

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 23rd April 2026.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader of the Council), 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: Mike Greene, Peter Bell, Julie Butcher, Tracey Carter, Emma Champley, Kirsty Grundy, Clare Harper, Ged Morton, Chris Renahan, Marc Stephenson and Paul Wilson

Also in attendance: Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Apologies: None.

CAB/117/25 Evacuation Procedure

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

CAB/118/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CAB/119/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CAB/120/25 Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse - Final Report of the Community Safety Select Committee

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the Community Safety Select Committee's review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) undertake a communications campaign (reflecting the 'keeping your child in mind' principle) around the impact of domestic abuse on children.
2. In collaboration with local schools, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and Harbour introduce a school staff training programme on domestic abuse, its impact on children, and the support services available (including a plan to increase the uptake of domestic abuse training in primary schools).

3. Options be explored in order to secure funding for the continuation / enhancement of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services within local health settings (hospitals and primary care).

4. All organisations improve their recording of details (including a child's age) of domestic abuse-related referrals made to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) (note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026) and local support service, Harbour (even when domestic abuse is only one of several reasons for a referral being submitted).

5. In terms of domestic abuse-related training:

a) SBC introduces a mandatory course for all staff (and Elected Members) which includes content on identifying this form of abuse and how / where to report it.

b) Relevant partnerships with oversight of domestic abuse / safeguarding matters encourage organisations represented within these multi-agency arrangements to introduce mandatory courses for all staff, the content of which should reflect a tiered approach based on individual roles / responsibilities.

c) The Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG) seek greater assurance around the uptake of such training within individual organisations (including early years providers) and how this is impacting upon practice.

6. Harbour strengthens the promotion of its existing offer within local primary care services (across all Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and the individual practices themselves).

7. Where appropriate, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG oversee a drive to increase awareness and utilisation of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) by frontline professionals across the local 'system' when domestic abuse is identified within a household.

8. SBC provides assurance to key partners and all Elected Members around the changes to its 'front door' to services for children and their families (note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026), including how existing partnership arrangements will be maintained / enhanced.

9. The Stockton-on-Tees DASG seek assurance that key local partners have 'voice of the child' strategies / mechanisms in place and that best practice principles in relation to capturing the child's voice are shared and continually reinforced (particularly with frontline officers attending households).

10. The Stockton-on-Tees DASG provide updates on the progress of actions associated with the local Domestic Abuse Strategy, highlighting any areas which are proving challenging and the reasons for this.

11. Suggested areas of future focus identified by contributors to this review be shared with, and subsequently considered by, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG and the HSSCP.

12. The findings and recommendations from the recently published thematic joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) report on 'the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse' be shared with all relevant local organisations.

CAB/121/25 Minutes of Various Bodies

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

TSAB – 10 December 2025

TVCA Cabinet – 20 March 2026

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

CAB/122/25 Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025-2030 - Implementation Update

Consideration was given to a report that presented an updated Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030 and provided an update on its implementation.

The updated Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030 provided a strengthened strategic framework for managing the Council's land and property estate.

Building on the version previously approved by Cabinet in December 2024, this updated SAMP tightened the Council's strategy and policy approach, strengthens the Corporate Landlord Model, enhances asset categorisation, and introduces a more structured and transparent process for asset challenges and decision-making.

The updated SAMP provided greater clarity for Members, senior officers, and operational teams, ensuring that asset decisions are consistent, evidence-led, and aligned with the Council's wider priorities, including financial sustainability, regeneration and inclusive growth, community outcomes, and environmental responsibility.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The updated Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
2. The key updates and improvements made to the SAMP since the previously approved version be noted, including strengthened strategy, policy, asset categorisation and asset challenge arrangements.
3. The progress made in implementing the SAMP be noted, particularly in relation to the disposal of surplus assets and improved asset performance through reviews.
4. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Leader, to approve future updates to the SAMP to ensure it remains current, responsive and aligned with corporate priorities. Significant changes or departures from the agreed strategic direction will continue to be reported to Cabinet as appropriate.

CAB/123/25 Pride in Place - Central Stockton and Portrack - Update

Consideration was given to a report on Pride in Place - Central Stockton and Portrack.

In the summer of 2025 Central Stockton and Portrack was announced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as one of 284 communities across the country to be part of the Pride in Place (PiP) Programme. The report updated Cabinet on the work undertaken to date and details the next stages of the development of the programme.

PiP a new Govt funding programme aimed at putting power into the hands of local people to shape their communities. Central Stockton and Portrack was one of 284 PiP neighbourhoods across the country. The Programme would provide access to £19.6M (over 10 years) to spend on projects that would make a real difference to local people and the neighbourhood. The programme was intended to be flexible, supportive, community led and have a focus on long-term sustainability.

A requirement of PiP funding was the need to establish a Neighbourhood Board which would be responsible for producing a 10-year vision for their place, supported by interventions which were set out in a Regeneration Plan. The Council were the accountable body for the programme. To achieve the strategic objectives of the programme, the Board would need to consider the 3 overarching PiP aims:

- Stronger communities
- Thriving communities
- Communities taking back control

MHCLG guidance stipulated the need for the programme to be driven by the Board and that the Board must be drawn from those who predominantly live and work in the neighbourhood and should also include the local ward councillors and MP.

An initial step for the programme was to appoint a Chair of the Board, through an open and competitive process. This opportunity was advertised through the Council's social media channels and partnership networks and newsletters throughout March 2026. The selection process, carried out by the Council and Chris McDonald MP was almost complete and would be shared on the PiP pages of the Council website and through the Council's communication channels shortly. The Chair, supported by the Council would then be responsible for appointing and convening the remaining board members by the end of July 2026. The programme allowed for board members to claim reasonable expenses, to ensure that all members of the community could become board members and have access to attend meetings.

Ipsos had been commissioned by MHCLG to pilot a range of consultation techniques. Working with 20 local authorities with PiP neighbourhoods this would form part of a PiP Local Authority good practice engagement toolkit. SBC was one of these authorities. Working with Ipsos launched the PiP consultation with sessions with year 5 primary school pupils within the Central Stockton and Portrack neighbourhood. The Council heard enthusiastically about what these young people loved about living in Stockton and what they want their local area to look like in 10 years' time.

To ensure the Council adheres to critical MHCLG submission deadlines a programme of next steps and deadlines had been developed and was included at Appendix 1 of the report. This programme set out the plan for engagement and board recruitment over the spring, and the MHCLG deadlines in July for submission of the details of all board members and November for submission of the Neighbourhood's 4-year Investment Plan and 10-year Regeneration Plan.

Members noted that a further report would be presented to Cabinet before the 28th November 2026 MHCLG deadline; updating Cabinet on the key themes identified following the conclusion of this consultation and engagement phase, how these key themes had shaped the development of proposed priorities and to seek approval for the draft 4-year Investment Plan and 10-Year Regeneration Plan. The report would also provide further detail and seek agreement on the role of the Council as accountable body and secretariate and provide detail on the proposed programme and governance support requirements.

As noted above a key focus for the programme over the next few months was to undertake an extensive community engagement and consultation programme, to understand what was important to the people who live and work in the neighbourhood. A programme had been designed which built on the existing relationships with stakeholders and partners. Residents had already shared their views on issues such as, the use and development of Tilery park, crime and antisocial behaviour in the town centre and the Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint. These previous engagement exercises were being used as the foundation for the next stages of consultation, building on what our communities had already shared.

Since January of this year work had been ongoing to raise awareness of the programme amongst the public, business and community sector partners. These groups had helped to raise awareness of the programme and helped to share information about the recruitment of the board chair.

It was important that the Council heard the views and priorities of all sectors of the community, including businesses, young people, minority ethnic populations, and communities of interest and those that do not normally engage with public consultation. The programme was designed to include a range of consultation techniques, and be delivered collaboratively with community partners. Two-way communication was critical throughout the programme, this would involve a 'listen and check back-in' approach, as well as consultation networks which would contribute to shaping the work programmes for each of the priority areas identified. The engagement programme and results would form part of the submission to MHCLG.

As the programme developed links would be created with the work of wider SBC projects (such as the Neighbourhood Health Pilot for example) and partners. Feedback from all consultees would be shared to ensure that the voice of residents, businesses and customers was used to shape future service design, avoid duplication and priorities issues that were important to residents.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted, including the progress towards appointment of a Chair of the Neighbourhood Board and the timetable outlined in paragraph 6 of the report and in Appendix 1.

CAB/124/25 Post-16 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transport - Approval to Launch a Formal Public Statutory Consultation on Potential Changes to Discretionary Transport Support

Consideration was given to a report on Post-16 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transport - Approval to Launch a Formal Public Statutory Consultation on Potential Changes to Discretionary Transport Support.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) provided discretionary post-16 SEND transport to approximately 175 learners, which included 40 learners aged 19+. The estimated cost of this service for 2025/26 was circa £400,000 in direct external expenditure, with additional internal staffing and vehicle costs of around £300,000, giving an indicative total of £700,000.

Demand and associated costs for community transport services continued to increase and, without change, would place significant and growing pressure on the Council's budget over the medium term. Continuing the approach without change was unlikely to be financially sustainable over the medium term. However, no decision had been made as to how the policy should change.

No policy change was proposed at this stage. Cabinet was asked only to approve a formal public statutory consultation, with a further report to return after consultation setting out findings, mitigations and a recommended policy position for decision.

The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on a range of potential approaches and the appropriate balance between financial sustainability, accessibility and support for learners.

Any changes arising from consultation would be implemented in line with statutory requirements, including the annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement and associated notice periods.

National government launched a new schools white paper and SEND reform white paper in February 2026, which were in a consultation period closing on 18 May 2026. The proposed reforms detailed a ten-year transformation of the SEND and Alternative Provision system which had a clear vision of an inclusion-led, sustainable school system. Schools and local authorities must prioritise early intervention through clear local pathways of support, jointly commissioned with health services.

Local Area Partnership Boards for SEND, led by local authorities, have to complete a Local Area Reform Plan by June 2026, which detailed local plans to increase mainstream inclusion and decreased deficits on high needs funding, through planned incentives and capital investment.

Within this, there was recognition of rising home to school transport costs linked to SEND placements. Local authorities were expected to review this spend and use analysis of this to inform their Local Area Reform Plan, ensuring a move towards less reliance on home to school transport. The reforms reinforced a clear expectation that local authorities strengthen local provision, reduced reliance on out-of-area placements, and support young people to be educated within their communities, naturally linking to more sustainable transport arrangements.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The launch of a formal public statutory consultation be approved (of a minimum of 28 working days during term-time) on potential changes to the discretionary post-16 SEND transport offer.
2. Consultation materials will illustrate a range of potential approaches at a formative stage and without any predetermined outcome, including the option of maintaining the current approach, and including:

- Introducing parent/carer financial contributions (with reductions/exemptions and hardship routes)
- Ceasing some or all non-statutory post-16 transport

The consultation will also explore mitigations such as phasing, Independent Travel Training (ITT), personal travel budgets and exceptional circumstances governance, recognising that the effectiveness of such measures will vary depending on individual circumstances and implementation.

3. Delegated authority be given to the Director(s) responsible for the relevant functions at the time of implementation, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to finalise consultation documents and approach within the scope of options set out in this report and in line with statutory requirements..

4. A further Cabinet report return post-consultation, setting out outcomes, impacts, mitigations and a recommended policy position for decision.

CAB/125/25 RIPA Inspection Outcome Report

Consideration was given to a report that provided Cabinet with the details and outcome of the latest RIPA inspection undertaken by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO). The Council provided assurance to the IPCO which meant that an onsite inspection was not required and that current arrangements demonstrated a high standard of compliance.

The Council had provided its annual submission for 2025 to the IPCO outlining the occasions it has used the powers. The submission was a nil response for the period 1 January – 31 December 2025.

The RIPA Steering Group would continue to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements were in place for any RIPA activity undertaken by the Council. The next inspection was expected in 2028.

An annual update would be provided to Cabinet covering the details of the next IPCO statistical submission.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CAB/126/25 Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited Annual Report

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the performance of Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited and enabled Cabinet, in its capacity as shareholder, to consider both the financial performance of the companies and the wider economic and regeneration outcomes associated with the Council's investment.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The performance of the HotelCo for the financial year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 be noted.

2. Lisa Tague, Strategic Finance Manager be appointed, as a council appointed director of both companies.

3. The appointment of further Council Officers to the board of both companies be delegated to the Shareholder Representative in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport.

4. The appointment of the non-executive director to the board of directors for HotelCo be delegated to the Council's Shareholder Representative in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport.

CAB/127/25 Resolution to exclude the public from the meeting for part of agenda item - Operational Depot Provision - Estate Rationalisation and Acquisition

RESOLVED that:-

1. The press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business pursuant to section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3; Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as the information is exempt and if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and

2. The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

CAB/128/25 Operational Depot Provision - Estate Rationalisation and Acquisition

Consideration was given to a report Operational Depot Provision - Estate Rationalisation and Acquisition.

The requirement for the Waste Transfer Station to become operational at the Yarm Road depot in April 2026 necessitated the temporary relocation of the Council's grounds maintenance service. While this arrangement had ensured continuity in the short term, it was not a sustainable or suitable long-term solution. There was therefore a need to secure a long-term, fit for purpose depot facility for the grounds maintenance team.

The need for a new depot had also provided an opportunity to review the Council's wider operational depot estate. The report outlined the findings of that review and sought approval to acquire an identified depot site to meet the long-term operational needs of the grounds maintenance service. The proposed site also had the potential to accommodate additional operational services in the future, supporting broader estate rationalisation and income generation. Any such future proposals would be subject to separate business cases.

Financial and commercial details relating to the acquisition were presented within the confidential appendix.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The acquisition be approved of the identified depot site to provide a long-term and fit for purpose operational base for the Council's grounds maintenance service.
2. The findings of the operational depot review be noted and acknowledge that, while the site offers potential to accommodate additional operational services, any such proposals will be subject to the development and approval of separate business cases.
3. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Leader and Chief Finance Officer, to progress negotiations, undertake due diligence, agree terms, and complete the acquisition as set out in the confidential appendix.
4. Up to £1.097m of capital grant funding for depots from DEFRA be allocated to acquire the site and deliver the works required to create a facility to enable the long-term delivery of the grounds maintenance service as a direct consequence of the establishment of the Waste Transfer Station.