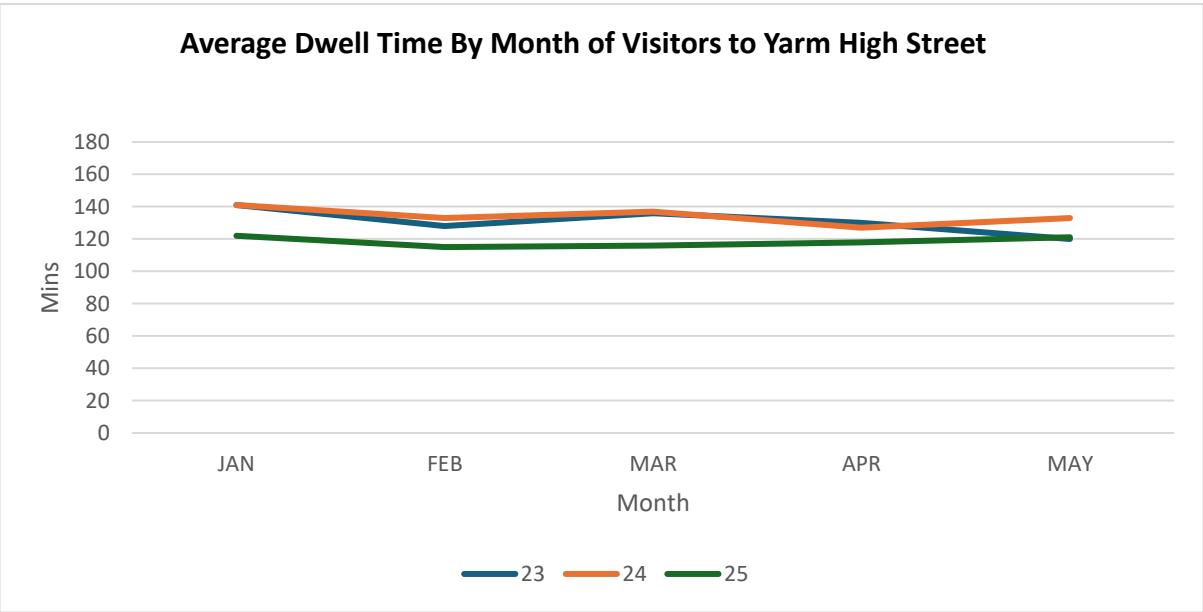
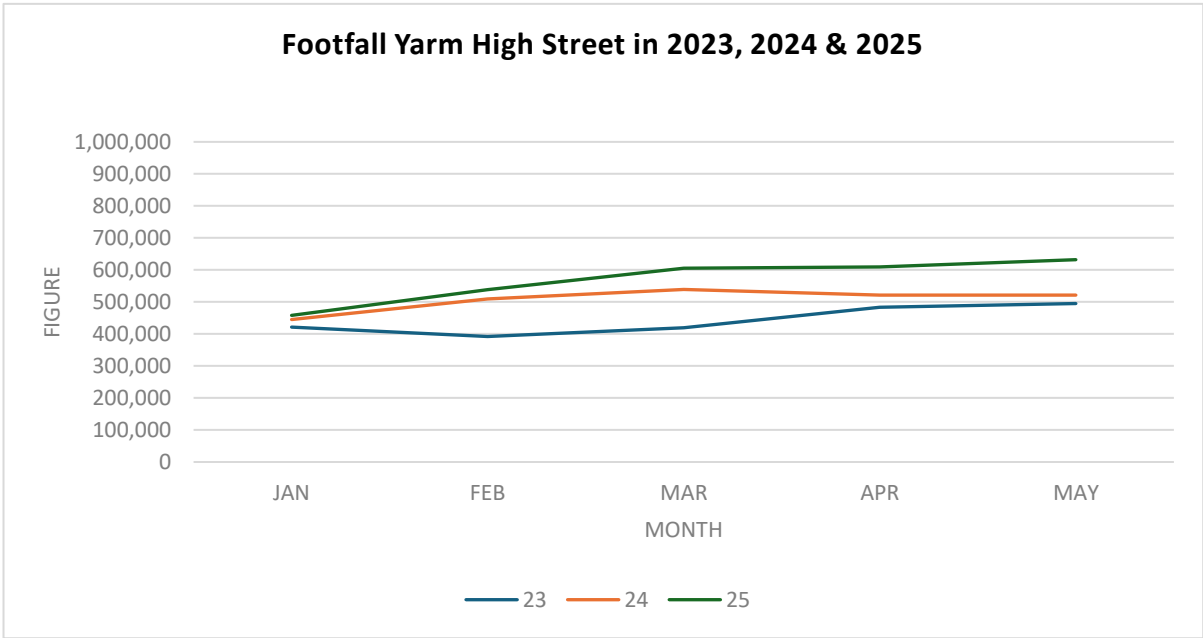
Visitor Insights collect GPS coordinate data, gathered by application publishers on hand-held devices. Predominately phones, though can be Fitbits and Smart Watches.

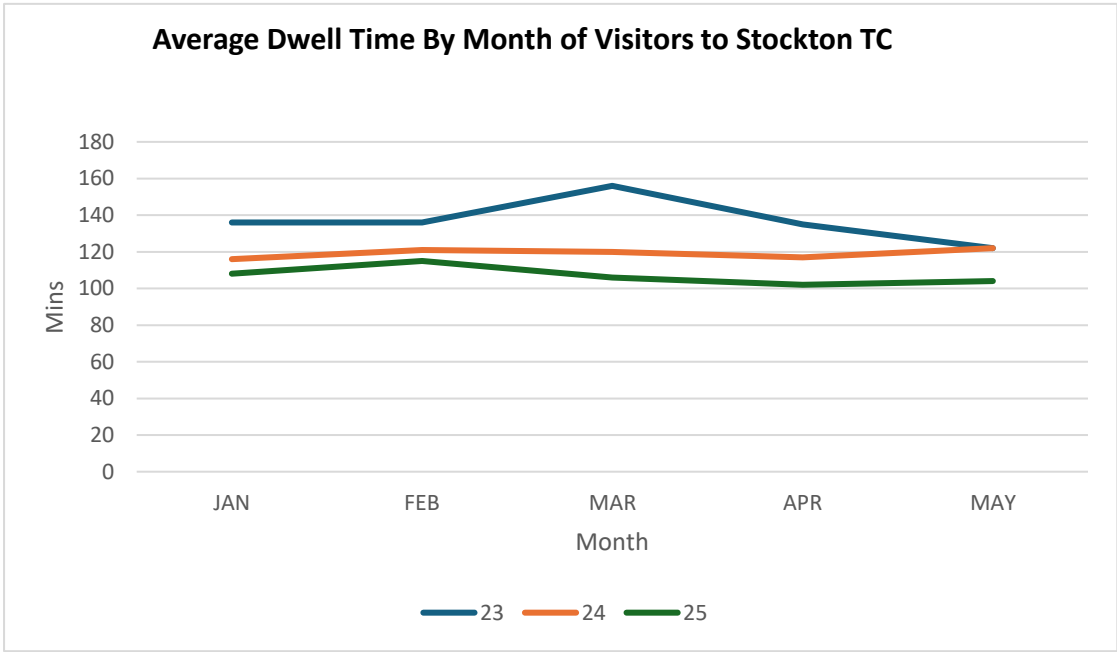
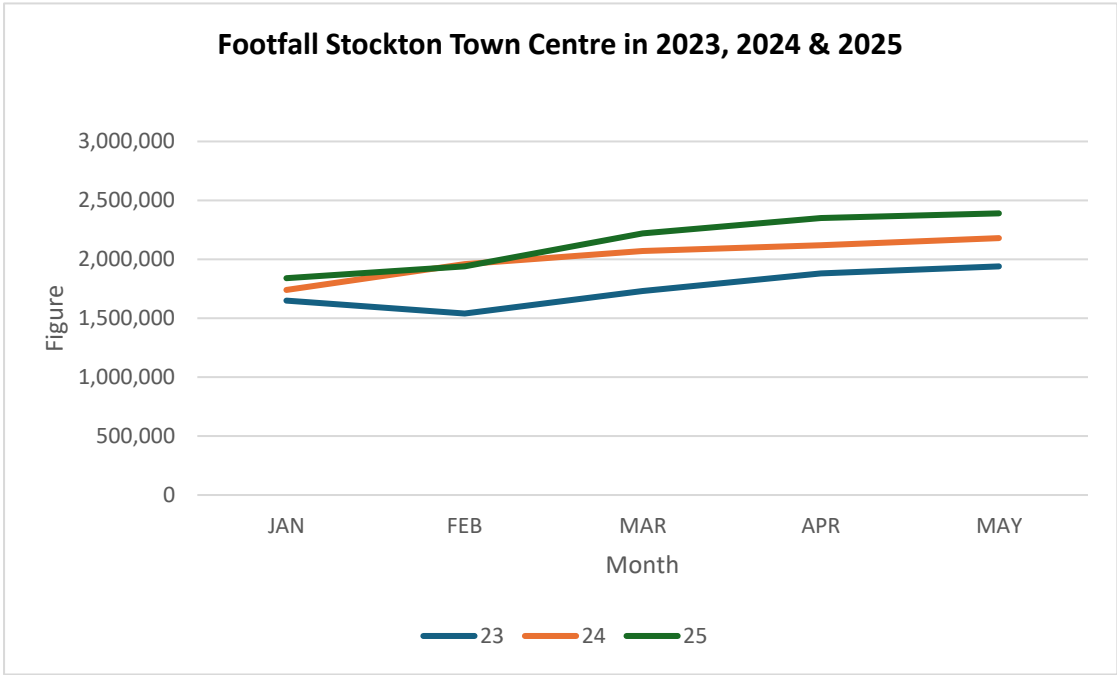
The GPS location data is sourced from over 100 data application publishers found on these devices. Sample size has a wide range of audiences, that is representative of the UK population, which reduces bias.

Each location is mapped through a bespoke digital geofence on the platform, allowing footfall and visitor behaviour insights based on the geolocation.

When a ‘visitor’ enters a geofence boundary and ‘dwells’ for 5 minutes or more they will be registered as a visitor. The timeframe prevents those who enter a location then immediately leave.

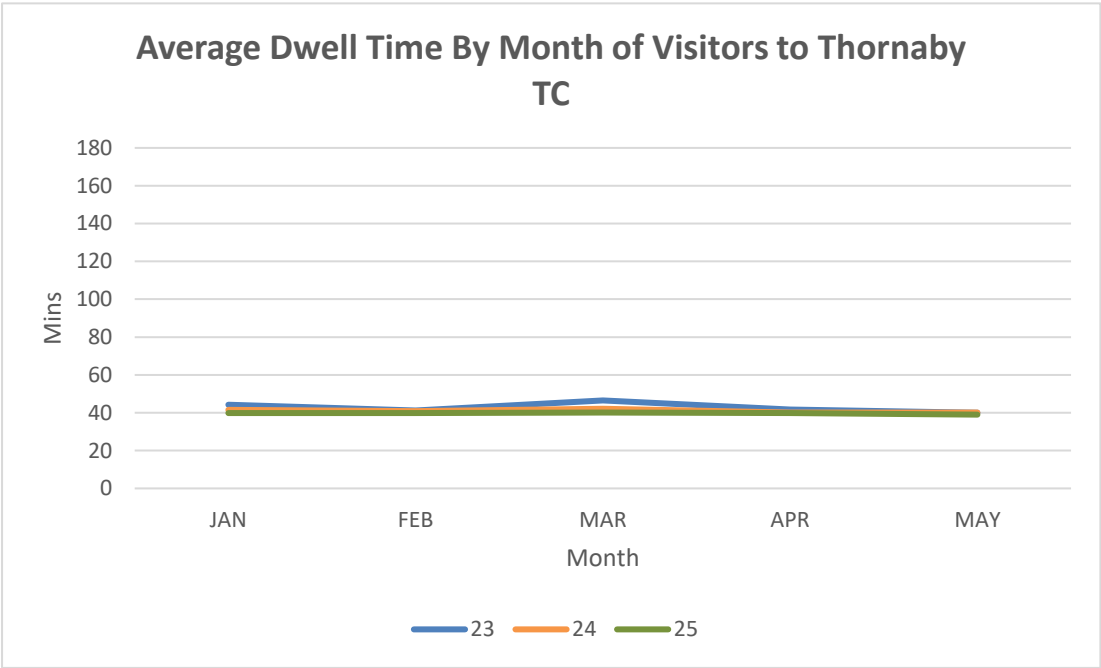
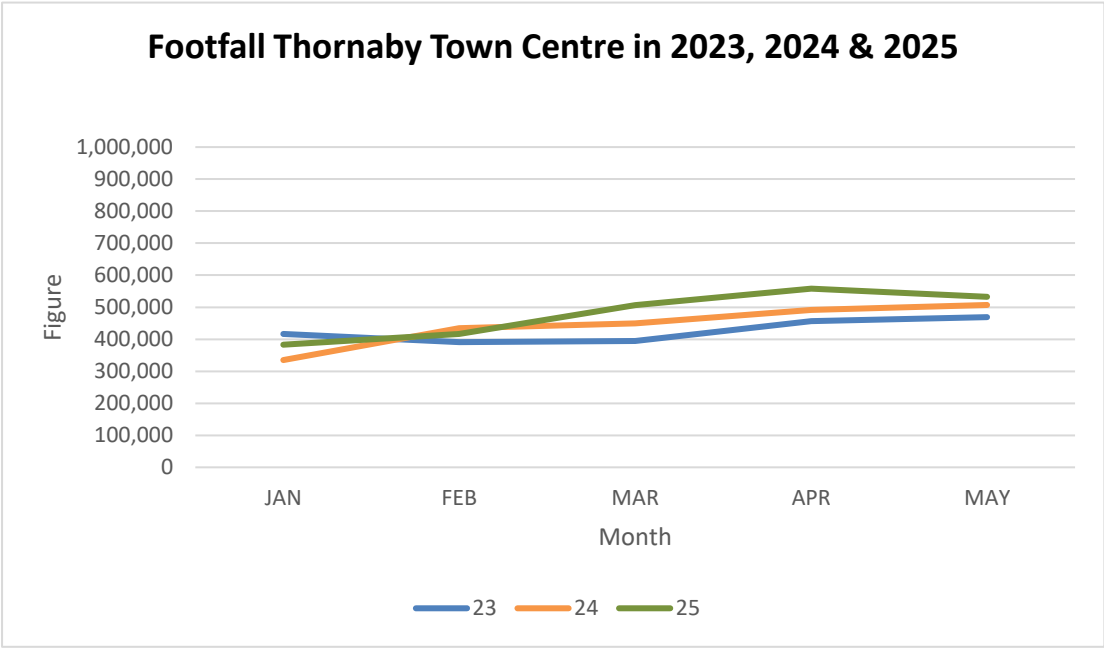
Yarm
Stockton



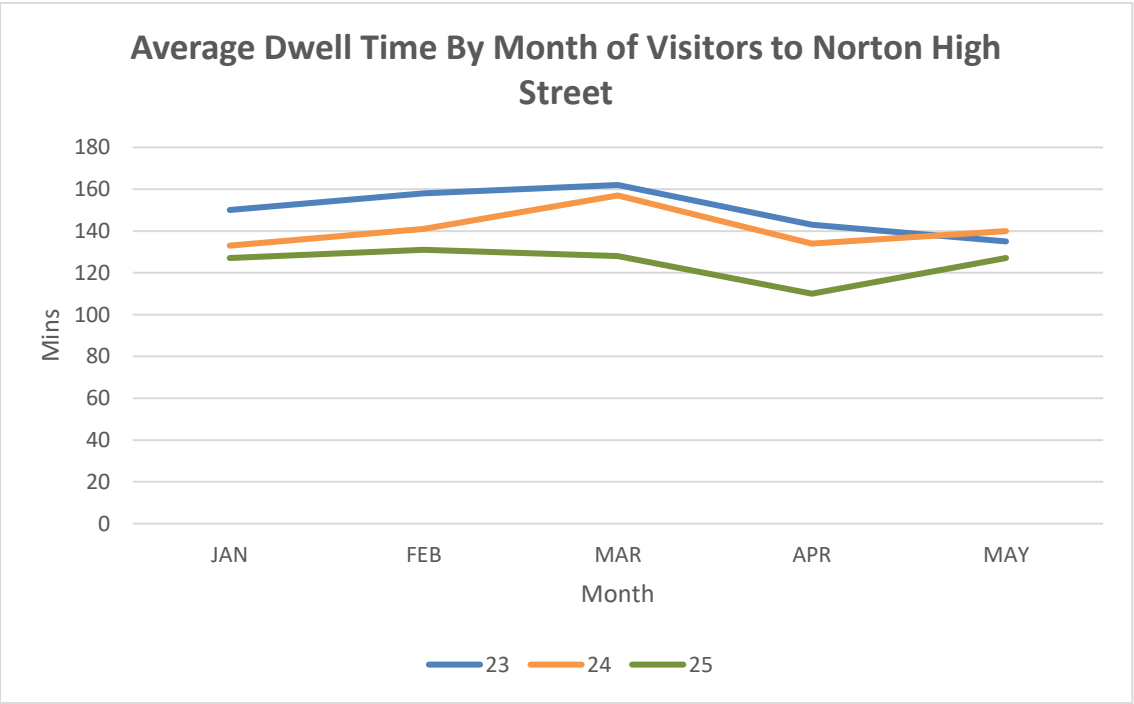
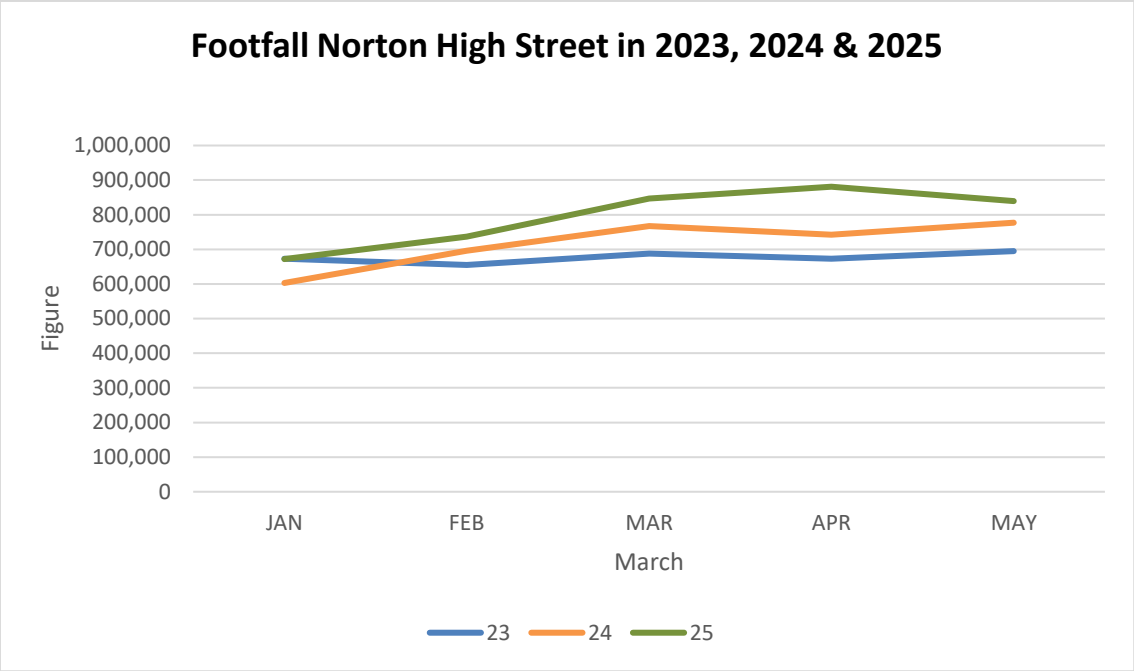


Although not part of the report, some data from other towns, where car parking charges have not changed or applicable.

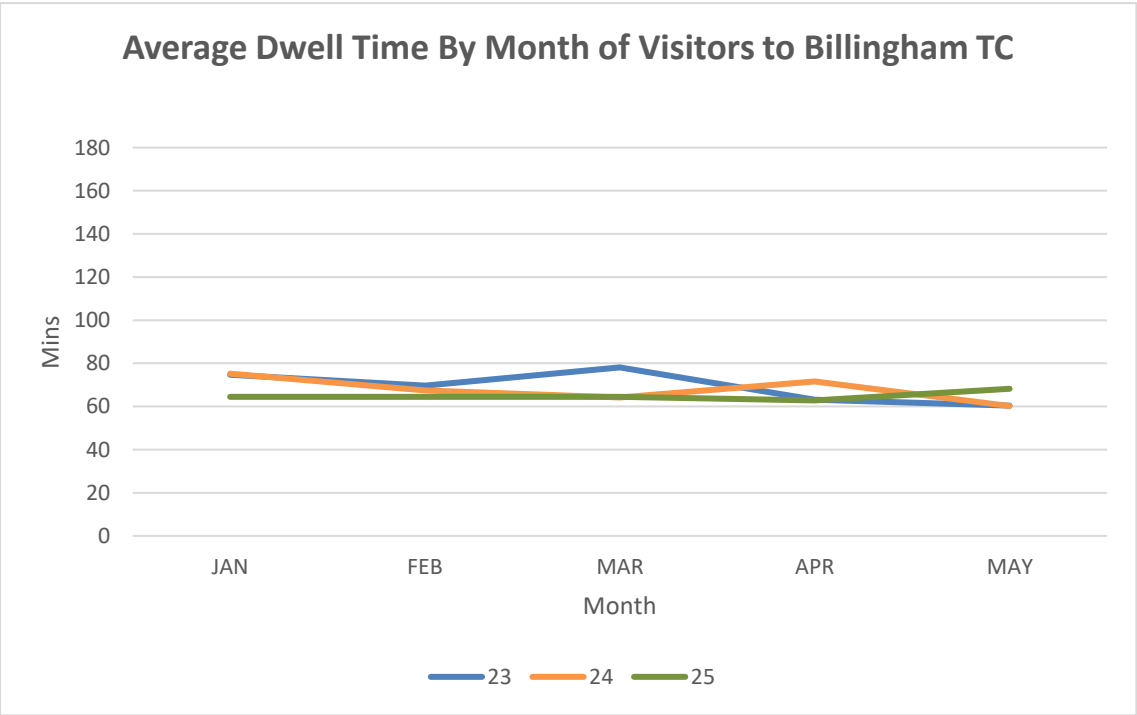
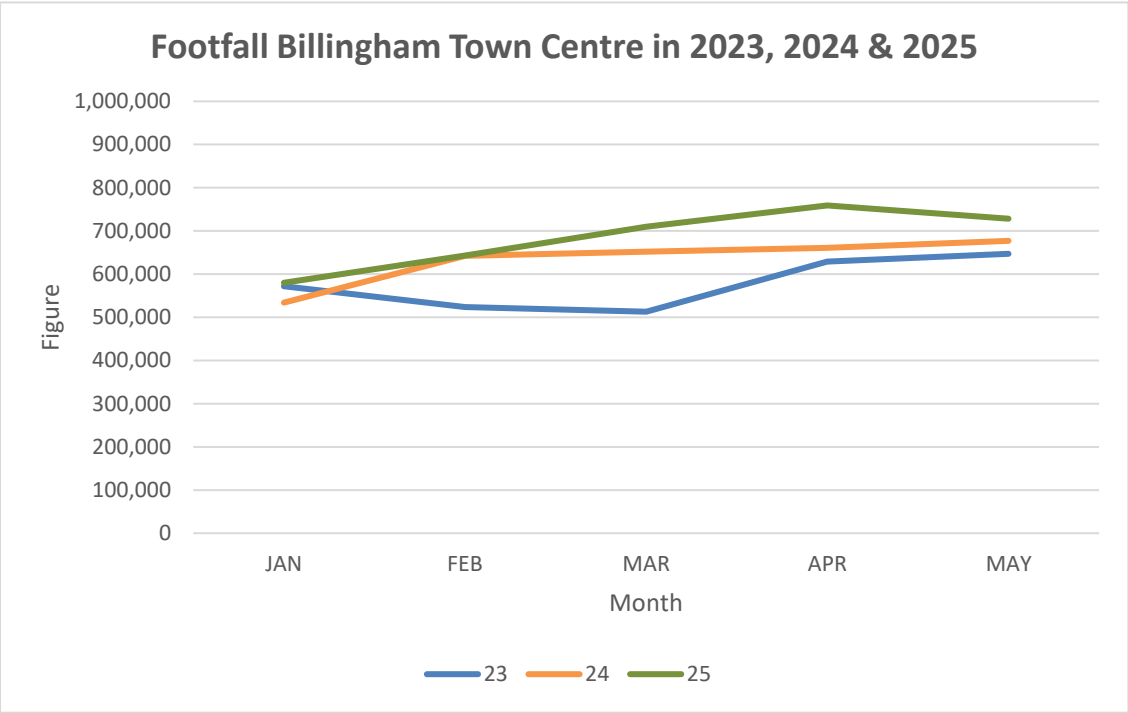
Thornaby



Norton



Billingham



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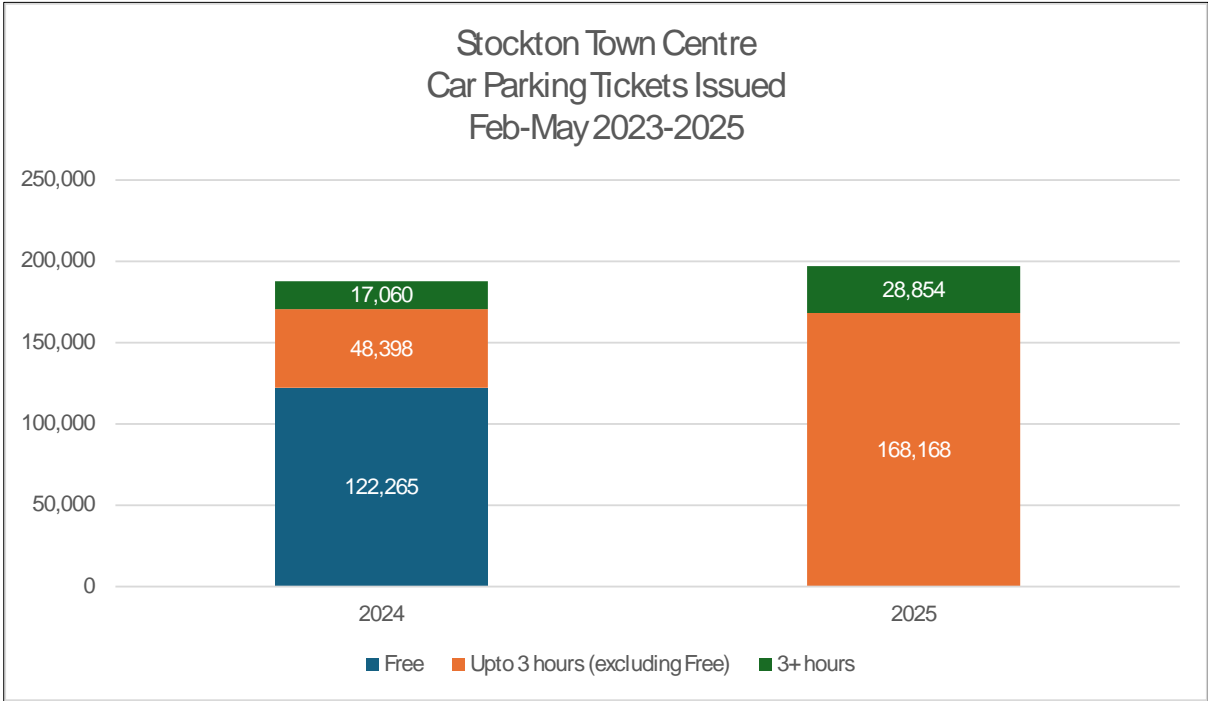
INTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES IN STOCKTON TOWN CENTRE AND YARM HIGH STREET
IN SBC OWNED CAR PARKS

EARLY ANALYSIS - KEY HEADLINES

STOCKTON TOWN CENTRE

1. Since the introduction of car parking charges in SBC owned car parks in February 2025, the number of **tickets issued** has increased (see **Figure 1**).
- In February to May 2025, there were **197,022 tickets issued** compared to **187,723 tickets issued** for the same time-period in 2024.

Figure 1 – Tickets Issued in Stockton Town Centre Car Parks, February to May 2024 compared to February to May 2025¹



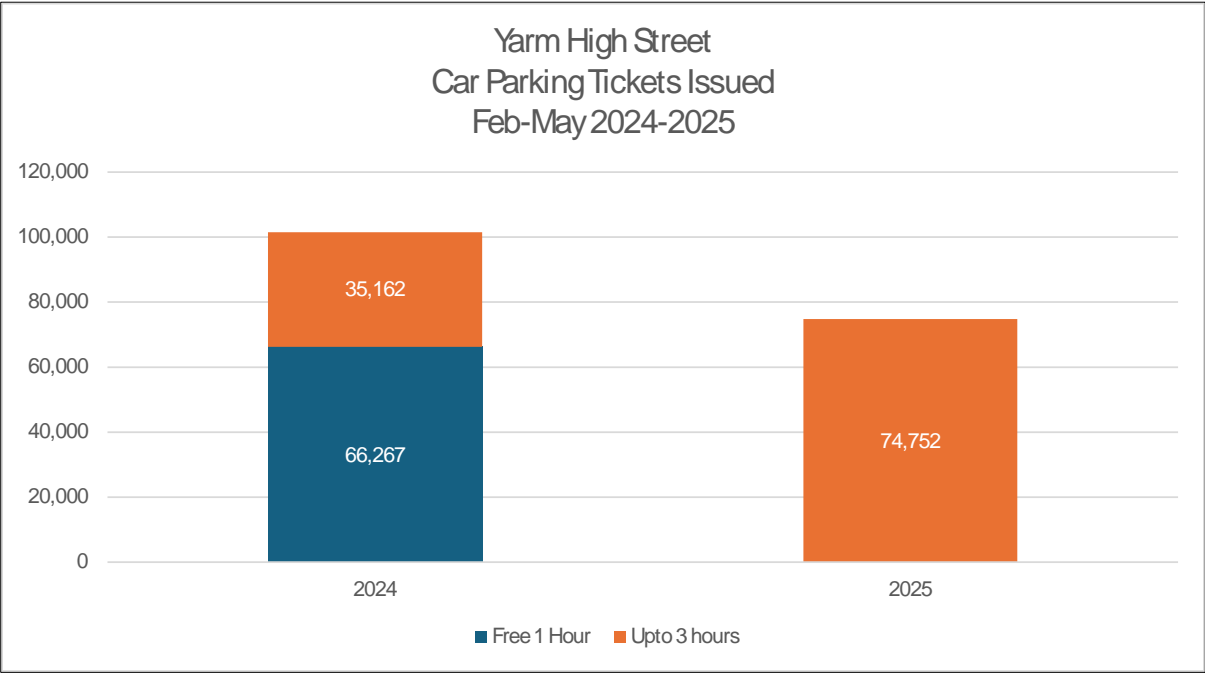
2. The parking data includes all off-street car parks managed by Stockton Borough Council, as well as Wellington Square, all of which have no maximum stay restrictions. In 2024, Wellington Square operated a tariff offering free parking for up to two hours, £1.50 for stays between two and three hours, and a flat rate of £3 for all-day parking. In comparison, Stockton’s own tariff provided free parking for the first hour, then charged £1 for up to three hours, with an additional £1 applied for each hour beyond that.

¹

YARM HIGH STREET

3. Since the introduction of car parking charges in SBC owned car parks in February 2025, the number of **tickets issued** has decreased (see **Figure 2**).
- In February to May 2025, there were **74,752 tickets issued** compared to **101,429 tickets issued** for the same time-period in 2024.

Figure 2 - Tickets Issued in Yarm High Street, February to May 2024 compared to February to May 2025²



4. Short-stay parking in Yarm is exclusively provided on-street along the High Street, where visitors are permitted to park for a maximum of three hours.

2