

Date:

Thursday 14 May 2026 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. Live Streaming

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

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

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

2. Evacuation Procedure (Pages 7 - 10)

3. Apologies for Absence

4. Declarations of Interest

5. Minutes (Pages 11 - 20)

Cllr Paul Rowling - Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport

6. Place Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects(Pages 21 - 54)

7. Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update (Pages 55 - 62)

Cllr Richard Eglington - Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

8. Yarm Levelling Up Fund (LUF) (Pages 63 - 86)

9. **Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan** (Pages 87 - 100)
10. **Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and Article 4 Direction** (Pages 101 - 166)

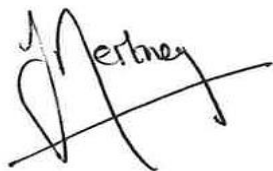
Cllr Norma Stephenson - Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety
11. **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Consent Street Trading Policy Review 2026** (Pages 167 - 170)

Cllr Lisa Evans – Leader of the Council
12. **Anti-Poverty Action Plan Update 2026** (Pages 171 - 182)

Cllr Pauline Beall - Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care
13. **Adult Social Care Fees and Charges Consultation** (Pages 183 - 190)
14. **Strategic Commissioning Board – Corporate Approach** (Pages 191 - 206)
15. **Public Health Grant Spend** (Pages 207 - 214)

Cllr Nigel Cooke - Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture
16. **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Biodiversity Duty Report 2025/26** (Pages 215 - 264)

Cllr Clare Besford - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
17. **Foster with North East Expansion** (Pages 265 - 274)



Jonathan Nertney
Head of Democratic Services
Wednesday 6 May 2026

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

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

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

Contact: 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

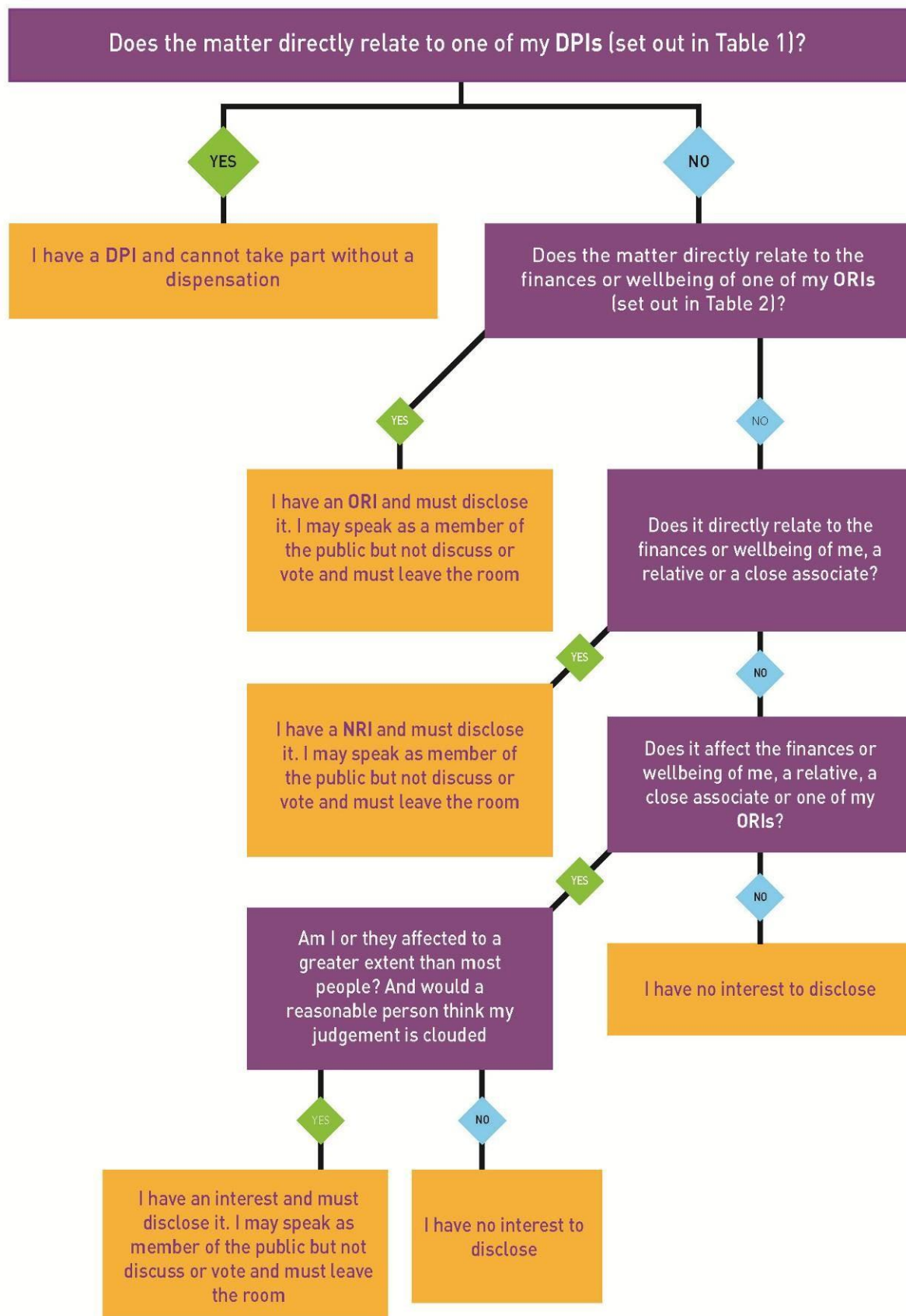


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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 Registrable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

a) any unpaid directorships

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

c) any body

(i) exercising functions of a public nature

(ii) directed to charitable purposes or

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

Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

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



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

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

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

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

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

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



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

When the Alarm sounds:

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

5. await further instructions.

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

Toilets

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

Water Cooler

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

Microphones

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

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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.

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REPORT TO CABINET

14 MAY 2026

REPORT OF PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington

Scrutiny Review of Capital Projects

Summary

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Place Select Committee's review of Capital Projects

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025-2026. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Place Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

1. The level of financial delegation given to officers in relation to capital projects is reviewed and any potential changes be taken through Cabinet and Council.
2. When making a decision Cabinet receive information that addresses the following:
 - option appraisal
 - public and stakeholder consultation and engagement
 - benefit identification
 - risk management
 - financial delegations
 - lessons learned from previous projects where appropriate
3. Member information for and engagement of the capital programme is strengthened by:
 - Providing regular and consistent updates to members via Cabinet/Member briefings showing progress against approved programme
 - Including training for members on capital programme governance and funding frameworks within the Member Induction

- Refreshing the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Councillors to include the flow of information on the progress of capital projects particularly to relevant Ward Members
4. Consideration be given within the ongoing development of the Council's People Plan of the need to ensure sufficient workforce capacity and skills to support the capital programme
 5. Officers provide a report on the effectiveness of the governance structure to the Select Committee in January 2027, when further projects have been through the process

Detail

1. The Council has a large-scale programme of capital projects to ensure that we are providing quality facilities for residents, attracting investment, and making Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work, and visit. The review aimed to examine the processes, including governance and decision-making structures, in delivering major capital projects and identify if these can be improved thereby ensuring that they provide value for money as well as having a social value and be effective in place shaping of the Borough.
2. The current governance arrangements have been in place since November 2024, and the Committee found that these provide a solid foundation for delivering projects that benefit residents, support regeneration, and meet the strategic ambitions of the Borough. The review highlights a strong appetite to strengthen member engagement and the importance of learning from experience. The need to ensure sufficient skills and capacity to deliver the programme was also highlighted and Members were made aware of the development of the Council's workforce "People Plan". Recommendations therefore focus on communication, including strengthening the communication of risk and sharing of lessons learnt, and ensuring workforce capability, to further improve delivery.
3. The Committee has taken evidence from the Assistant Director of Town Centre Development, the Highways, Transport and Design Manager, the Strategic Finance Manager, the Capital Programme Manager, the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, and the Monitoring Officer.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

4. The Committees review and recommendations support Priority Five: A Sustainable Council of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan.

Corporate Parenting Implications

5. There are no direct corporate parenting implications in the report.

Financial Implications

6. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations.

Legal Implications

7. There are no direct legal implications identified at this stage.

Risk Assessment

8. The review 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 (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

9. This review is relevant to all Wards across the Borough.

Background Papers

10. None

Name of Contact Officer: Michelle Gunn

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Scrutiny Review of Governance of Capital Projects

Place Select Committee, April 2026

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Select Committee – Membership

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Councillor Steve Nelson (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Steve Dodds

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The Committee would like to thank the following former members for their contribution to the review:

Councillor Stefan Houghton

Councillor Hilary Vickers

Acknowledgements

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

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Andy Corcoran – Highways, Transport and Design Manager

Iain Robinson – Assistant Director – Town Centre Development

Sharon Caddell – Capital Programme Manager

Tracey Carter – Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

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Foreword

Following the Place Select Committee's review of Governance of Capital Projects, we are pleased to present the Committee's final report.

The Capital Programme includes programmes and projects carried out through capital expenditure. This includes the creation or upkeep of assets, purchasing new assets such as land or buildings, and refurbishing and improving existing assets such as road or office space. The Committee received an outline of the breadth of projects that are included in the Council's Capital Programme.

The review focused on the capital projects governance arrangements that have been in place since November 2024, which include a five-stage process that each project must now go through and the layered reporting and decision-making structure that provides oversight to the programme. During the evidence gathering sessions, case studies were presented that illustrated the different funding streams, member, stakeholder, and public involvement, and challenges that can be faced while designing and delivering capital projects.

Our recommendations seek to improve the communication both in the reporting of capital projects, decision-making and risk management, and the sharing of lessons learnt. They also seek to ensure that workforce capability for delivering capital projects is included in the Council's workforce planning.

We would like to extend our thanks to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers that have contributed to the review.

Cllr Jim Beall Chair



Councillor Jim Beall
Chair – Place Select Committee



Councillor Steve Nelson
Vice-Chair – Place Select Committee

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will address the following priority of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan:

Priority five - A sustainable Council: We will ensure our council is financially sustainable and manages our assets effectively to enhance their local impact. We will be a well-run council across areas of our business and continue to improve outcomes for communities.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

SBC has a large-scale programme of capital projects within the Borough to ensure that that we are providing quality facilities for residents, attracting investment, and making Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work and visit. It is important that when these are developed, they are well thought out, delivered on time, and on budget, to demonstrate that our council is sustainable and well managed.

A strong governance and oversight framework for capital projects gives confidence to both Council members as well as residents that they are value for money and have a social value. This should include robust processes for financial planning, identifying risk, and assessing the impact on services for residents.

The aim of the review is to examine the processes, including governance and decision-making structures, in delivering major capital projects and identify if these can be improved.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

1. What is the Council's capital programme – number of schemes, capital values, type of projects included
 - Detail of capital programme so context of individual projects and programmes are understood within the broader capital programme
2. How do projects and interventions emerge/evolve to be included on the capital programme - How do capital project opportunities arise?
 - How are capital projects funded?
 - Examining approaches and steps taken with externally funded capital interventions
 - At what point are financial commitments/allocations to individual projects made?
 - What is the decision-making process?
 - At what points are members consulted/involved?
 - How are other stakeholders involved?
3. What are existing Capital Programme and project governance arrangements
 - Risk identification and management – different routes to managing risk across schemes
 - Understanding of resource and expertise – the varying role of the Local Authority in delivery and relationships with external providers

- What risk management and escalation measures are in place?
- How are tolerances of a project determined?
- What is the decision-making process within capital programme?
- At what points are members consulted/involved?
- How have lessons learnt on previous projects been implemented?

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

The aim of the review is to identify if improvements can be made to the decision making and governance processes of capital projects, thereby ensuring that they provide value for money as well as having a social value and thereby be effective in place shaping of the Borough.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the Place Select Committee's scrutiny review of Capital Projects. Capital Projects are defined as those that are carried out via capital expenditure on the creation or improvement of assets such as purchasing land or buildings as well as creating or improving existing assets such as a roads/cycleways/drainage or undertaking works to Council property assets.
- 1.2. A strong governance and oversight framework for capital projects gives confidence to both Council members and residents that they are value for money and deliver the intended benefits. The review therefore aimed to examine the processes, including the governance and decision-making structures, in delivering major capital projects.

The Capital Programme

- 1.3. The Capital Programme reflects the Council's long-term ambition to support regeneration, manage assets, and deliver infrastructure that meets the needs of residents. Investment is targeted to meet the five strategic priorities. There is no definitive definition of what constitutes a major capital project, and while there is monetary value to consider there are also community economic and environmental impacts which may make a capital project a major project.
- 1.4. A programme is a group of linked projects that deliver a long-term objective (e.g. regeneration of an area) whereas a project is a specific action to achieve an outcome (e.g. one scheme within an area).
- 1.5. When presented to the Committee in November 2025, there were 17 programmes and 112 projects delivering place or theme-based outputs and benefits. Community, Environment, Culture, and Leisure had the biggest number of programmes (8) followed by Regeneration (4), however within those programmes Transportation had the biggest number of projects (46) followed by Community Environment and Culture & Leisure (24).
- 1.6. Funding determines what can be achieved within the capital programme, with projects unable to progress without the funding that they need. Work may commence to scope the outcomes, resource and finance requirements ahead of an allocation of capital. In November 2025 there was £245,234m allocated to the Capital Programme within the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2027. Regeneration had the largest budget for capital projects (59.52%)
- 1.7. The majority of resources come from grants and contributions (64.9%) therefore many projects are dependent on successful bidding opportunities or complex negotiations with developers and require alignment with external criteria.
- 1.8. Due to the breadth of the Capital Programme, there is a challenge to ensure the knowledge and skills are in place to support and deliver the programme. Staff development is important and there is investment in trainees, graduate trainees and apprenticeships. In areas where specific knowledge is required, external support from other organisations is sought.

Emergence of Schemes

- 1.9. Projects are identified through several routes including:
 - As a response to a specific issue

- Through a funding opportunity that has arisen
 - Consultation with members
 - Consultation with the public
- 1.10. The Capital Programme is agreed annually, in February as part of the MTFP Budget report and changes to the programme contained with the quarterly MTFP update. The Council receives funding for investments, e.g. the Basic Needs Grant used for school investments, and aims to use these as flexibly as possible to deliver interventions, submitting annual grant returns to the relevant Government Department where required. Developer Funded Schemes, either Section 106 or Section 278 schemes, are secured as part of planning application to mitigate the effect of a development and negotiated by Council officers with the Developers.
- 1.11. There are also Government funding streams that the Council can bid for. These funding opportunities can arise suddenly e.g. Town Deal and Levelling Up, and the scoping of these projects may need to be determined to enable to apply before detailed design work is completed, creating uncertainty. Officers will include a contingency and allowances for inflationary uplifts to mitigate for this but there is often an unpredictable time lag between application and award then delivery, that creates an inbuilt inflationary pressure.

Project Governance Arrangements

- 1.12. Strong governance is essential to managing risk and complexities within the capital programme. The Council's project lifecycle (micro) governance framework is ensuring that each scheme follows a structured process with clear gateways, financial oversight, risk management, and defined responsibilities. This provides consistency across directorates, the ability to intervene early if issues arise, and reduces the risk of uncontrolled projects.
- 1.13. The five stages each project must go through are:
- Foundation – high-level feasibility of a new capital initiatives, identifying benefits and producing a Project Mandate
 - Discovery – Mandate is developed into Project Brief, giving an outline design or business case/option appraisal. At the completion of this stage the project is noted within the MTFP
 - Design – detailed design and Full Business Case/Project Initiation Document (PID) developed
 - Delivery – delivered against agreed plan, and highlight, exception reports produced along with change requests. Exception issues must be reported to the Placemaking (Regeneration) Mission Board (PMB)
 - Review – project handover and review take place when nearing successful completion and ready for formal handover along with budget reconciliation. A checklist is completed by the Project Management Office on closure of the project, along with an outline of ongoing support and maintenance and contract management
- 1.14. There are gateways at each stage to approve progression to the next stage, reviewing and monitoring the PID.
- 1.15. Scopes can evolve, cost fluctuate due to unpredictable issues (utility delays, market inflation, weather, site investigations, and land acquisition), and timescales span several years, therefore flexibility in delivery is required. While officers make judgements on tolerances to include in the

initial project scope, these can create challenges for public communication and managing expectations.

1.16. The reporting and decision-making structure includes:

- A Project Group for every project to oversee the delivery, with officers from finance, legal, procurement and any other officers relevant to the project. The group has responsibility and accountability for the maintenance of documentation, project plan and Risks, Actions, Issues, Decisions, and Lesson Learn Log (RAIDL).
- Programme Working Groups chaired by Assistant Directors, who oversee progress of the projects within individual programmes and manage delivery of the projects.
- Placemaking (Regeneration) Mission Board who oversee the capital programme and formally approves projects to move to the next stage. The Board also provide advice to the decision making of the relevant Director who has delegation from Cabinet to deliver projects and programmes. The Board will also escalate decisions to Cabinet where they exceed delegated powers.
- Corporate Management Team (CMT)/ Powering our Futures (PoF) Board authorises capital projects for progression to Cabinet/Council
- Cabinet/Council makes executive decisions and formally approves inclusion of capital projects in budgets and delegates further decision making to the relevant Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder in line with the Council's Constitution.

1.17. Project Groups, Programme Working Groups, and the Placemaking Mission Board (PMB) are providing a layered oversight to the programme, with strong escalation routes and clarity on decision-making at each stage, while frequent reporting to the relevant Cabinet member and Corporate Management Team ensures accountability.

1.18. The completion of Closure reports by officers aims to ensure that lessons learnt from completed projects are informing future projects, strengthening the process and improving future delivery of the programme.

1.19. As it was only introduced in its current form in November 2024 the governance framework has not yet been tested across enough completed projects to fully evaluate its effectiveness.

1.20. In addition to projects being subject to the in-house governance processes, some schemes within the capital programme require compliance with external governance arrangements to either secure funding and/or demonstrate how the funding has been used e.g. Tees Valley Combined Authority assurance frameworks for transport schemes, Homes England validation for the Elton Interchange scheme, Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)/HM Treasury requirements for Town Deal, annual grant returns to the Department of Education (DoE), etc. This gives assurance that these projects meet national standards, strengthening the governance arrangements and credibility.

1.21. Member engagement with the capital programme is dependent on the specific project. The capital programme is included in the annual MTFP Budget report members agree in February and there is regular dialogue with Cabinet Members on the projects that fall within their portfolio. In addition, there may be consultation with Ward Members for Ward specific projects or members may be represented on boards associated with a project, e.g. the Town Deal. However, there is an appetite for clearer, more consistent information flows. While there is a Concordat for Communication with

Members which outlines how information should be provided to members as well as how officers should consult with members, this has not been reviewed in recent years

- 1.22. Effective communication with residents and stakeholders can be also beneficial to the smooth and agile delivery of a project.
- 1.23. Continued collaboration with the Council's partners, strong governance, and investment in staff capability will be crucial to ensuring the successful delivery of outcomes and benefits across the borough in the years ahead.

Conclusion and recommendations

- 1.24. Overall, the Committee concludes that the Council has made significant progress in building a strong and credible governance framework for its capital programme, the systems now in place provides a solid foundation for delivering projects that benefit residents, support regeneration, and meet the strategic ambition of the Borough. Continued focus on governance, communication, risk management and workforce capability will further improve delivery, ensuring that capital projects achieve their intended outcomes and continue to contribute positively to the Borough's growth and development.
- 1.25. The Committee recommends that:
 - 1) The level of financial delegation given to officers in relation to capital projects is reviewed and any potential changes be taken through Cabinet and Council.
 - 2) When making a decision Cabinet receive information that addresses the following:
 - option appraisal
 - public and stakeholder consultation and engagement
 - benefit identification
 - risk management
 - financial delegations
 - lessons learned from previous projects where appropriate
 - 3) Member information for and engagement of the capital programme is strengthened by:
 - Providing regular and consistent updates to members via Cabinet/Member briefings showing progress against approved programme
 - Including training for members on capital programme governance and funding frameworks within the Member Induction
 - Refreshing the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Councillors to include the flow of information on the progress of capital projects particularly to relevant Ward Members
 - 4) Consideration be given within the ongoing development of the Council's People Plan of the need to ensure sufficient workforce capacity and skills to support the capital programme.
 - 5) Officers provide a report on the effectiveness of the governance structure to the Select Committee in January 2027, when further projects have been through the process.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the Place Select Committee's scrutiny review of Capital Projects.
- 2.2. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has a large-scale programme of capital projects within the Borough to ensure that we are providing quality facilities for residents, attracting investment, and making Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work, and visit. The review aimed to examine the processes, including governance and decision-making structures, in delivering major capital projects and identify if these can be improved thereby ensuring that they provide value for money as well as having a social value and be effective in place shaping of the Borough.
- 2.3. The Committee undertook the following key lines of enquiry:
- What is the Council's capital programme – number of schemes, capital values, type of projects included?
 - How do projects and interventions emerge/evolve to be included on the capital programme?
 - How do capital project opportunities arise?
 - How are capital projects funded?
 - Examining approaches and steps taken with externally funded capital intervention
 - At what point are financial commitments/allocations to individual projects made?
 - What is the decision-making process?
 - At what points are members consulted/involved?
 - How are other stakeholders involved?
 - What are the existing capital programme and project governance arrangements?
 - Risk identification and management – different routes to managing risk across schemes
 - Understanding of resource and expertise – varying role of the Local Authority in delivery and relationships with external providers
 - What risk management and escalation measures are in place?
 - How are tolerances of a project determined?
 - What is the decision-making process with capital programme?
 - At what points are members consulted/involved?
 - How have lessons learnt on previous project been implemented?
- 2.4. Contributions were sought and subsequently received from the Assistant Director of Town Centre Development, the Highways, Transport and Design Manager, the Strategic Finance Manager, the Capital Programme Manager, the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, and the Monitoring Officer.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Capital Programme is a series of programmes and projects carried out via capital expenditure on the creation or improvement of assets that create benefits lasting more than one year. This includes purchasing new assets such as land or building as well as creating or improving existing assets such as a roads/cycleways/drainage or undertaking works to Council property assets. Maintaining assets in their existing state is not considered capital expenditure. Local Authorities need to ensure that there is a clear separation between capital and revenue expenditure in their financial activities and reporting. Independent Auditors will highlight if expenditure has been misrepresented as capital/revenue.
- 3.2 A strong governance and oversight framework for capital projects gives confidence to both Council members and residents that they are value for money and deliver the intended benefits. This should include robust processes for financial planning, identifying risk, and assessing the impact on services for residents.
- 3.3 The LGA's guidance, [Must Know: Capital Expenditure](#) [Must know: Capital expenditure | Local Government Association](#) , provides an outline for effective Capital Expenditure including capital programme management and governance. It states that "good governance is the starting point of effective capital delivery". It highlights the importance of business cases and project appraisals which are based on robust data, clear accountability for taking decisions and managing projects, and a dedicated contracts and project management unit employing those with specialised project management skills to manage the programme.
- 3.4 The Council's Constitution states that Council is responsible for the adoption of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MFTP), following recommendations from the Cabinet, which contains the capital programme. While the Constitution states that financial management of the Capital Programme will be taken in accordance with the approved Capital Programme arrangements, Council approval will be required for all new capital schemes or acquisitions or developments which require the use of prudential borrowing that is outside the budget.

4.0 Evidence

The Council's Capital Programme

- 4.1. The Council's Capital Programme is a rolling programme of separate programmes with differing start and finish dates. A programme is a group of linked projects that deliver a long-term objective (e.g. regeneration of an area) whereas a project is a specific action to achieve an outcome (e.g. one scheme within an area). A programme may be made up of several projects, which also may have differing start and finish dates, to better manage the governance, risk and funding. When presented to the Committee in November 2025, there were 17 programmes and 112 projects delivering place or theme-based outputs and benefits.
- 4.2. Community, Environment, Culture, & Leisure had the biggest number of programmes (8) followed by Regeneration (4) at the time of presenting, however within those programmes Transportation

had the biggest number of projects (46) followed by Community Environment and Culture & Leisure (24). A breakdown of the number of programmes and projects in November 2025 is below:

Directorate	Programmes	Projects
School Investment Programme and Children's Services	1	9
Inclusive Growth	2	4
Regeneration	4	20
Transportation	2	46
Community, Environment, Culture & Leisure	8	24
Adult, Health & Wellbeing	4	9
TOTALS	17	112

- 4.3. In November 2025 there was £245,234m allocated to the Capital Programme within the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2027. Regeneration had the largest budget (59.52%). The breakdown of the budget by directorate is below:

CAPITAL PROGRAMME Up to 2027	Revised Programme £'000	%
School Investment Programme & Children's Services	16,089	6.56
Inclusive Growth	11,144	4.54
Regeneration	145,960	59.52
Transportation	24,837	10.13
Community, Environment, Culture & Leisure	21,045	8.58
Adults, Health & Wellbeing	5,261	2.15
Xentrall ICT	900	0.37
Council Wide	20,000	8.16
Total Approved Capital MTFP	245,234	

- 4.4. The budget for the capital programme comes from a number of sources, with the majority being from grants and contribution (64.9%/£159,147m). Borrowing made up 29.87% of the budget (£73,258m) and Council approval is required for all new capital schemes which require the use of prudential borrowing that is outside of the budget. The rest of the budget came from Council Resources 3.15% (£7,724m) and Capital Receipts 2.08% (£5,104m).
- 4.5. A breakdown of the grants and contribution funding source shows that the biggest contribution comes from the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) (£77.2m) with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) making the second biggest contribution (£15.4m). A further contribution (£15.6m) from the Department for Transport – City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) is allocated via TVCA. The full breakdown is below:

<u>TVCA</u>	
TVCA	29,641,866
Department for Transport - City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS)	15,666,728
Government Departments	
MHCLG	77,281,495
Department for Education	15,442,436
DEFRA	1,441,210
Environment Agency	7,598,710
<u>Developer Agreements</u>	6,178,982
National Lottery Heritage Fund	1,943,672
Other	3,952,346
	159,147,445

Officer capacity

- 4.6. Due to the breadth of the Capital Programme, there is a challenge to ensure the knowledge and skills are in place to support and deliver the programme. Staff development is important and there is investment in trainees, graduate trainees and apprenticeships. In areas where specific knowledge is required, external support from other organisations is sought.

Emergence of Schemes

- 4.7. The Committee were informed that projects are identified through several routes including:
- As a response to a specific issue
 - Through a funding opportunity that has arisen
 - Consultation with members
 - Consultation with the public
- 4.8. The Capital Programme is agreed annually, in February, as part of the MTFP Budget report. Changes to the programme are contained within the quarterly MTFP update considered by Executive Scrutiny Committee and available to all members to note.
- 4.9. A project can only be placed on the Capital Programme and move through the governance stages (outlined in paragraphs 4.19 – 4.25 below) if the funding for it is identified. Where funding has not been identified or secured, the scheme will remain at the Foundation/Discovery Stages of the process and not be placed on the MTFP until the funding is available.
- 4.10. As outlined in paragraphs 4.4 – 4.5, the majority of funding for the Capital Programme is from grants and contributions and there are different ways that the Council receive these. The Council will receive funding for investments from the Government, such as the Basic Needs Grants (BNG) and High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) which are both used for school investments. The Council aims to use these funding sources as flexibly as possible to deliver interventions and will submit annual grant returns to the relevant Government Department on spend and deliverables where required.

Case Study – Ash Trees at Billingham South

Additional provision at Ash Trees Academy was identified to meet the needs of increasing number of students with Severe Learning Difficulties. The school was unable to expand on the current site, therefore alternatives needed to be considered. A satellite model was explored whereby the school operates both at its main building and on another school site. This model had been used to create Abbey Hill at Northshore Academy. The scheme would create two 10 place classrooms for Ash Trees school at Billingham South Primary School.

Discussions took place with various stakeholders including both Ash Trees and Billingham South Primary schools, the Cabinet Member, and Parent Carer Forum through the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategic Governance Board. The School's Investment Strategy report, in which £1m allocated for the scheme following a feasibility report, was approved by Cabinet in October 2022, before design work took place in 2023.

Construction was completed in Summer 2024. The scheme was managed through the Council's governance processes and monitored quarterly from a financial perspective, reporting to the Director of Children's Services. Annual grant returns will be submitted to the Department for Education on spend, the number of places created and need met.

- 4.11. There are also Government funding streams that the Council can bid for, which tend to be ad-hoc one-off bidding opportunities targeted at specific outcomes and can be announced without prior indication. This can create a challenge for Council officers to identify schemes and submit bids for funding. The funding is often time limited e.g. must be spent by a specific date, request local contributions and tend to come with defined conditions and monitoring requirements. This type of funding therefore suits shovel ready schemes. There is often an unpredictable time lag between application and award then delivery, that creates an inbuilt inflationary pressure. Examples of Government funding bids include the Levelling-Up Fund, Town Deal, Housing Infrastructure Fund, Local Pinch Point Fund, Major Route Network Fund, and Structures Fund. These have been used to carry out schemes such as Wolviston Roundabout, Durham & Thornaby Cycleways, Thornaby Town Deal, and more.

Case Study – Thornaby Town Deal

The Town Fund emerged from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) without prior indication, offering grant funding to bid for subject to a minimum of 20% local match funding. Stockton-on-Tees was successful in receiving £23.9m of funding. There were defined boundaries for the funding, with projects developed to fit the following themes:

- **Urban regeneration, planning and land use:** ensuring towns are thriving places for people to live and work
- **Skills and enterprise infrastructure:** driving private sector investment and ensuring towns have the space to support skills and small business development.
- **Connectivity:** developing local transport schemes that complement regional and national networks, as well as supporting the delivery of improved digital connectivity

There was a two-stage bidding process requiring the submission of a Town Investment Plan, establishing priorities and projects within the objectives, and a HM Treasury-complaint business case that was subject to validation through TVCA Quality Assurance mechanisms. The development of a prescribed governance structure for monitoring, evaluation, and communication in line with the DLUHC/HM Treasury requirements was also required.

Extensive engagement underpinned the programme, including 18 months of consultation with the public, education providers, TVCA, Registered Housing Providers, businesses, and the newly established Thornaby Town Deal Board which included representation from MP's and members. Stakeholder workshops and discussions took place as well as regular dialogue with the relevant Cabinet member. This approach proved helpful in having a local voice and guidance on where investment should be focused and activity prioritized. The Board continues to oversee and guide identification of projects and priorities within the programme.

Programme development was challenging due to the requirement to submit the budget and programme prior to carrying out both preliminary and detailed design and costing, surveys, negotiations to secure third party land or property, contractual agreement on partner funding, and market testing. Initial proposals for the Golden Eagle and Phoenix House sites were refined as commercial issues emerged, while ongoing engagement created opportunities to expand the programme—such as supporting NETA's relocation, developing an extensive cycleways network, and securing investment for North Thornaby housing improvements. Extensive lobbying of Government departments where these were not directly aligned with the funding criteria enabled them to be incorporated to meet local need

Given the scale and duration of the programme, changes to scope, costs, and timeframes were unavoidable. Continuous governance was maintained through regular briefings with the Cabinet Member, updates to the Town Deal Board, and formal Cabinet approvals.

- 4.12. TVCA has been given funding from the Government to allocate to projects across the Tees Valley region, including the City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement (2022 – 2027) (CRSTS), a Capital Programme for improving public transport/active travel, and the Transport for the City Regions (2027 – 2032) (TCR). A Strategic Transport Plan was approved by TVCA's Cabinet in January 2020, and the ambition is to develop a world-class transport system to connect people to opportunity and assist business growth and inward investment.
- 4.13. Schemes funded via the CRSTS in 2022/27 include the improvements to Eaglescliffe, Billingham, Thornaby, Allens West, and Yarm Stations, local highway improvements and maintenance, electric vehicle charging, and enhancing the existing road network A66/A19 interface. The TCR scheme includes the Teesside Park/Marshalling Yard Train Station, A689 Corridor, A19 New Tees Crossing, Thornaby Train Station Transport Hub, Transport Bridge, and sustainable transport links to employment and training.
- 4.14. Developer Funded Schemes are secured as part of planning applications to mitigate the effect of a development. They can be either Section 106 agreement schemes where the developer pays a contribution or Section 278 agreement schemes where the developer fully funds the scheme. Developer contributions tend to be staggered throughout the delivery of a development and are predominately for access to a new development but can also be for offsite improvements for large developments. There may be conditions within the agreements that the scheme begins once a set number of properties have been built, with a contingency included for increasing costs, and will be included on the MTFP capital Programme once this has been reached. These agreements are negotiated by Council officers with the Developer.

Case Study – Elton Interchange

West Stockton was highlighted in the Local Plan as a location for significant housing development and capacity improvements at Elton Interchange were subsequently identified.

In 2017 the Government announced a Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to help unlock new housing sites that had viability issues. Following approval by the Cabinet Member, the Council submitted a bid and awarded £10m on 1 February 2018.

The fund required a lengthy validation process before release therefore the Funding Agreement was not signed until end of 2019. During this time the conditions of the grant were changed, to be utilised to forward fund the scheme prior to any funding being secured from developers. There is no net long-term cost to the Council as repayment and further funding has been secured through development contributions as part of planning permission conditions.

Homes England, who administered the fund, set conditions for the funding, which entailed completing designs, gaining planning permissions, securing additional funding from developers, the tender process and construction by March 2023.

Full public consultation was carried out, along with Member briefings. Planning permission was granted in February 2021. The scheme required numerous Traffic Regulation Orders such as no waiting and speed limits which underwent statutory public consultation and Cabinet Member approval.

Delivery was overseen by a Project Team, reporting monthly to the Highways Infrastructure Steering Group. The scheme followed the Councils standard project management process. It took approximately 18 months on site to complete, with complex traffic management in place during that time. During construction there were delays caused by Statutory Undertakers timeframes, unknown utilities, poor weather, and design changes due to National Highways requirements. During the life of the project, material and constructions costs increased by 52%, due unforeseen factors including Covid and the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

The scheme spanned six years, from first designs in 2017 to site completion in December 2023

Project Governance Arrangements

- 4.15. Good governance makes sure that costs, risks, and impacts are identified as early as possible, recorded properly, and communicated clearly to enable members and officers to make informed decisions.
- 4.16. The Committee received information regarding the governance structure for the capital programme along with the document templates used throughout the process. The current governance structure for the capital programme has been developed in-house and been in place in its current form since November 2024. There is a Programme Management Office within Corporate Services that supports the structure. Improvements have been made following its implementation, e.g. new forms introduced and procurement of new software system.
- 4.17. There is a minimum set of governance and standards that any project must have in place to ensure it is properly managed. The standard that every project must have is:
- Project Sponsor
 - Project Delivery Manager
 - Finance Lead
 - Project Initiation Document (PID)

A template document has been developed which requires clear indication of the officers responsible for the project, what the outcomes of the project are expected to be, expected costs, key milestones, key risks and a financial breakdown. It also requires the tolerances in timeframe, cost, risk, and deliverables to be outlined along with a communication plan and procurement strategy. The PID includes a structure for recording that each Gateway (noted in paragraph 4.20) has taken place and the approved costs. The document acts as the single point of truth and is centrally held in the Project Management Office.

- Risk, Actions, Issues, Decisions and Lesson learnt log (RAIDL)

A template document has been developed which requires a description of what has happened and its impact on the project, control measures, actions needed, dependencies, log and justifications of decisions, what would be changed or improved in the future, and who is responsible for ensuring the lesson is shared/applied in future projects.

- 4.18. Some documents used throughout the governance process are not publicly available due to containing sensitive information, which may remain even when the project is complete. Sensitivity is assessed as either commercial prejudice, public interest, and legal compliance.

Lifecycle of a Project (Micro Governance Structure)

- 4.19. There is a five-stage process for each project:
- Foundation – high-level feasibility of a new capital initiatives, identifying benefits and producing a Project Mandate
 - Discovery – Mandate is developed into a Project Brief, giving an outline design or business case/option appraisal. At the completion of this stage the project is noted within the MTFP
 - Design – detailed design and Full Business Case/PID developed
 - Delivery – delivered against agreed plan, and highlight, exception reports produced along with change requests. Exception issues must be reported to the Placemaking (Regeneration) Mission Board (PMB)
 - Review – project-handover and review take place when nearing successful completion and ready for formal handover along with budget reconciliation. A checklist is completed by the Project Management Office on closure of the project, along with an outline ongoing support and maintenance and contract management.
- 4.20. There are gateways at each stage to approve progression to the next stage, monitor delivery, and highlight closure/benefits. The benefits of the project are defined at the Foundation/Discovery stage, monitored through Design and Delivery, and the effectiveness of the project is reviewed at the final stage. This will include any Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) or standards from external funders the project is required to adhere to. The PID is reviewed and monitored at each Gateway.
- 4.21. The expected costs, time, and potential risks are identified at the Discovery stage and contingency and allowance for inflationary uplifts will be built in to the project to mitigate for uncertainty. Risks can include inflation, delays within the supply chain, and labour costs. However, other unexpected issues and risks may arise at Delivery stage, e.g. issues being discovered with utility pipes when digging on a site. There may also be occasions when funding opportunities arise where the intention of a project and budget must be set to apply for the funding before the detail can be worked up, which increases the risks. It is therefore important for good governance that risks are anticipated at Discovery, identified as early as possible throughout the stages and Gateways, and there is clear recording of risk to enable members and officers to make informed decisions.
- 4.22. Due to the many different type of projects, there is no set level of contingency to apply to all projects that are carried out by the Council. The extra time/costs to factor in to a project is calculated by officers, who make a judgement on the probability of different issues occurring.
- 4.23. Funding, risks, and capacity are addressed at each of the gateways before a project can progress to the next stage, and every project must be fully funded before progressing. The project will be

presented to PMB to approve progression to the next stage. If a project cannot be delivered within the agreed budgets and scopes, including those set by external funders, it is escalated to the appropriate governance level, including Cabinet and Council.

- 4.24. Closure reports at the review stage are shared with PMB. These reports, which use a standard template, include information on performance against the non-negotiable outcomes, project summary, planned and actual end date, planned and actual costs, and planned resources.
- 4.25. Details of the governance roles and responsibilities of the project are also requested, evaluating if they are being applied and working effectively. It is asked if any lessons have been learnt throughout the template, along with follow on actions and recommendations. The reports evaluate the success of a project and are considered and signed off by the PMB. Information on lessons learnt/follow on actions disseminated to the appropriate teams.

Case Study – Hartburn Lane/Hartburn Avenue Road Junction

The Hartburn Lane/Hartburn Avenue Road Junction Closure Report indicates that early and regular stakeholder communication allowed concerns/queries to be resolved. It was noted there was sufficient contingency within the initial budget forecast for the increase in actual cost, and that a Stage 4 Road Safety Audit would take place after 12 months to analyse the safety performance of the new road layout. The report highlights prioritising internal delivery of such schemes.

Case Study – Causeway/Melrose Avenue Signalisation

The Causeway/Melrose Avenue Signalisation closure report demonstrates how it is highlighted that a scheme would not achieve its non-negotiable outcomes and therefore stopped from going ahead. Additional modelling took place to inform decision-making, and the project was closed to avoid future expenditure. The lessons learnt, which included early investment in analysis, early assessment of schemes, and disbenefits and risks identified escalated early in the project life, would be applied to future projects

- 4.26. The micro governance structure is illustrated in **Appendix 1**

Reporting and Decision Making (Macro Governance Structure)

- 4.27. Every project has a Project Group to oversee the delivery. Officers who sit on the Project Group include the project manager, finance, legal, procurement and any other officers relevant to the project. The group has responsibility and accountability for the maintenance of documentation, project plan, and RAIDL.
- 4.28. Project groups report to a Programme Working Group, which are chaired by Assistant Directors and are responsible for developing and making recommendations for all newly proposed projects. They also oversee progress of the projects within individual programmes and managing delivery of the projects. There are six Working Groups:
 - Assets
 - Transport and Highways
 - Housing Delivery
 - Local Plan and Spatial Policy

- Central Stockton
 - Billingham, Thornaby Yarm & Eaglescliffe.
- 4.29. Highlight reports are completed, signed and dated by the project manager, ensuring the data is current, to provide a snapshot of project status using a Red Amber and Green (RAG) rating. It includes milestones, risks, issues, activity taken place in the last period, and activity planned. These are used to create a single dashboard for all projects which includes details of the Working Group it reports to and Chair, Project Manager, Project Name, a RAG rating for the project's status, and the Gateway stage the project is at. The dashboards support the Working Groups and PMB in scrutinising, challenging and monitoring the delivery of the capital programme.
- 4.30. The highlights dashboard and RAIDL is reviewed regularly at governance meetings for checking and challenging, to ensure accountability and transparency within the project.
- 4.31. Working Groups report to the PMB who are responsible for the oversight of the capital programme. PMB seek assurance from Working Groups and formally approves newly proposed projects progression for formal consideration by Powering our Futures (PoF) Board and Corporate Management Team (CMT). PMB also formally approves progression of each project to the next stage. PMB also provide advice to the relevant Director who has delegation from Cabinet to deliver projects and programmes and escalate decisions to Cabinet where they exceed delegated powers.

Case Study – January 2026 PMB meeting

The PMB were presented with a request and PID to move the Worsall Road Culvert Improvement Scheme to the Design stage. The scheme would remove existing screens and install a CIRIA C786-complaint security and debris screen. The funding allocated to the scheme would support detailed design, site investigations and construction works. Once the design had been completed and tenders returned the scheme would be presented again to request moving to Delivery stage.

The PMB also considered two requests to move projects from Design to Delivery stage:

- Care Homes Solar Scheme to install solar panels on public sector buildings via the Mayoral Renewables Fund, which had to be completed by the end of the year. The funding agreement had been signed by TVCA, and ready to move to Delivery.
- Thornaby Swimming Pool, which had sought Cabinet approval throughout the different stages in the process, including budget for delivery, approval of the existing scheme scope, and approval of moving funds from different projects in the Town Deal programmes to the scheme.

- 4.32. CMT authorises capital projects to progress to Cabinet who make executive decisions (and where appropriate make recommendations to Council) in respect of budget allocations for capital projects and programmes and delegates further decision making to the relevant Director in consultation with the Cabinet member in line with Council's Constitution.
- 4.33. Finance officers highlight any issues with budgets to the relevant group throughout the project to determine if and how to source any extra funding needed.
- 4.34. The macro governance structure is illustrated in **Appendix 2**.

Member Engagement

- 4.35. Member engagement throughout the lifecycle of a project varies depending on the project.
- 4.36. Cabinet members have input and oversight regarding capital projects within their portfolio via regular dialogue with officers and receive the data they need to make informed decisions. Reports are presented to Cabinet when executive decisions on a programme or project are required e.g. the approval of inclusion of schemes on the programme and allocation of budgets.
- 4.37. In addition, member engagement could also include:
- Consultation with Ward Members for Ward specific projects
 - Representation on boards such as the Town Deal Board
 - Updates to the Leader/Deputy Leader
 - Reports to Cabinet/Council
 - Programme updates through the MTFP cycle
- 4.38. To ensure good governance, it is important when communicating with members they receive clear, consistent, and timely information as the project evolves. This includes explaining how scopes change, risks arise, and costs are affected to give an understanding of why a project is where it is at, e.g. if there are delays or changes to costs. Providing this transparency helps members in their decision making as well as preventing possible misconceptions at later stages of the project.
- 4.39. Members can make legitimate requests for information that they may need, and Scrutiny members have additional rights to summon officers to meetings and request information to carry out their work. While there are restrictions on commercially sensitive information being published, members are entitled to access sensitive information they reasonably need to discharge their functions through secure confidential channels.
- 4.40. The Council has a Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members which outlines how information should be provided to members as well as how officers should consult with members, however, this has not been reviewed in recent years.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. The Committee's review has examined the current governance arrangements for the Capital Programme which has been in place in its current form since November 2024. In doing so, members have received information on the breadth of activity underway and the types of challenges that different projects pose. This reinforces the need for clear, consistent governance and effective oversight to ensure projects deliver value for money and achieve their intended benefits.
- 5.2. All projects placed on the Capital Programme must be fully funded and potential risks identified, although it is acknowledged that there may be a level of unforeseeable risk. The early stages of the governance structure ensures that costs and risk are fully considered along with identifying benefits, giving an outline of the design. Gateways at each stage assures that these are monitored

and any issues throughout the lifecycle of a project highlighted to the relevant layer of oversight. The introduction of standardised documentation has strengthened consistency across the programme and improved the ability to monitor progress, manage risk, and record decision making.

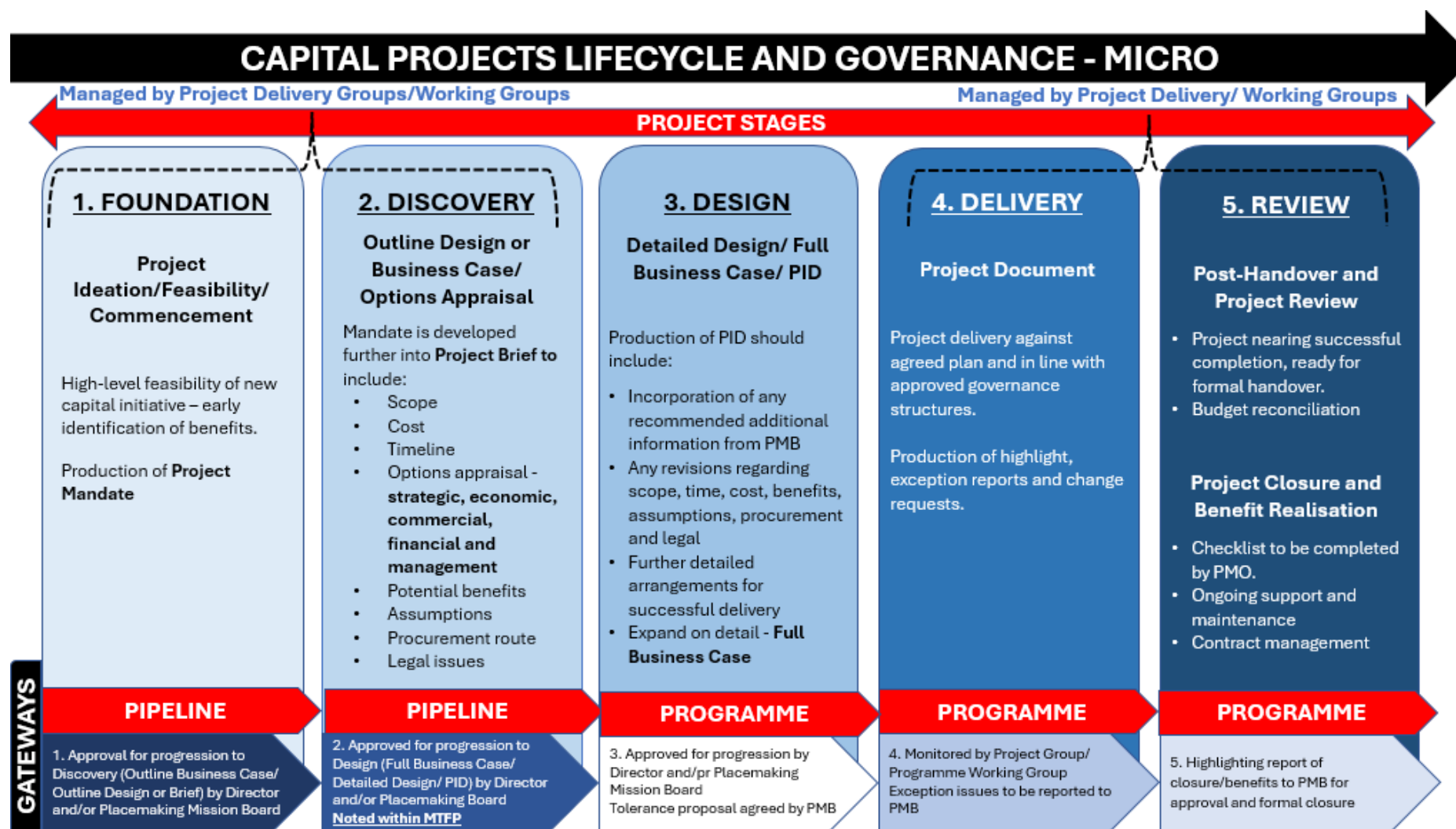
- 5.3. The layered system of providing oversight to the programme, via project groups, working groups, PMB, CMT, and Cabinet/Council, illustrates a clear line of decision-making and accountability which the LGA's guidance highlights as being important for good governance. The establishment of the Programme Management Office to support the governance structure reflects the guidance from the LGA that there should be a dedicated unit with specialised project management skills to manage the programme. The Committee are aware of the development of the Council's workforce "People Plan" to ensure that there are sufficient capacity and skills across the organisation, and this should also consider the needs to support the capital programme.
- 5.4. The review highlights the importance of learning from experience, and the requirement to log lessons learnt and complete closure reports demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement which will become increasingly valuable as more projects move through the full governance cycle.
- 5.5. The review also highlighted a strong appetite to strengthen member engagement to ensure more consistent information flows and earlier involvement where appropriate, as well as to aid the decision-making processes.
- 5.6. Overall, the Committee concludes that the Council has made significant progress in implementing a strong and credible governance framework for its capital programme. The systems now in place provides a solid foundation for delivering projects that benefit residents, support regeneration, and meet the strategic ambition of the Borough. Continued focus on governance, communication, risk management and workforce capability will further improve delivery, ensuring that capital projects achieve their intended outcomes and continue to contribute positively to the Borough's growth and development.

Recommendations

- 5.7. The Committee recommends that:
 - 1) The level of financial delegation given to officers in relation to capital projects is reviewed and any potential changes be taken through Cabinet and Council.
 - 2) When making a decision Cabinet receive information that addresses the following:
 - option appraisal
 - public and stakeholder consultation and engagement
 - benefit identification
 - risk management
 - financial delegations
 - lessons learned from previous projects where appropriate
 - 3) Member information for and engagement of the capital programme is strengthened by:
 - Providing regular and consistent updates to members via Cabinet/Member briefings showing progress against approved programme
 - Including training for members on capital programme governance and funding frameworks within the Member Induction

- Refreshing the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Councillors to include the flow of information on the progress of capital projects particularly to relevant Ward Members
- 4) Consideration be given within the ongoing development of the Council's People Plan of the need to ensure sufficient workforce capacity and skills to support the capital programme.
 - 5) Officers provide a report on the effectiveness of the governance structure to the Select Committee in January 2027, when further projects have been through the process.

Appendix 1

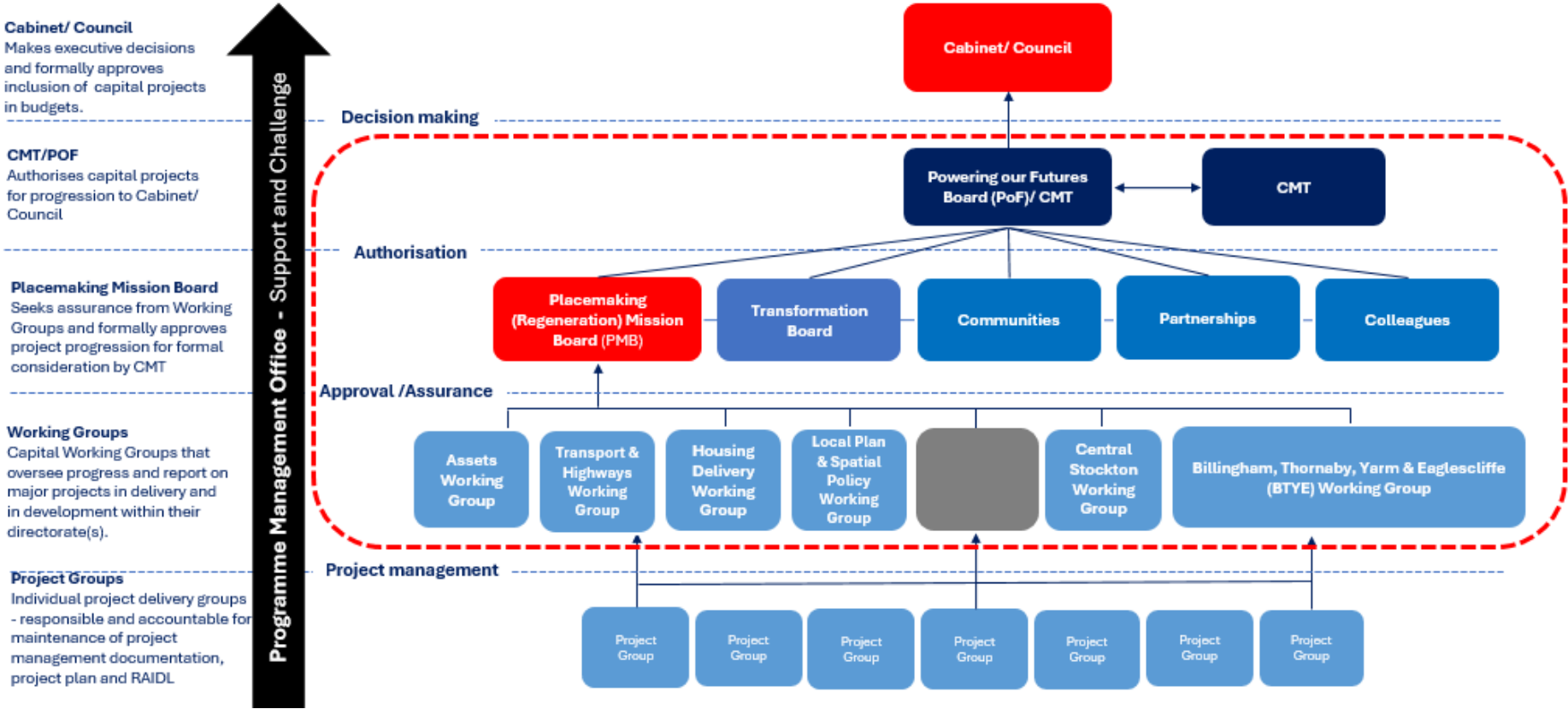


Appendix 2

This document was classified as: OFFICIAL

Capital Programme

Capital Programme Governance – Macro



Glossary of Terms

BNG	Basic Needs Grants
D&B	Design and Build
CMT	Corporate Management Team
CRSTS	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements
DoE	Department of Education
DLUCH	Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
HNPCA	High Needs Provision Capital Allocations
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LGA	Local Government Association
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
PID	Project Initiation Document
PMB	Placemaking (Regeneration) Mission Board
PoF	Powering our Futures
RAG	Red, Amber and Green
RAIDL	Risk, Actions, Issues, Decisions and Lesson learnt log
TCR	Transport for City Regions
TVCA	Tees Valley Combined Authority

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REPORT TO CABINET

14th May 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio Title – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

Powering our Future – Transformation Reviews Update

Summary

The Council's Powering Our Future Programme provides a framework to modernise ways of working, focused on improving outcomes for residents, whilst ensuring we remain financially sustainable and resilient in the context of rising demand, budget pressures and increasing complexity. Powering Our Future includes a Transformation Mission, and a series of reviews that seek to maximise use of our resources, whilst continuing to support strong, inclusive and resilient communities across the Borough. Phase 1 of Transformation activity has already identified £9.9m of savings, and a number of key projects are now in delivery.

The budget report to Council in February highlighted ongoing financial pressures arising from demand pressures and rising costs across several services, particularly Children's and Adults' Social Care, Home to School Transport and support for children with special educational needs. Demand is growing in both volume and complexity, while funding is not keeping pace with cost pressures, resulting in an estimated budget gap of £6.7m in 2026/27, rising to £13.8m in 2027/28 and £18.4m in 2028/29.

To address this, a second Phase of Transformation Reviews were introduced focused on day-to-day efficiencies, council-wide initiatives and outcome-based service reviews. This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress, and the contribution of activity towards closing the Medium Term Financial Plan budget gap. It focuses primarily on Efficiency Reviews, where savings are front-loaded. Separate reports will be brought to Cabinet on the detail of Outcome-based Reviews as part of a planned approach and key milestones that ensure robust options and impact analysis.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To note the progress of Powering our Futures Transformation Mission and financial implications to date.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet note the progress of reviews to date and the activity towards closing the budget gap across the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Detail

1. The budget report to Council in February identified the ongoing financial pressures and growth in demand we are experiencing across many council services, in particular within Children's and Adult's Social Care, Home to School Transport and educational support to children with special educational needs. We continue to see significant rises in the number of residents requiring many of these services, with the complexity of support required for individuals increasing, and in some services an external provider market with significant price rises all of which are leading to greater costs for the council to pay, whereby funding is not growing at the same pace, leading to budget gaps. This has resulted in an estimated budget gap of £6.7m in 2026/27, rising to £13.8m in 2027/28 and £18.4m in 2028/29.
2. To close the Budget gap, we are taking a planned approach to transformation and change using the Powering our Future Framework. Work is well underway with the second phase of Transformation Reviews are focusing on day to-day efficiencies, alongside Service Reviews and cross-council transformation. We continue to ensure services are fit for purpose to address the challenges we face, so that we continue to be a high-performing, sustainable council that does our best for communities.
3. The first phase of the Transformation Mission within the Powering our Futures programme, consists of a number of reviews covering services such as Community Transport, Waste Collection, Supporting People to Live at Home Independently, Administration and Business Services, Fees and Charges and Children in our Care. These are now at varying stages of review with some now into delivery phase. These reviews have focused on delivering improved outcomes, with many also delivering financial savings. To date these have already identified £9.9m worth of savings and have supported the Council's position.
4. Building on the structure of Phase 1, and in response to the challenging financial position, the budget report in February 2026 identified a Phase 2 approach to the Powering our Futures Programme. Phase 2 covers three strands of work; efficiency reviews, council wide initiatives and outcome-based service reviews. Work is well underway across all three strands and updates will be brought back to members at relevant points in the review cycle.
5. The first strand of the Efficiency Reviews is being progressed through a structured and robust programme approach to identify opportunities to deliver services to residents in a more efficient and effective way. This work includes the implementation of smaller-scale service changes, systematic reviews of posts as they become vacant to assess ongoing need, the development of income generation opportunities, and the maximisation of digital solutions. Service delivery models are also being reviewed to ensure their long-term sustainability. Progress against this strand is being monitored through established project management and governance arrangements, with regular updates to be reported.
6. The second strand focuses on Council-wide initiatives designed to identify organisation-wide efficiencies and is being delivered through a coordinated programme of work supported by robust project management and financial analysis. This includes data-driven reviews of

corporate expenditure by type of spend, an assessment of procurement and purchasing arrangements, and consideration of more modern and efficient ways of working. Work is progressing to promote the appropriate use of the purchasing annual leave policy and to review working practices to minimise avoidable expenditure, including travel and other discretionary costs. In addition, opportunities to achieve financial benefits through the re-profiling of funding or delivery timescales for capital projects are being explored. Regular progress updates will be brought forward through the Council's established reporting processes.

7. The third area of focus will be Outcome Based Service Reviews. Each of these reviews will follow the well-established governance of the Phase 1 Transformation projects already in progress, with a focus on meeting outcomes including reducing costs. The list of reviews are:
 - Strategic Commissioning
 - Reablement Phase 2
 - Learning Disabilities Direct Care Provision
 - Opportunities for young people into employment
 - Review of Children's Support Services to ensure readiness for the Families First reforms
 - Libraries Service
 - Environment & Leisure
 - Customer Services
 - Asset Management Review
 - Reviewing the events service
 - Communication Methods
 - Review of Catering Services
8. Significant progress is being made on these reviews and Appendix A provides a summary update on savings identified and moving into delivery phase to date. This will complement other reports due to be brought to Cabinet in the coming months setting out progress against the larger reviews.
9. Regular updates will be brought back to Cabinet summarising the overall performance against the budget gap, supplementing the regular MTFP updates, as well as individual updates on the Outcome Based Reviews and other reviews as appropriate, this will include Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessments.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

10. An EPIA has been completed for the individual decisions where appropriate.

Corporate Parenting Implications

11. There are no implications on the corporate parenting role.

Financial Implications

12. The table at appendix A sets out the savings identified so far towards closing the budget gap; £2.974m in 2026/27, £2.364m per annum for future years. Consideration has been given to wider, longer term financial implications as a result of each decision.

Legal Implications

13. Legal implications are considered as part of the decision making process for the individual decisions in the attachment.

Risk Assessment

14. Risks are considered as part of the decision making process for the individual decisions in the attachment. These will also form part

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

15. Consideration is given to wards affected as part of each individual decision.

Background Papers

16. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update and Strategy February 2026.

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Appendix A

Directorate	Area of Saving	Description	Savings Identified 26/27	Savings Identified 27/28	Savings Identified 28/29
Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Public Health	The Council receives a ring-fenced grant to deliver public health services and outcomes, investing in services delivered throughout the Council and by external partners to meet public health objectives. There are elements of the grant in 2025/26 that were committed to one-off expenditure, as well as an annual uplift in the grant. An outcome-based review has been undertaken considering the optimum use of public health investment, to realign to other areas of the Council. The work builds on existing joint working between Public Health and other services across the Council. The proposed Council areas to receive realigned funding have been identified: • Trading standards, enforcement • Employment & training, inclusive growth, economic & place development • Parks & green space, active travel • Homelessness (complex lives) & communities, engagement & consultation • Workplace health There is a more detailed report on this meeting agenda for Cabinet to note with more information.	(735,000)	(670,000)	(670,000)
Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Public Health	The Council currently funds a weight management programme delivered by Tees Active which allows residents to access support and advice on healthy weight. Residents can also find other support for healthy weight locally, such as through referral by their GP e.g. the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme. More broadly, the Council continues to invest in leisure services with partners including Tees Active as well as small grants to community groups for delivering physical activity support including for children and young people. The public health team leads a whole system approach to	(65,000)	(130,000)	(130,000)

		healthy weight and physical activity across partners, including embedding opportunities for prevention.			
Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Public Health	As part of the review mentioned above, the discretionary areas of public health spending has also been considered. As a result, funding in two areas was reduced by £30,000 per annum each: the provision of sexual health prevention advice and outreach; and funding local community groups to address local health needs through small grants. Public health continues to fund £50k per year for community small grants; and funds £1,094,261 per year as part of a Tees-wide contract to deliver integrated sexual health services (genito-urinary medicine and community contraception).	(60,000)	(60,000)	(60,000)
Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Public Health	As part of the same review of discretionary areas within public health, the funding for Sporting Chance has ceased. As above, public health continues to provide a range of funding and support around physical activity (Tees Active contract, small grants programme, Sport England award, whole system coordination and delivery).	(30,000)	(30,000)	(30,000)
Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Adult Social Care	Savings are expected from managing growth in demand through a reduction in the use of residential beds. This will be delivered through strengthened pathway management and limiting reliance on discharge beds, resulting in fewer long term residential placements. Our priority remains keeping people safely in their own homes for as long as possible, this includes working with our partners to return people home safely when they leave hospital.	(230,000)	(230,000)	(230,000)
Children's Services	Social Care	We have been awarded additional funding from the Department for Education to support our preparation for the Families First Reforms. During 2026/27 this funding will be used to undertake an outcome based review to ensure Council services are organised in the optimum way to deliver the Families First outcomes.	(245,000)	0	0

Community Services, Environment and Culture	Leisure Services	A review of the management fee paid to Tees Active has been undertaken, this has resulted in a reduction in the management fee of £220,000 per annum.	(220,000)	(220,000)	(220,000)
Community Services, Environment and Culture	Events	A review of the events programme for 2026/27 has been undertaken to generate a reduction in the overall programme costs by £250,000. This includes a reduction in the number and scale of events delivered and a reduction in the financial support (including grants) for events delivered by third parties on Council Land. Further work is ongoing to consider future years events programmes.	(250,000)	(250,000)	(250,000)
Community Services, Environment and Culture	Highways	An efficiency review has been undertaken within the highways service focusing on maintaining levels whilst identifying efficiencies within the service. Through a combination of digital solutions, and optimising income streams the service has identified a recurring saving.	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)
Council Wide	Optimisation of Grant Income	Through a series of efficiency reviews across council budgets we have considered the optimal use of grant funding to meet existing commitments. This has allowed us to identify alternative funding sources, using external funding where possible, freeing up Council resources.	(857,000)	(492,000)	(492,000)
Council Wide	Deletion of Vacant Posts	Through a series of efficiency reviews across council budgets we have considered existing staffing budgets and deleted a small number of vacant posts.	(82,000)	(82,000)	(82,000)
		Total	(2,974,000)	(2,364,000)	(2,364,000)

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REPORT TO CABINET

14 MAY 2026

JOINT REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER AND THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration and Housing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington

Yarm Levelling Up Fund (LUF) – Reconsideration of Decision Following Call-In

Summary

This report enables Cabinet to reconsider its decision relating to the Yarm Levelling Up Fund (LUF) public realm proposals following a call-in and subsequent consideration by the Executive Scrutiny Committee.

The call-in forms part of the Council's constitutional arrangements for scrutiny of executive decision-making and enables an executive decision to be paused and reconsidered where concerns are raised about the decision-making process.

On 22 April 2026, the Executive Scrutiny Committee considered the call-in and resolved to refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration, having identified matters relating to the clarity and presentation of the decision-making process that Cabinet was asked to have regard to.

The original Cabinet report and decision record are attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

1. The decision has been referred back to Cabinet in accordance with the call-in procedure set out in the Council's Constitution.
2. Cabinet is therefore required to reconsider the decision, having regard to the matters identified by the Executive Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

Cabinet is invited to:

1. Consider the matters identified by the Executive Scrutiny Committee; and

2. Determine whether to:
 - a. confirm the original decision;
 - b. amend the decision; or
 - c. substitute an alternative decision.

Background to the Original Decision

1. At its meeting on 12 March 2026, Cabinet considered a report relating to the Yarm Levelling Up Fund (LUF) public realm proposals. The report set out the outcome of a public engagement exercise in relation to the proposed High Street scheme, the wider financial context, and a range of options for the future use of the remaining funding.
2. Following consideration, Cabinet resolved to note the outcome of the public engagement, not to proceed with the scheme as originally proposed, and to reallocate the remaining funding. This included retaining a proportion of funding for locally focused schemes, with further development delegated accordingly.

Call In and Executive Scrutiny Consideration

3. The decision was subsequently called in in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The call in raised concerns relating to the presentation and interpretation of the engagement exercise, the extent to which its outcomes were reflected in the decision, and the clarity with which options and alternative approaches were presented.
4. On 22 April 2026, the Executive Scrutiny Committee considered the call in. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the call in met the constitutional requirements for validity and that the matters raised were capable of scrutiny within the Council's decision making framework. The Committee then resolved to refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

Matters for Cabinet to Have Regard To

5. In referring the decision back, the Executive Scrutiny Committee identified matters for Cabinet to have regard to when reconsidering its decision. These matters relate to the clarity and explanation of the decision making process.
6. In summary, they concern:
 - how clearly the engagement exercise was presented and understood;
 - how the purpose and status of that engagement were communicated;
 - how engagement outcomes were interpreted and taken into account;
 - the clarity with which options and alternative approaches were presented;
 - the articulation of reasons for the decision; and
 - the overall completeness and coherence of the information before Cabinet, including the relationship between engagement outcomes, financial considerations, and the decision taken.

Reconsideration of the Decision

7. Cabinet is invited to reconsider the decision following the Executive Scrutiny Committee's resolution to refer the decision back for reconsideration, and having regard to the matters identified by the Committee.

8. Referral of the decision back does not indicate that the original decision was unlawful or improperly taken. The decision remains one taken within the Council's executive arrangements; however, its implementation is paused pending reconsideration.
9. On reconsideration, Cabinet is not required to reach a different outcome. Cabinet retains full discretion to confirm the original decision, amend it, or substitute an alternative decision, provided it is satisfied that the matters raised through scrutiny have been properly considered and that the reasons for the decision reached are clearly articulated.
10. The decision taken following reconsideration will constitute the operative decision for the purposes of the Council's decision-making framework.

Consultation and engagement

11. No additional consultation has been undertaken as part of this report. Cabinet is asked to reconsider its decision having regard to the matters identified through the call-in and scrutiny process.

Next Steps

12. Following reconsideration, the decision taken by Cabinet at this meeting will be implemented in accordance with the Council's executive arrangements and recorded in the formal decision notice.

Financial Implications

13. The financial implications remain as set out in the original Cabinet report unless Cabinet determines to amend or replace the decision.

Legal Implications

14. The referral of the decision back to Cabinet has been carried out in accordance with the call-in procedure set out in the Council's Constitution. Call-in is a mechanism for scrutiny of the decision-making process and does not of itself imply any unlawfulness or procedural impropriety in the original decision.
15. In reconsidering the decision, Cabinet must have regard to the matters identified by the Executive Scrutiny Committee, take into account relevant considerations, and give clear reasons for the decision reached. Provided these requirements are met, Cabinet remains within its executive powers to confirm, amend, or replace the original decision following reconsideration.

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STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET DECISION

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting 12 March 2026

1. **Title of Item/Report**

Levelling Up Fund - Yarm Public Realm

2. **Record of the Decision**

Consideration was given to a report that provided a progress update on the Round 1 Levelling Up Fund programme of interventions along with a summary of the public engagement undertaken to inform whether the Council should proceed with the Yarm High Street public realm proposals as presented to the public in May 2025. In response to the majority 'no' vote that was received, the report sets out a series of options to inform a decision on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget for Yarm High Street.

The report provided a summary update of all Levelling Up Fund (LUF) interventions before focusing specifically upon the Yarm High Street public realm element of the programme.

The approved LUF programme was developed in response to the publication of LUF Round 1 application in 2021 with the objectives of delivering major proposals in Yarm and Eaglescliffe under the priority themes of Transport, Culture and Town Centre Regeneration.

The bid focussed on delivery of improvements to cultural facilities in, and enhancements to, Preston Park Museum and Grounds (PPMG), redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall and public realm enhancements on Yarm High Street and delivery of cycleway connections in Yarm and Eaglescliffe.

In March 2023, Cabinet noted that work had been underway to develop a greater level of understanding on the scope, cost and deliverability of the agreed interventions and approved a funding profile to reflect the proposed interventions across Yarm High Street, PPMG and Cycleway infrastructure.

Since then, work had been underway to deliver a range of interventions at PPMG, with completion of the Spence Building in September 2025, a remodelled cafe and new toilets, additional parking and improvements to the Aviary and playground. A planning application for the demolition and redevelopment of South Lodge was submitted in January 2026.

Work to create an improved cycle link along Durham Lane to connect key employment sites and surrounding residential areas commenced in January 2026 and were on programme to complete in September 2026. The route would be comprised of segregated cycle routes, shared route, and new crossing facilities between Elton Interchange and Cleasby Way junction, extending to the new western access to Eaglescliffe Station.

The programme of works for Yarm High Street, as set out in the LUF Round 1 bid was focussed on a public realm scheme and the redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall, in partnership with Yarm Town Council, to bring the building back into use as visitor attraction and to replace the public toilets that were displaced because of the works. The redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall was completed in September 2023 and new public toilets, located at Yarm Library opened in November 2022.

To help shape the public realm element of the High Street intervention and to gain insights into understand local priorities and opportunities, two periods of public consultation were undertaken in 2022.

The first period of consultation was undertaken in August 2022, for a period of three weeks. The consultation was promoted widely on social media and local media. Staffed engagement events were held in Yarm Library, and an online consultation form was available on the Council's website.

The results, published in October 2022, demonstrated that the top five improvements identified were: improving footpaths, reducing street clutter, adding more planting, improving connections and accessibility to the River Tees and providing more seating and places to rest. The findings from the initial public consultation were analysed and used to shape and develop a package of concept designs for Yarm High Street.

Concept designs were presented for a second round of consultation in December 2022 for a period of 4 weeks. Consultation provided the opportunity for members of the public to share their views through in-person consultation events held in Yarm Library and an online consultation form.

The proposals included new paving along the High Street, new landscaping, seating areas and improved public spaces, de-cluttering of pavements, new cycle parking as well as potential enhancements to the River Tees and Snaiths Field Playground.

The results published in January 2023 showed that 69 per cent of respondents agreed that the locations of proposed works were in the most appropriate places on the High Street, 64 per cent of respondents agreed that the proposals identified the right mix and type of improvements and 53 per cent of respondents said they would be accepting of the small loss of some parking spaces to deliver the scheme.

In response to public feedback received at this stage, which identified that enhancing spaces beyond Yarm High Street was a local priority, schemes to improve connections to and along the River Tees and upgrading the existing playground at Snaith's Field were developed.

The first phase of works focused on resurfacing the existing footpath and repairing root damage along True Lovers Walk, which were completed in September 2025, successfully improving access along walkways.

In response to feedback received, the scope of improvements to True Lovers Walk was broadened to consider two existing fishing pontoons located along the route.

A visual ground-level inspection of the pontoons was undertaken in autumn 2024, which found the pontoons to be in poor condition and their structural integrity compromised. Both structures were subsequently closed to the public.

Following the inspections an officer recommendation to remove the existing pontoons emerged, on the basis that their deteriorating condition, public safety concerns, ongoing maintenance and unknown structural defects below the water line made the pontoons a financial and legal liability to the Council. The cost for removing both pontoons was estimated at approximately £20,000.

Works to upgrade Snaith's Field playground were completed in October 2025. The installation of new play equipment, provision of new seating and resurfacing works to the existing footpath have made the location more accessible, which has been well received by users of the park.

In May 2025, proposals for a series of improvements to the public spaces on Yarm High Street, developed in response to the two periods of public consultation were presented.

Following publication of the scheme in May 2025 some concerns were raised regarding the appearance of the proposed planters and a revised design was undertaken to incorporate a more subtle and refined finish to the planter material, in keeping with the character of the High Street. Furthermore, a commitment was made at Cabinet in July 2025 to assess the cost of re-providing pontoons in the current locations.

Despite these refinements to the scheme, a variety of representations were made to the Council throughout summer and autumn of 2025 in opposition to the proposed scheme, culminating in an instruction to pause the planned start of works whilst further public engagement took place to make sure any interventions reflected local views.

Local people were invited to share their views on the proposed improvements to Yarm High Street over a 4-week period ending in early January 2026 under the banner of 'Yarm High Street - You Decide'. In-person engagement events were held in Yarm Library as well as an online form that was available on the Council's website.

The purpose of the engagement was to understand public views on whether the Council should proceed with the proposed scheme and from the 1,564 responses received, results showed that 225 (14 per cent) respondents agreed that Yes - the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed whilst 1339 (86 per cent) people expressed a view that No – the Council should not proceed with the scheme as proposed.

A full summary of the engagement results was attached to the report.

As the recent engagement process produced an 86 per cent 'No' response as to whether the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed, a decision was sought on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget.

As per the report to Cabinet in March 2023, the approved budget for the Yarm High Street element of the LUF programme was £4,600,000 to support interventions including a public realm scheme, redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall, relocation of public toilets, improvements to Snaiths Field and enhanced access to the River Tees.

The £4.6m was made up of £1m Council funding (from the previously approved £3million from the MTFP in 2020/21 for investment in interventions in Ingleby Barwick, Norton and Yarm), £3.5m LUF and £100k Yarm Town Council funding. To date c.£2.25m had been spent or committed leaving a balance of c.£2.35m made up of c.£950k Council co-funding and c.£1.4m LUF.

The Levelling Up Fund was administered opposite MHCLG under the Government's Regeneration Funding Simplification Programme – Local Regeneration Fund (LRF).

The Local Regeneration Fund simplified capital funding by consolidating the Levelling Up Fund, Town Deals, Future High Streets Fund and Pathfinders Pilot into a single funding pot. The LRF programme attempted to provide a greater flexibility and allow for more local control, enabling local authorities to make decisions about moving funding between projects, cancelling and creating new projects.

allowed for potentially more than one alternative use as the remaining budget could be considered as a single sum or separate budget strands by funding source.

To aid deliberation on potential next steps, a range of alternative courses of action are set out below. The options were by no means exhaustive, rather an attempt to categorise the potential alternatives within the existing LRF remit, options outside of the LRF remit and potential to split the funding by source.

- Retain Funding in Yarm High Street / LUF Round 1 boundary
- Remove Council co-funding into Council reserves (£950k)
- Develop alternative scheme on Yarm High Street.
- Develop alternative scheme in Yarm and Eaglescliffe area.
- Utilise LUF to offset borrowing (approved at Council in February 2025) c£950k to deliver Aviary, Stockton & Darlington Railway heritage feature and Central Area.
- Explore increased scope of interventions in PPMG beyond planned programme.
- Retain LUF money (c£1.4m) for alternative scheme in Yarm and Eaglescliffe area (including High Street)

Reallocate some or all funding from Yarm / LUF Round 1 boundary to interventions across the Borough

- Remove Council co-funding into Council reserves
- Hold LUF funding for a period of time as contingency across LRF programme.
- Identify and develop a new project to allocate some or all LUF funding.
- Allocate to an existing project elsewhere in the Borough

Following the commitment to revisit the principle of removing the fishing pontoons, made at Cabinet in July 2025, further evaluation, including a dive inspection, had since been undertaken to establish the cost and deliverability of removing and replacing the two existing wooden pontoons.

The estimated cost of removing the existing pontoons and replacing with a modern standard, similar sized structure using composite and steel materials to provide improved durability and a longer service life would be approximately £135,000.

A decision on replacing the pontoons would be subject to securing the necessary permits and consents along with a detailed risk assessment to ensure they meet the Council's statutory duties and are safe for public use.

Cabinet was asked to consider whether to proceed with the removal of the pontoons only, or the removal and installation of new pontoons.

Given the condition of the pontoons, in either scenario they must be removed which was estimated at £20,000. The cost of removal and installation of the pontoons, if instructed, would be deducted from the remaining allocated funding of £2.35m as set out in paragraph 28 of the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The findings of the public engagement undertaken in relation to the Yarm High Street public realm scheme be noted.
2. With regard to the £2.35m remaining funds from the allocated budget for Yarm High Street:-
 - a) The £950,000 of SBC co-funding be returned to support the Council's MTFP and financial position.

- b) £950,000 of the remaining LUF funding be used to repay the borrowing associated with the additional expenditure at Preston Park Museum.
- c) The remaining £450,000 LUF funding be committed in the Yarm area.
- d) Delegated Authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to produce a shortlist of possible projects that could be achieved with the remaining budget of £450,000 and then engage with the residents and businesses of Yarm for their priorities. The list is to include the costs of each item on the list and to include the consideration of the replacement of the pontoons, to enable residents and businesses to consider the value for money and extent of the works available when providing their priorities.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To inform a decision on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget for Yarm High Street.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

None

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, 20 March 2026

Proper Officer

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REPORT TO CABINET

12 MARCH 2026

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

KEY DECISION

Regeneration and Housing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington

LEVELLING UP FUND – YARM PUBLIC REALM

Summary

This report provides a progress update on the Round 1 Levelling Up Fund programme of interventions along with a summary of the public engagement undertaken to inform whether the Council should proceed with the Yarm High Street public realm proposals as presented to the public in May 2025. In response to the majority 'no' vote that was received, the report sets out a series of options to inform a decision on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget for Yarm High Street.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To inform a decision on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget for Yarm High Street.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet to note the findings of the public engagement undertaken in relation to the Yarm High Street public realm scheme.
2. Cabinet to consider options for the future use of the allocated budget for Yarm High Street and agree a preferred option for its use.
3. Cabinet to consider options presented in relation to the removal and replacement of two fishing pontoons on True Lovers Walk and decide upon the most appropriate course of action regarding their future provision.

Detail

1. This report provides a summary update of all Levelling Up Fund (LUF) interventions before focusing specifically upon the Yarm High Street public realm element of the programme.

Background

Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 1 Programme

2. The approved LUF programme was developed in response to the publication of LUF Round 1 application in 2021 with the objectives of delivering major proposals in Yarm and Eaglescliffe under the priority themes of Transport, Culture and Town Centre Regeneration.
3. The bid focussed on delivery of improvements to cultural facilities in, and enhancements to, Preston Park Museum and Grounds (PPMG), redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall and public realm enhancements on Yarm High Street and delivery of cycleway connections in Yarm and Eaglescliffe.
4. In March 2023, Cabinet noted that work had been underway to develop a greater level of understanding on the scope, cost and deliverability of the agreed interventions and approved a funding profile to reflect the proposed interventions across Yarm High Street, PPMG and Cycleway infrastructure.
5. Since then, work has been underway to deliver a range of interventions at PPMG, with completion of the Spence Building in September 2025, a remodelled cafe and new toilets, additional parking and improvements to the Aviary and playground. A planning application for the demolition and redevelopment of South Lodge was submitted in January 2026.
6. Work to create an improved cycle link along Durham Lane to connect key employment sites and surrounding residential areas commenced in January 2026 and are on programme to complete in September 2026. The route will be comprised of segregated cycle routes, shared route, and new crossing facilities between Elton Interchange and Cleasby Way junction, extending to the new western access to Eaglescliffe Station.

Background

Yarm High Street

7. The programme of works for Yarm High Street, as set out in the LUF Round 1 bid was focussed on a public realm scheme and the redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall, in partnership with Yarm Town Council, to bring the building back into use as visitor attraction and to replace the public toilets that were displaced because of the works. The redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall was completed in September 2023 and new public toilets, located at Yarm Library opened in November 2022.

8. To help shape the public realm element of the High Street intervention and to gain insights into understand local priorities and opportunities, two periods of public consultation were undertaken in 2022.
9. The first period of consultation was undertaken in August 2022, for a period of three weeks. The consultation was promoted widely on social media and local media. Staffed engagement events were held in Yarm Library, and an online consultation form was available on the Council's website.
10. The results, published in October 2022, demonstrated that the top five improvements identified were: improving footpaths, reducing street clutter, adding more planting, improving connections and accessibility to the River Tees and providing more seating and places to rest. The findings from the initial public consultation were analysed and used to shape and develop a package of concept designs for Yarm High Street.
11. Concept designs were presented for a second round of consultation in December 2022 for a period of 4 weeks. Consultation provided the opportunity for members of the public to share their views through in-person consultation events held in Yarm Library and an online consultation form.
12. The proposals included new paving along the High Street, new landscaping, seating areas and improved public spaces, de-cluttering of pavements, new cycle parking as well as potential enhancements to the River Tees and Snaiths Field Playground.
13. The results published in January 2023 showed that 69 per cent of respondents agreed that the locations of proposed works were in the most appropriate places on the High Street, 64 per cent of respondents agreed that the proposals identified the right mix and type of improvements and 53 per cent of respondents said they would be accepting of the small loss of some parking spaces to deliver the scheme.
14. In response to public feedback received at this stage, which identified that enhancing spaces beyond Yarm High Street was a local priority, schemes to improve connections to and along the River Tees and upgrading the existing playground at Snaith's Field were developed.
15. The first phase of works focused on resurfacing the existing footpath and repairing root damage along True Lovers Walk, which were completed in September 2025, successfully improving access along walkways.
16. In response to feedback received, the scope of improvements to True Lovers Walk was broadened to consider two existing fishing pontoons located along the route.
17. A visual ground-level inspection of the pontoons was undertaken in autumn 2024, which found the pontoons to be in poor condition and their structural integrity compromised. Both structures were subsequently closed to the public.
18. Following the inspections an officer recommendation to remove the existing pontoons emerged, on the basis that their deteriorating condition, public safety concerns, ongoing

maintenance and unknown structural defects below the water line made the pontoons a financial and legal liability to the Council. The cost for removing both pontoons was estimated at approximately £20,000.

19. Works to upgrade Snaith's Field playground were completed in October 2025. The installation of new play equipment, provision of new seating and resurfacing works to the existing footpath have made the location more accessible, which has been well received by users of the park.
20. In May 2025, proposals for a series of improvements to the public spaces on Yarm High Street, developed in response to the two periods of public consultation were presented.
21. Following publication of the scheme in May 2025 some concerns were raised regarding the appearance of the proposed planters and a revised design was undertaken to incorporate a more subtle and refined finish to the planter material, in keeping with the character of the High Street. Furthermore, a commitment was made at Cabinet in July 2025 to assess the cost of re-providing pontoons in the current locations.
22. Despite these refinements to the scheme, a variety of representations were made to the Council throughout summer and autumn of 2025 in opposition to the proposed scheme, culminating in an instruction to pause the planned start of works whilst further public engagement took place to make sure any interventions reflected local views.

Yarm High Street Public Engagement - December 2025

23. Local people were invited to share their views on the proposed improvements to Yarm High Street over a 4 week period ending in early January 2026 under the banner of 'Yarm High Street - You Decide'. In-person engagement events were held in Yarm Library as well as an online form that was available on the Council's website.
24. The purpose of the engagement was to understand public views on whether the Council should proceed with the proposed scheme and from the 1,564 responses received, results showed that 225 (14 per cent) respondents agreed that Yes - the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed whilst 1339 (86 per cent) people expressed a view that No – the Council should not proceed with the scheme as proposed.
25. A full summary of the engagement results can be found at Appendix 1.

Next Steps

26. As the recent engagement process produced an 86 per cent 'No' response as to whether the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed, a decision is sought on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget.
27. As per the report to Cabinet in March 2023, the approved budget for the Yarm High Street element of the LUF programme was £4,600,000 to support interventions including a public realm scheme, redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall, relocation of public toilets, improvements to Snaiths Field and enhanced access to the River Tees.

28. The £4.6m was made up of £1m Council funding (from the previously approved £3million from the MTFP in 2020/21 for investment in interventions in Ingleby Barwick, Norton and Yarm), £3.5m LUF and £100k Yarm Town Council funding. To date c.£2.25m has been spent or committed leaving a balance of c.£2.35m made up of c.£950k Council co-funding and c.£1.4m LUF.
29. The Levelling Up Fund is currently administered opposite MHCLG under the Government's Regeneration Funding Simplification Programme – Local Regeneration Fund (LRF).
30. The Local Regeneration Fund simplifies capital funding by consolidating the Levelling Up Fund, Town Deals, Future High Streets Fund and Pathfinders Pilot into a single funding pot. The LRF programme attempts to provide a greater flexibility and allows for more local control, enabling local authorities to make decisions about moving funding between projects, cancelling and creating new projects.
31. Taking the flexibilities afforded by the Local Regeneration Fund into account, alongside the remaining c.£2.35m budget, a range of uses for the funding can be considered. The make-up of the remaining budget (LUF and SBC funding) allows for potentially more than one alternative use as the remaining budget could be considered as a single sum or separate budget strands by funding source.
32. To aid deliberation on potential next steps, a range of alternative courses of action are set out below. The options are by no means exhaustive, rather an attempt to categorise the potential alternatives within the existing LRF remit, options outside of the LRF remit and potential to split the funding by source.

Retain Funding in Yarm High Street / LUF Round 1 boundary

- Remove Council co-funding into Council reserves (£950k)
- Develop alternative scheme on Yarm High Street.
- Develop alternative scheme in Yarm and Eaglescliffe area.
- Utilise LUF to offset borrowing (approved at Council in February 2025) c£950k to deliver Aviary, Stockton & Darlington Railway heritage feature and Central Area.
- Explore increased scope of interventions in PPMG beyond planned programme.
- Retain LUF money (c£1.4m) for alternative scheme in Yarm and Eaglescliffe area (including High Street)

Reallocate some or all funding from Yarm / LUF Round 1 boundary to interventions across the Borough

- Remove Council co-funding into Council reserves
- Hold LUF funding for a period of time as contingency across LRF programme.
- Identify and develop a new project to allocate some or all LUF funding.
- Allocate to an existing project elsewhere in the Borough

Pontoons

33. Following the commitment to revisit the principle of removing the fishing pontoons, made at Cabinet in July 2025, further evaluation, including a dive inspection, has since been undertaken to establish the cost and deliverability of removing and replacing the two existing wooden pontoons.
34. The estimated cost of removing the existing pontoons and replacing with a modern standard, similar sized structure using composite and steel materials to provide improved durability and a longer service life would be approximately £135,000.
35. A decision on replacing the pontoons would be subject to securing the necessary permits and consents along with a detailed risk assessment to ensure they meet the Council's statutory duties and are safe for public use.
36. Cabinet is therefore asked to consider whether to proceed with the removal of the pontoons only, or the removal and installation of new pontoons.
37. Given the condition of the pontoons, in either scenario they must be removed which is estimated at £20,000. The cost of removal and installation of the pontoons, if instructed, will be deducted from the remaining allocated funding of £2.35m as set out in paragraph 28.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

38. Proposals in this report have been the subject of an Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment, which will be developed further once Cabinet have taken a decision on a preferred alternative use for the remaining funding.

Corporate Parenting Implications

39. There are no corporate parenting implications in this report.

Financial Implications

40. The funding referenced above of £2.35m is within the approved Capital Programme. The specific financial impact would be determined by the solution chosen. Up to £950,000 of the Council revenue funding referenced could be utilised to support the revenue MTFP and/or reserves position. The £1.4m LUF monies can be re-prioritised under the flexibility provided by the Local Regeneration Fund (this all-encompassing fund covers what were previously referenced as Future High Street Fund, Town Deal and Levelling Up Funds). If Cabinet's preferred option is to utilise some of the LUF funding for offsetting prudential borrowing, the remaining LUF budget for reuse would be circa c£450K
41. Any financial changes to the capital programme would be reflected in a subsequent quarterly MTFP update to Cabinet.

Legal Implications

42. The MHCLG's technical guidance on the flexibility of the Local Regeneration Fund provides
43. "We are giving local authorities greater ability to make decisions locally about moving funding between projects in their funding portfolio. Local authorities should consider how they can use this increased flexibility to invest more effectively, whether that is pooling funding in the same area, redeploying funding to different priorities or making changes to existing projects to expedite delivery and maximise their impact".

and further that

44. "We no longer require local authorities to seek approval from MHCLG for any changes to project activities and/or spend profiles as long as the following conditions are met:
- all MHCLG funding is spent by end March 2028
 - all project activity contributes to one or more Government Missions, and in particular economic growth outputs and outcomes as described in the simplified monitoring framework
 - consideration is given to the areas and communities that originally stood to benefit from the funding
 - the portfolio of projects continues to offer VFM - the S.151 Officer (or equivalent) must confirm this is the case
 - MHCLG spend is on activity that falls entirely within the administrative boundaries of the local authority (although this should not restrict collaborations with other local authorities)
 - does not require additional in-year funding above the yearly MHCLG allocation
 - the total MHCLG grant is not exceeded
45. As long as the conditions already mentioned above are met, changes could include:
- amendments to the scope of existing projects, cancellation of existing projects and creation of new projects
 - amendments to project outputs and outcomes
 - amendments to project spending profiles

Risk Assessment

45. A detailed risk assessment of the preferred option will be undertaken in line with the Council project governance and risk assessment criteria.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

Eaglescliffe East, Eaglescliffe West and Yarm Wards

Background Papers

Report to Cabinet March 2023, Report to Cabinet July 2025

Name of Contact Officer: Iain Robinson
Post Title: Assistant Director Town Centre Development
Telephone No. 01642 526017
Email Address: ian.robinson@stockton.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Yarm High Street Engagement - Summary of Findings

Yarm High Street – You Decide engagement ran from Wednesday 10 December 2025 to Monday 12 January 2026.

In-person engagement events were held in Yarm Library on three separate days as well as an online form that was available on the Council's website.

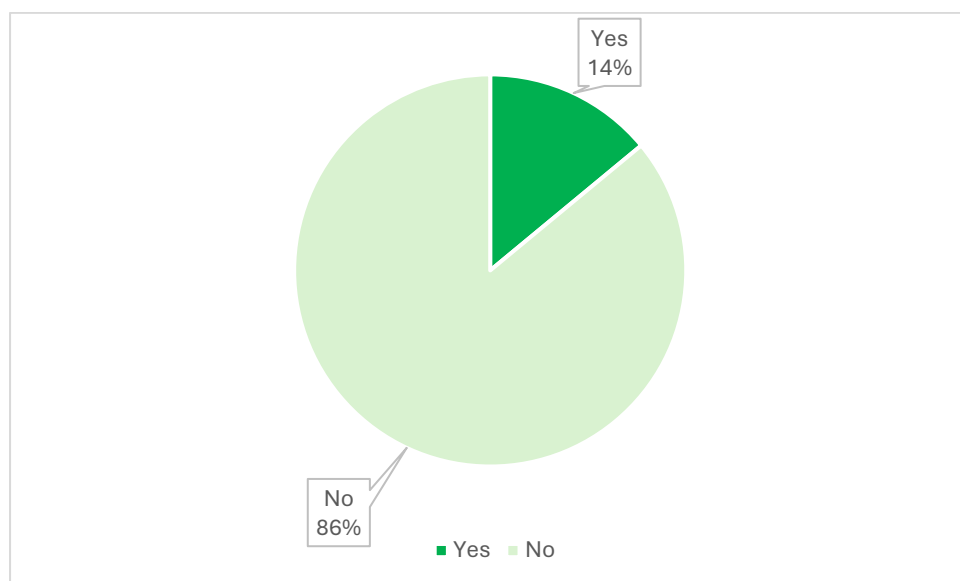
In total, 1,564 responses were received.

This summary presents the findings of this engagement.

Do you think the Council should proceed with the proposed Yarm High Street improvement scheme?

Question 1 of the survey asked respondents, 'Based on the information provided, do you think the Council should proceed with the proposed Yarm High Street improvement scheme?'.

Respondents were asked to answer Yes or No to this question and the graph below details the results.



The results revealed that 225 (14 per cent) respondents agreed that Yes - the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed whilst 1339 (86 per cent) people expressed a view that No – the Council should not proceed with the scheme as proposed.

Free Text Responses

In Question 2, thematic analysis of the optional free text question - *If you would like to explain your view, please use the space below* was undertaken to identify common themes across the

1190 written responses that were received. Examples of comments made under the key themes are summarised below.

Please note that people often raised more than one issue so for this reason percentages won't sum to 100 per cent.

Key Themes	Examples of comments
53 per cent of responses made comments on the theme of Parking & Traffic Congestion	Parking availability is already restricted. Removing parking spaces will increase congestion. Housing growth impacting on parking.
51 per cent of responses made comments on the theme of Yarm's Historic Character	Scheme is too modern and not in keeping with the historic Georgian High Street. Frequent comparisons to looking like Teesside Park.
26 per cent of responses made comments on the theme of Accessibility	Pavements and cobbles need to be better maintained as existing paving creates trip hazards. High Street is not very accessible for wheelchairs and public transport users.
18 per cent of responses made comments on the theme of Antisocial Behaviour	New public spaces will encourage more ASB, littering, loitering and vermin.
15 per cent of responses made comments on the theme of Traffic Congestion	Traffic congestion and traffic flow will be problematic. Need to look at creating a bypass or other traffic solutions.
13 per cent of responses made comments on the theme of New Planters & Seating	New planters and seating are deemed not necessary or of the wrong design. Style of benches and planters are too modern and feel inauthentic for Yarm. Concern that new public spaces won't be maintained by the Council.

In addition to the thematic analysis, respondents offered ideas for delivering High Street improvements, which have been summarised below.

- Focus on the maintenance of existing infrastructure such as re-lining parking bays and repairing paving slabs, road potholes and existing seating.
- Improve parking arrangements on the High Street including providing additional disabled parking bays and designated parent and child spaces.
- Improve and increase public toilet provision.
- More investment in the Riverside walkways including improving access to pontoons and more seating.
- Construct a ring road or bypass around Yarm High Street and a footbridge/subway to ease congestion, reduce vehicle emissions, and improve air quality.
- Improve signage to long-stay and short-stay car parks.
- Introduce a park and ride scheme.
- Alleviate the financial pressures faced by the Local Authority including a reduction in Council Tax burden on households.

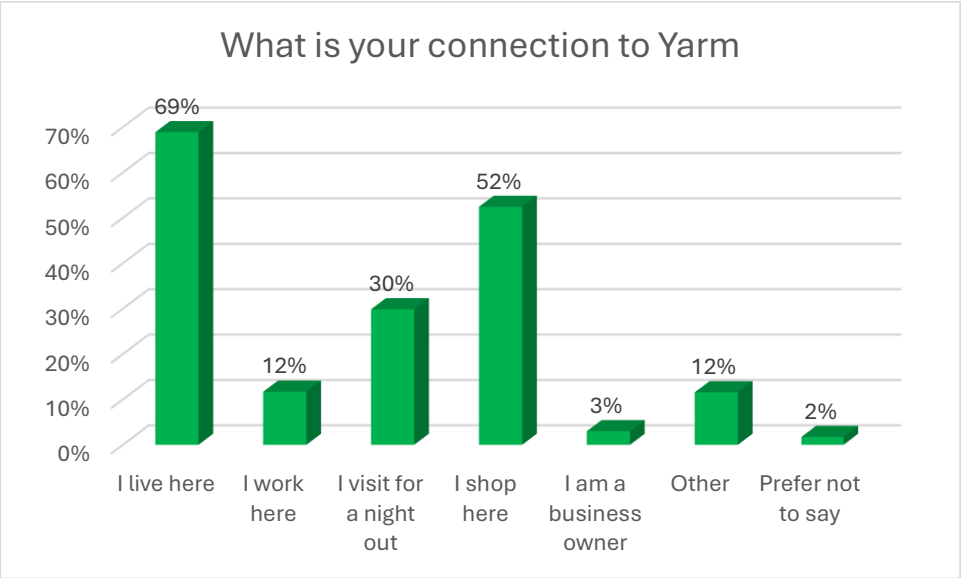
- Allocate funding to improvements at North Tees Hospital or in places like Thornaby or Billingham.

Profile of responses

This section summarises the demographic profile of people that responded to the engagement.

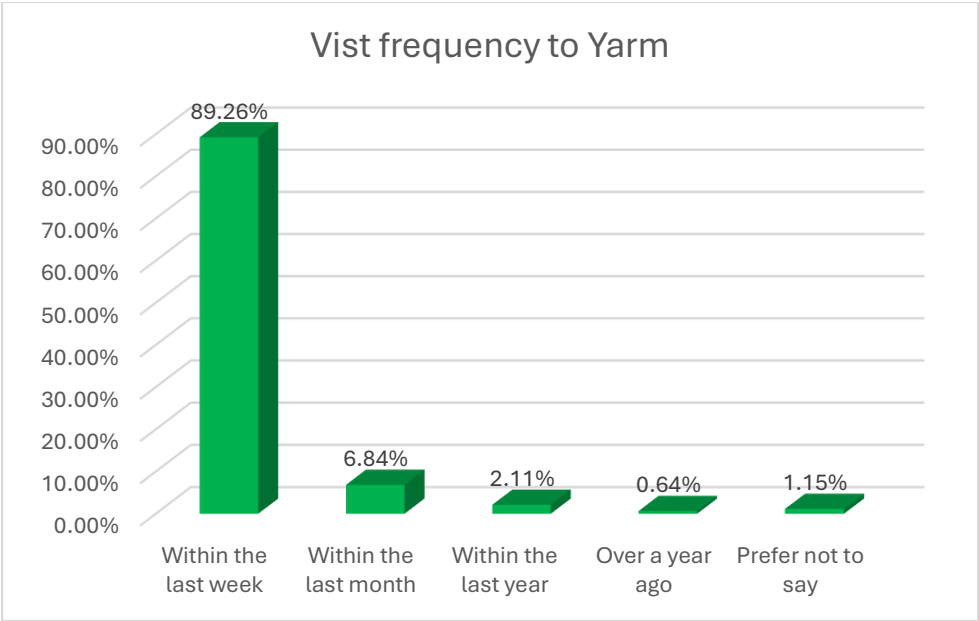
Connection to the Area

Respondents to the engagement found that respondents typically live in the area, shop in Yarm or visit for a night out. A smaller number of responses were received from people that work in the area, with this figure standing at 12 per cent. With regards to the response from business owners, this figure stood at 47 responses, making up 3 per cent of the total responses.



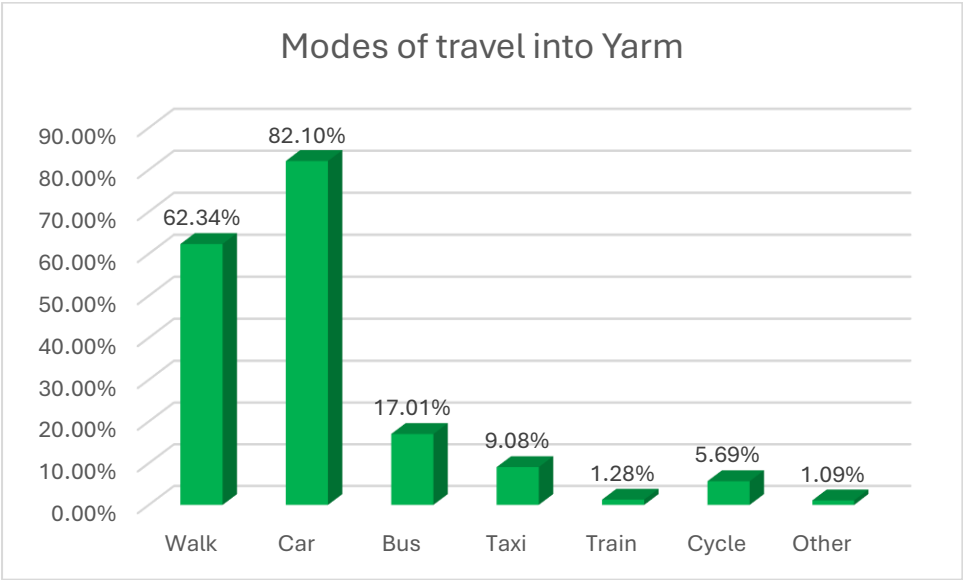
Visit Frequency

Most people who responded to the engagement were people that have visited Yarm recently, with 89 per cent of respondents visiting within the last week.



Modes of Travel

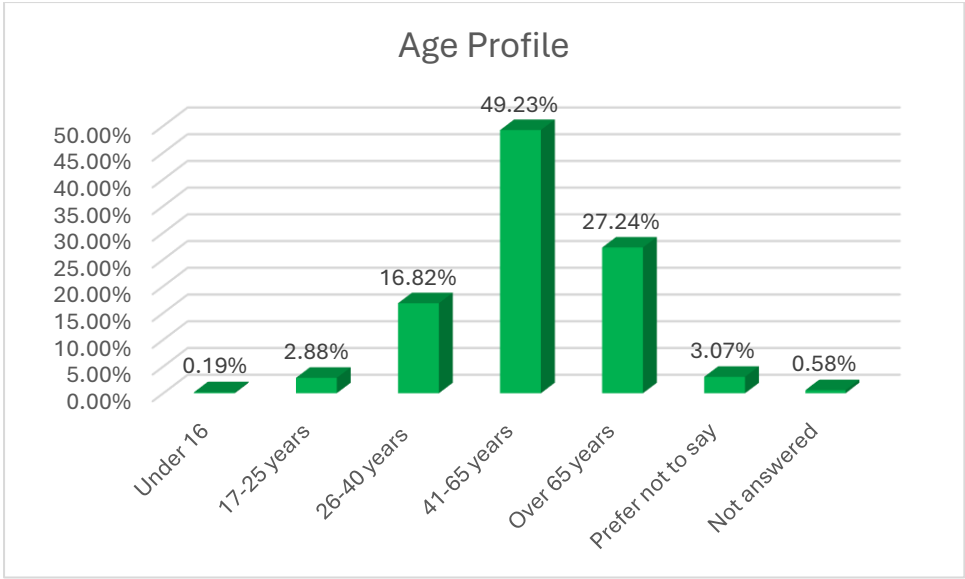
When travelling to and from Yarm, the most used mode was to travel by car (82 per cent). The second most popular mode was that of walking, with the figure being 62 per cent. Of the other transport modes, bus was slightly more popular than taxi (17 per cent versus 9 per cent) followed by cycle at 6 per cent, train at 1 per cent and ‘other’ at 1 per cent.



Age

The majority of respondents (49 per cent) were aged between 41 – 65 years old, with the second highest age category being Over 65 (27 per cent).

16.8 per cent of respondents were aged 26-40 years old and only 48 people aged 25 or under responded to the engagement.



Next steps

This report has presented a summary of the results from engagement on *Yarm High Street – You Decide* that was held from Wednesday 10th December 2025 to Monday 12 January 2026. In total 1564 responses were received. Overall, responses to this engagement were from local people that either live in Yarm or visit for shopping or leisure. Most of the respondents are people that have recently visited Yarm and have travelled by car or on foot. This round of engagement received low levels of engagement from young people and people that work or own a business in Yarm.

The purpose of the survey was to understand public views on whether the Council should proceed with the proposed scheme. Feedback will be used to inform a future decision, which will be presented to a Cabinet meeting in due course.

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REPORT TO CABINET/COUNCIL

DATE 14 MAY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION/KEY DECISION

Regeneration and Housing– Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington

Stockton on Tees Local Plan

Summary

In January 2024, in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, a five-year review of the Local Plan concluded that a full update through a new Local Plan was required. Council agreed that progressing a new Local Plan under the emerging plan-making system was the most robust and cost-effective approach.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 came into force on 25 March 2026, introducing a new regulatory framework for the preparation of Local Plans, Minerals and Waste Plans, and Supplementary Plans.

This report seeks Council's agreement to commence a new Local Plan in accordance with the 2026 Regulations, authorising all required elements to allow for progression through the 'getting ready' stage, including giving a notice of intention to MHCLG by 31 December 2026, and meeting all the necessary requirements to enable the commencement of Gateway 1 by 30 April 2027.

The report also seeks approval to establish a cross-party consultative and advisory steering group to support the Local Plan process.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To commence a new Local Plan and comply with the new plan making regulations within the associated prescribed timeframes.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet endorses the commencement of a new Local Plan and recommends that Council agrees to the following;

2. Council approves the commencement of a full update of the Stockton on Tees Local Plan in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) as amended and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
3. Council delegates the preparation, publication and submission of a 'Notice of intention to commence the Stockton on Tees Local Plan' to the Director of Regeneration & Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing and that this will be made available in accordance with the Local Plan Timetable and no later than September 2026.
4. Council approves the preparation and submission of an updated Local Plan Timetable in broad accordance with Appendix 1 and authorises its submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and its publication.
5. Council delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member to update and publish the Local Plan Timetable monthly or as required, to ensure an up-to-date timetable is publicly available in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
6. Council approves the commencement of a Design Guide Supplementary Plan to comply with the requirement of Section 15B and 15F(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing to produce a draft document for consultation.
7. Council authorises officers to explore the preparation of a Joint Minerals and Waste Plan with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities and delegate to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, the responsibility for all matters relating to Stockton-on-Tees Borough, including;
 - the commissioning of an associated evidence base (as necessary);
 - develop a 'Joint Minerals and Waste Plan agreement' under section 15I of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) as amended;
 - develop a Minerals and Waste Plan Timetable;
 - undertake a 'scoping consultation' on the joint Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Local Plan; and
 - produce all associated documentation to allow to progress the joint Tees Valley Minerals and Waste Local Plan to progress through Gateway 1.
8. Council delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, to agree commencement of the scoping consultation for the Local Plan which will:
 - provide an opportunity for residents, community groups, businesses and other interested parties to register to be notified of Local Plan updates, via the Council website;

- consultation taking place in accordance with the Local Plan Regulations;
 - consultation material being made publicly available; and
 - a consultation plan being produced prior to Gateway 1 after having regard to comments made during the statutory scoping consultation.
9. Council delegates authority to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, to undertake all necessary steps to inform and prepare the documents for the Gateway 1 self-assessment which may include commissioning evidence, undertaking a call for sites and preparing draft vision, Local Plan content and consultation plan, on the proposed local plan.
10. Council approves the formation of a cross-party consultative and advisory Members working group in broad accordance with the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 2 to support the Local Plan process.

A New Plan Making system

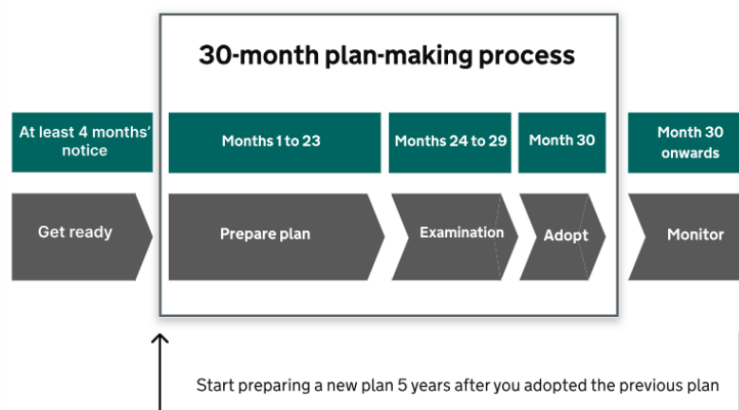
1. In January 2024, in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, a five year review of the Local Plan was undertaken. This review concluded that a full update, in the form of a new Local Plan, was required. Council agreed with this recommendation and confirmed that progressing a new Local Plan under the emerging plan making system represented the most robust and cost-effective way forward.
2. In the interim period, work has progressed on developing internal governance arrangements, preparing conservation area appraisals, and building up elements of the evidence base.
3. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new plan-making framework that fundamentally reshapes the development plan system with a streamlined 30-month process. The Government has since introduced the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 on 25 March 2026 confirming the procedures for this new plan-making framework.
4. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's agreement to commence a new Local Plan in accordance with the 2026 Regulations and to give notice to MHCLG of the Council's intention to commence plan-making. This will ensure compliance with the Government's backstop deadline of 31 December 2026. The associated recommendations will enable progression of the Local Plan through the 'getting ready' stage and support the completion of all necessary preparatory steps required to enter the formal plan-making process, known as Gateway 1.
5. As part of the new Local Plan process, all plans prepared under the new system must publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 30 April 2027. Upon entering Gateway 1, there is a statutory 30-month period within which the Local Plan must progress through all stages to adoption.

6. To ensure timely progress and compliance with statutory requirements, appropriate delegations will be required to enable officers to undertake and complete the necessary procedural steps, with Council continuing to make decisions on the substantive elements at the relevant stages of the process.
7. At this stage, authorisation is sought to proceed through the various preparatory steps to enable progression towards Gateway 1. Further reports providing updates and seeking relevant approvals and delegations will be presented at the appropriate stages.
8. For completeness, Members should be aware that the Secretary of State has powers to intervene in the plan-making process where key milestones are not achieved or where satisfactory progress is not being made.

Process Overview

9. Under the new plan-making system, there are new statutory requirements which the council must adhere to, to ensure a plan process is compliant with legislation. This includes a 30-month timeframe for plan preparation and adoption and involves scoping consultation, two plan consultations and progression through three gateways as the Local Plan progresses through the system.
10. The overall process is outlined within the figures below;

Figure 1 – 30-month Local Plan process



11. As part of the new Local Plan process, all plans under the new system must give notice of intention to commence by 31st December 2026 and publish a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 30th April 2027.

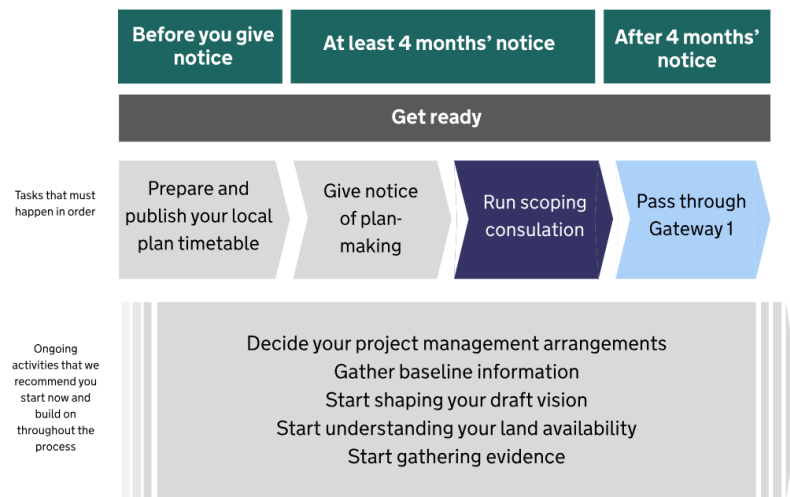
‘Getting ready’ stage (a minimum of four months prior to Gateway 1)

12. Prior to progressing through ‘Gateway 1’ is the ‘Getting ready stage’ which should occur a minimum of four months before. This stage is about being ready to start plan making and being confident that adoption can be achieved within the 30-month timeframe. The focus is on plan preparation rather than the technical detail.
13. The key requirements of this stage are;

- preparing and publishing a local plan timetable;

- issuing a notice to commence plan making;
- establishing project management and governance arrangements about the preparation of the plan;
- developing an approach to consulting and engaging on the plan;
- developing the anticipated content of the plan, including base line information, vision, land availability and evidence; and
- progressing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Figure 2 – ‘Getting ready’ - before the 30 month process starts



14. The steps required under the new statutory plan making processes can only be undertaken once a notice of intention to commence and a Local Plan Timetable have been submitted to MHCLG and published.

Preparing the plan (months 1-23)

15. Once Gateway 1 is passed, the 30-month period begins and a summary of the scoping consultation must be published. This must explain the key issues raised and how the responses received have been considered.
16. During this phase the authority must also;
- finalise the draft vision, aims and objectives of the Local Plan;
 - consider site selection and gather evidence to support key priorities and allocations such as housing, employment land and infrastructure;
 - undertake stakeholder engagement and address cross-boundary matters;
 - begin drafting planning policies based on the evidence/appropriate justification; and
 - undertake public consultation on the proposed plan content and evidence for a minimum of six weeks.
17. A consultation summary must then be published, highlighting those issues raised and how they have been considered. Where appropriate this may influence the overall strategy and policies which would inform a draft version of the Local Plan.

1. Figure 3 – Local Plan preparation process



Gateway 2

18. The next stage is to seek the observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate on the draft version of the Local Plan, which seeks to achieve an early resolution on its soundness and likely areas of concern ahead of progress towards Gateway 3.
19. After consideration by the Planning Inspectorate, the advice received must be published alongside any necessary updates to the Local Plan. An eight week consultation is then undertaken of the proposed Local Plan and associated information including policies map and supporting evidence, again a consultation summary must then be published.

Gateway 3

20. This stage seeks to establish whether the plan is ready to progress to an examination. The Local Plan to be examined must be submitted alongside other supporting information and a statement of compliance.
21. An assessor from the Planning Inspectorate will advise and decide whether the plan is ready to be submitted for examination. If Gateway 3 is passed, then the plan must be submitted for examination. If not, the necessary changes will need to be made and the gateway must be done again.

Examination and adoption (Months 24-30)

22. At this stage the Local Plan is submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate where its overall soundness is tested. Those who have commented on the plan will have the opportunity to present their view at the examination.
23. As a result of the examination further modifications may be suggested and these will need to be consulted on and considered prior to any adoption of the Local Plan.

24. In some instances, the Inspector may consider that further work is required and the examination may be paused for up to 6 months to allow for that work out to be carried out.
25. Following a successful examination, the Local Plan can be adopted and the policies map published.

Supplementary Plans

26. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduces Supplementary Plans as a replacement for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which have traditionally been used to provide additional detail to support Local Plan policies and are a material consideration in decision making.
27. Under the reformed system, SPDs will no longer be capable of being adopted after 30 June 2026. Instead, Supplementary Plans will form part of the statutory development plan alongside the Local Plan, although these are subject to formal process, including preparation (including consultation), examination and adoption.
28. During the transition period, existing SPDs will remain in effect until a new Local Plan under the new plan making system is adopted.
29. Consideration will be given to incorporating the key aspects of the current SPD's into future planning policy or whether to produce supplementary plans, at this stage a design guide supplementary plan is considered necessary and recommendation 6 of this report seeks approval to begin work on the pre-commencement stage of a Design Guide Supplementary Plan, and delegates the formal publication of a 'notice of commencement' to the Director of Inclusive Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing at the appropriate time.

Members Working group

30. To ensure that the new Local Plan has broad Member support across the political spectrum, from its inception to adoption, it is considered essential to have Member involvement.
31. To facilitate that aim, a cross-party working group acting as a consultative and advisory group is proposed, providing ongoing debate / dialogue as the emerging Local Plan progresses. It would remain that substantive decisions and updates to the Local Plans progress would be reported through to place-making board, CMT, and then through Cabinet/Committee.
32. The group would be politically balanced and based on the current composition of the Council. It would consist of the following;
 - Seven elected members
 - Based on the current political balance, include three Labour members (including chair), three Conservatives members and a representative from the Thornaby Independent Association.

- Representation on the group will be via nominations from group leaders
 - Membership of the group will be reviewed annually through the Council's AGM to maintain political balance
33. The group would be supported at officer level by the Planning Services Manager and Principal Planning Policy Officer with support and input from other officers responsible for producing elements of the evidence base or policies as appropriate. It is envisaged that the group would meet on a quarterly basis, with the potential for more frequent meetings should there be a requirement, depending on the stage of the Local Plan.
34. As the new Local Plan system requires a new plan to be produced every 5 years, it is anticipated that the working group is likely to be required beyond this new Local Plan.

Resource Implications

35. An existing budget for the Local Plan preparation has been agreed and at this stage there are no additional Local Plan costs associated with commencing plan-making under the new system.
36. The Local Plan will continue to be progressed by the current resources of the Planning Services team which will remain under review to confirm that sufficient capacity and resource remain available to ensure delivery is achieved. However, to achieve timely progress in line with statutory requirements, delegations to Officers will be necessary at various stages of the plan making process.
37. Additionally cross service support on the production of the plan and associated evidence base will be provided as necessary.
38. Members should also be aware that the Secretary of State has powers to intervene in the plan making process should the relevant milestones not be achieved and that satisfactory progress is not being made

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

39. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken, and due regard will be given to Section 149 of the Equality Act as the Local Plan progresses.

Corporate Parenting Implications

40. The report does not contain any corporate parenting implications.

Financial Implications

41. The production of a new Local Plan, associated evidence base can be met from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

42. The new plan-making system has introduced new legislative requirements which the Stockton on Tees Local Plan will need to be progressed against.

43. In line with the Council's constitution, plan making system is the sole responsibility of full Council

44. The Local Plan is subject to a statutory procedure and is open to legal challenge.

Risk Assessment

45. The development of a new Local Plan 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

46. A new Local Plan will introduce a series of planning policies which will apply and inform decision making across all wards in the Borough.

Background Papers

- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026
- [New local plan-making system roadmap - GOV.UK](#)
- [30-month local plan process: an overview - GOV.UK](#)

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APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL PLAN TMETABLE (DRAFT)

Activity	Indicative start date
Notice of intention to commence plan preparation available	June 2026
Start of the 'scoping consultation'	October 2026
End of 'scoping consultation'	November 2026
Publication of Gateway 1 self-assessment	Feb/March 2027
Plan preparation period	March 2027 – Feb 2029
Consultation on 'proposed local plan content and evidence' starts	September 2027
Consultation on "proposed local plan content and evidence" ends	Mid October 2027
Gateway 2 Submission	November 2027
Consultation on "proposed local plan" starts	October 2028
Consultation on "proposed local plan" ends	December 2028
Gateway 3 Submission	February 2029
Submit examination	March 2029
Adoption	September/October 2029

APPENDIX 2– STOCKTON ON TEES LOCAL PLAN – MEMEBRS WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE (DRAFT)

Role and Purpose of the Local Plan Working Group

1. This Local Plan working group is being established to support the development of the Stockton on Tees Local Plan.
2. The Local Plan must be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and be informed by the available evidence gathered.
3. Members will be asked to share their knowledge and insights of Stockton on Tees as a whole and help create an informed local plan, which aims to meet the needs of the Borough and benefits all areas our communities.
4. The Working Group is advisory and has no decision-making powers. Its purpose is to aid greater understanding of issues and policy development.
5. The Local Plan working group will;
 - Consider and comment on documents that relate to the Local Plan including (but not restricted to) policy options, draft policies and evidence studies prepared to support the Plan.
 - Identify potential gaps in the evidence base, assist in helping to develop the outputs of technical work and other information into policy development.
 - To monitor progress on the preparation of the Local Plan

Membership of the Local Plan Working Group

6. The group will comprise of seven elected members and be broadly apportioned in line with the political balance of the Council.
7. Membership will be identified by the group leaders of the respective parties. Group leaders are encouraged to try and ensure there is a balance in the geographic representation
8. The Working Group will be chaired by the party with administrative control of the Council
9. The Chair shall be responsible for the effective conduct of meetings and ensuring clear conclusions are reached.
10. Members appointed to the Working Group are expected to make every effort to attend meetings and where they are unable to do so, appoint a substitute. In addition they will be expected to;

- Promote engagement with the Local Plan process particularly with local community groups, residents and stakeholders
 - Engage with their political groups, ensuring that all members are kept informed on the local plan progress
 - Be proactive in contacting officers to resolve any points of confusion ahead of the meeting
11. The lead officer for the working group will be the Planning Services Manager and supported by the Principal Planning Policy Officer. Items will be prepared and presented to the Group by Officers from the Planning Policy team and officers from the Council when relevant.

Local Plan Working Group - Process and Principles:

12. The Members be supported by officers and consultants as appropriate.
13. The Working Group will support the development of a new Local Plan to ensure progress is made in a timely manner and meets the statutory timeframes and associated Gateways.
14. The focus of the Working Group is on key issues for the Local Plan, not all related detailed issues.
15. Meetings to be held on a quarterly basis or as may be otherwise be required
16. Meetings are not open to the public, but outcomes from the Working Group will be made available to all Members as appropriate.
17. Any associated papers (reports, resolutions, minutes etc..) should be treated as confidential unless it is stated / agreed otherwise, or the information is already in the public domain.
18. Confidential information should not be shared with other parties, including other Councillors and outside organisation.

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REPORT TO CABINET/COUNCIL

14 MAY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION/KEY DECISION

Regeneration and Housing – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Richard Eglington

Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and Article 4 Direction

Summary

This report outlines activities undertaken in the preparation and consultation on a Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and Article 4 Direction following the resolution of Cabinet / Council in January 2026. The report seeks adoption of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and outlines next steps in relation to confirmation of the Article 4 Direction.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To note updates in relation to the Article 4 Direction and adopt new planning guidance, in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD reflects the adopted Local Plan and sets out clear and effective methods of implementing planning policies to aid colleagues, developers, the community and any other interested party.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet notes the contents of the report.
2. Cabinet notes and considers comments of Planning Committee in relation to the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (to be tabled at meeting).

In addition, Cabinet recommends to Council;

3. Council notes and considers comments of Planning Committee in relation to the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document
4. The adoption of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A) and its accompanying technical appendices (Appendices B to D).

5. Delegation of the authority to approve non-material and minor alterations to the SPD and its accompanying technical appendices to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, prior to publication.

Detail

Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document

1. The Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD (Appendix A) has been prepared following the resolution of Council in January 2026 and if adopted will apply to planning applications for new houses of multiple occupation whether that be a new build or through the conversion of an existing property. The document has been produced to ensure proposals for Houses of Multiple Occupation contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. It assists in the interpretation of policies within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan and sets out guidance and good practice for planning applicants to enable the delivery of better planning outcomes.
2. The SPD has been prepared in accordance with Government legislation and guidance and has been subject to public consultation in accordance with regulations. The public consultation period on the draft SPD took place between 19th March and the 17th April 2026. A total of 13 responses were received on the contents of the draft SPD. These responses can be summarised as falling into 3 categories:
 - **Organisations-** Natural England, Coal Authority, Home Office, Prism Planning, North Yorkshire Council, Historic England
 - **Local Resident-** 6 local residents
 - **Ward Councillor-** one response
3. A consultation statement (Appendix B) has been prepared which contains comments / main issues raised alongside the council's response to them.
4. Also provided are screening assessments in relation to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) have been undertaken and are available within Appendix C and D respectively.
5. It is recommended that the SPD document (Appendix A) and its technical appendices (Appendices B to D), be adopted which will enable them to be a material consideration in planning applications for relevant proposals. Following adoption, the documents will be made available in the Council's main office, on the Council's website and in public libraries across the Borough. Members should also be aware that legislation makes provision for individuals / organisations to pursue a legal challenge regarding SPDs, and this will end 3-months after adoption of the documents.
6. In accordance with The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026 the Council can adopt Supplementary Planning Documents until 30th June 2026. Adopted SPDs will continue to be a material consideration but they will cease to have effect upon adoption of a new Local Plan.

Article 4 Direction (small Houses of Multiple Occupation)

7. Following the resolution of Cabinet in January 2026, notice has been given that the Council has made a Direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Notice was given on 18th March 2026, and a period of consultation was undertaken from 19th March and the 17th April 2026.
8. If confirmed the direction would require planning consent for the change of use of a building within Class C3 (dwelling houses) to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) through the removal of permitted development rights for this type of development. The Direction would apply to the entire area of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.
9. During the consultation period 18 representations were received. These responses can be summarised as falling into 2 categories:
 - **Organisations-** Natural England, Coal Authority, Home Office, Prism Planning, National Residential Landlords Association, Stockton Liberal Democrats, The Canal & River Trust, North Yorkshire Council, Historic England.
 - **Local Resident-** 9 local residents

These representations must be taken into account by the local planning authority in deciding whether to confirm the direction. Having considered and taken into account the representations received (which are available within Appendix H), the local planning authority intends to confirm the Article 4 Direction. Necessary processes will be undertaken, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) to confirm the Direction which will come into force on Monday 22nd March 2027.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

10. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken, for both the HMO SPD and Article 4 Direction, and due regard has been given to Section 149 of the Equality Act.

Corporate Parenting Implications

11. The report does not contain any corporate parenting implications.

Financial Implications

12. Existing budgets will be used for all activities associated with Article 4 Direction confirmation and HMO SPD adoption.

Legal Implications

13. The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act made provision for the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide greater detail on specific policies within the Local Plan.
14. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents SPDs. SPDs

should not contain new policies and should not be contrary to the Local Development Plan or national policy.

15. In accordance with The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026 the Council can adopt Supplementary Planning Documents until 30th June 2026. Adopted SPDs will continue to be a material consideration but they will cease to have effect upon adoption of a new Local Plan.
16. The European Directive 2001/42/EC applied through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (SI No.1633) requires a Screening Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment to be produced.
17. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 currently grants deemed planning permission for residential properties to be converted to small HMO's without the need for an application. The introduction of an Article 4 Direction will remove this right and all such proposed conversions after the date the Direction will come into force will require a planning application to be submitted, with an associated fee. This affects the property rights of owners of residential properties which needs to be justified and proportionate.
18. Applicants whose applications are subsequently refused have the right to appeal against that decision.
19. An Article 4 Direction can only be made if the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that it is expedient to make it. Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 provides the procedures for bringing an Article 4 Directions into force. It is subject to a 21-day consultation period and must then be confirmed by the LPA before it comes into force. The making of the Article 4 Direction is subject to challenge by way of Judicial Review. The Secretary of State must be notified of the making of the Direction and has the power to cancel it before or after its confirmation.

Risk Assessment

20. The introduction of the Article 4 Direction and HMO SPD 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 (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

21. All elements detailed within the report (HMO SPD and Article 4 Direction) will, or have the potential to, affect all wards in the Borough.

Background Papers

22. Cabinet and Council papers of 15th January and 21st January 2026 respectively.
23. The following documents are provided in relation to the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document:
 - Appendix A- Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document

- Appendix B- Consultation Statement
- Appendix C- SEA Scoping Assessment
- Appendix D- HRA Screening Assessment

24. In relation to the Article 4 Direction the following documents are provided:

- Appendix E- Article 4 Direction
- Appendix F- Article 4 Direction Map
- Appendix G- Article 4 Direction Notice
- Appendix H- Consultation Representations

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Houses in Multiple Occupation

Supplementary Planning Document (May 2026)

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Section 1: Introduction

Overview

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are properties that are rented out by at least three people who are not from one household (such as a family) but share facilities like a bathroom and/or kitchen. They are sometimes known as 'house shares'. HMOs typically fit within one of two main Use Classes¹:

- **Use Class C4 HMO** - Small shared houses occupied by between three and six unrelated individuals, as their only or main residence, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom.
- **'Sui Generis'**² - includes HMOs with more than six residents

Both the Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme affirm the Councils commitment to driving economic growth to support community prosperity and well-being. The delivery of good quality, affordable housing in well-connected neighbourhoods is integral to this. Alongside this 'housing and the physical environment' is a main focus area within A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees which provides a strategic framework for tackling inequalities. HMOs form part of the borough's housing supply and contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited. They can be home to young professionals, students, people on low-incomes, and those on short-term work contracts.

Most HMOs within the Borough have been created through the conversion of existing properties that were previously in residential use (or other uses) which has seen their usage intensified. Whilst they are present across the borough there are concentrations within particular areas. Whilst there are few instances of this within the local area HMOs can also be purpose-built accommodation (i.e. new build). This document is equally relevant to conversions and new build HMOs.

The majority of HMOs within the borough are well managed and provide decent living standards for residents. However, the overconcentration of HMOs alongside poor design and management have the potential to lead to issues for both occupants and neighbours. Some of the most common concerns expressed in the borough in relation to HMOs relate to:

- Negative changes to the character of the area and the nature of the local community
- Negative impacts on the amenity of neighbours through the greater intensity of use of HMOs
- Pressure on parking provision
- Waste storage and litter
- Anti-social behaviour and crime
- Negative impacts on the physical environment and streetscape
- The provision of inadequate living accommodation for occupiers

The LA has two regulatory controls which can be applied that require landlords to effectively manage these types of properties. These are:

- **Mandatory HMO licencing** – which is a legal duty Housing Act 2004. Where a HMO is to be rented to five or more people who are not from the same household the owner, agent, or manager is required to obtain a licence from the Council.

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'.

² 'Sui generis' is a Latin term that, in this context, means 'in a class of its own'.

- **Selective licensing** – three areas within the borough have been identified for selective licencing (central Stockton, North Thornaby, and Newtown). Selective Licensing was introduced on the basis that these areas are likely to become an area of low housing demand, has a high concentration of private rented properties (well above the national average) and is experiencing high levels of deprivation and or is experiencing significant and persistent problems caused by high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Within these areas all privately rented properties are required to have a selective licence. Under a licence several mandatory conditions will apply which could be supplemented by discretionary conditions. Not all properties requiring a selective licence will be an HMO.

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been produced ensure proposals contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. It assists in the interpretation of policies within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan and sets out guidance and good practice for planning applicants to enable the delivery of better planning outcomes.

The SPD will not be able to address issues in relation to existing HMOs, but it is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications for new and expanded HMOs and is applicable throughout the borough. It applies to planning applications for:

- HMOs created through conversions
- Purpose-built HMOs
- The expansion of existing HMOs

This SPD does not consider applications for proposals that do not constitute a HMO for example self-contained flats (whether new build or conversion of an existing premises) unless their occupation would constitute classification as an HMO (i.e. occupied by at least three people who are not from one household but share facilities like a bathroom and/or kitchen. This is covered in more detail within the following section (see 'What isn't a HMO').

Section 2: Background

What is an HMO and what isn't?

What is an HMO?

The full legal definition of an HMO is given under the Housing Act 2004. Types of living accommodation defined include:

“One or more units of living accommodation within a building or part of a building not consisting of self-contained flats occupied by more than one household as their only or main residence with at least one person paying rent and two or more of the households sharing one or more basic amenities (or the building lacks an amenity) such as a bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities.

A self-contained flat within a building occupied by more than one household as their only or main residence with at least one person paying rent and two or more of the households sharing one or more basic amenities (or the building lacks an amenity) such as a bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities.

A converted building where new living accommodation has been created since its construction that is not a self-contained flat or flats and occupied by more than one household as their only or main residence with at least one person paying rent.

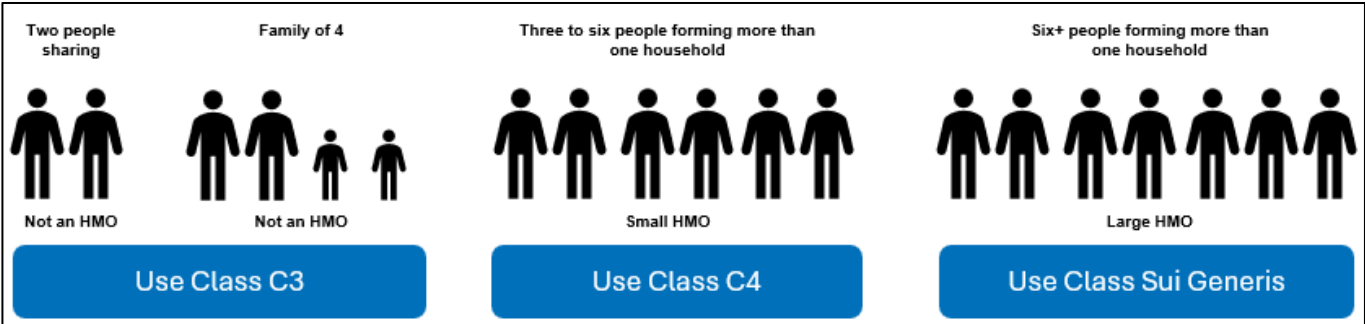
A building or part of a building which has been converted into self-contained flats where the conversion works did not comply with 1991 Building Regulations and more than one third of the flats are not owner-occupied.”

HMO's are generally defined as a property (house or flat) rented out by at least three people who do not form a single 'household' who share one or more basic amenities such as a kitchen and/or bathroom. They are often referred to as 'shared houses'.

The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) classifies HMOs as:

- **Use Class C4** – accommodating between 3 and 6 unrelated individuals, or;
- **'Sui Generis'** - accommodating 7 or more unrelated individuals.

Figure 1: HMO classification



What isn't an HMO?

There is a popular misconception that flats are HMO, but where such a property is self-contained and is being used in accordance with Use Class C3 then this is not the case.

Within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), C4 HMOs have the same meaning as that given in the Housing Act 2004. Schedule 14 of this Act identifies buildings which are not considered to be HMOs often being referred to as 'exempt accommodation'. This includes buildings which are controlled or managed by:

- registered social landlords and housing associations
- educational establishments
- religious communities
- public bodies such as local authorities, health authorities and the police.

Any property falling into the above categories cannot be identified as an HMO and therefore cannot be considered as falling within the C4 Use Class described above. There are three possible Use Class categories defined within the Use Classes Order which the above properties can be identified within:

- C3(b) – for properties with no more than six residents living together as a single household and where care is provided for residents; or
- C3(c) – for properties with no more than six residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents; or
- Sui Generis, which is a category for any uses which do not fit within the other classes

There is no statutory definition of a single household. It has been established by case law that it is a matter of fact and degree, considering certain factors. It may be appropriate to consider 'exempt accommodation' when applying the measures within section 4 of the document, but this would be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration local circumstances.

Article 4 Directions and when planning consent is required?

What is an Article 4 Direction?

The Council are in the process of introducing a borough-wide Article 4 Direction which when confirmed will mean that planning permission will be required for the change of use from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a small HMO (Use Class C4) (3-6 people). Until the Article 4 direction is confirmed planning permission for C3 to C4 will not be required as it remains permitted development.

The date for confirmation is scheduled to be 22nd March 2027. It should be noted that change of use in the opposite direction (C4 to C3) would be 'permitted development' not requiring planning permission.

When is planning consent required?

The following provides the most likely circumstances where planning consent will be required for an HMO:

- Where a 'new build' HMO is proposed
- Change of use of a C3 property to a Sui Generis HMO (accommodating 7 or more unrelated individuals)
- Change of use of a C4 HMO to a Sui Generis HMO

As detailed in the above section change of use of a C3 property to a C4 HMO (accommodating between 3 and 6 unrelated individuals) will require planning consent following the confirmation of the borough-wide Article 4 Direction.

Where else might planning consent be required:

- Existing Sui Generis HMO for the occupation of further residents if the previous planning permission stated the number of residents within the application description, or there was a restrictive condition
- External alterations or extensions

Figure 2: HMO Permitted Development and where planning permission is generally required (prior to Article 4 confirmation)

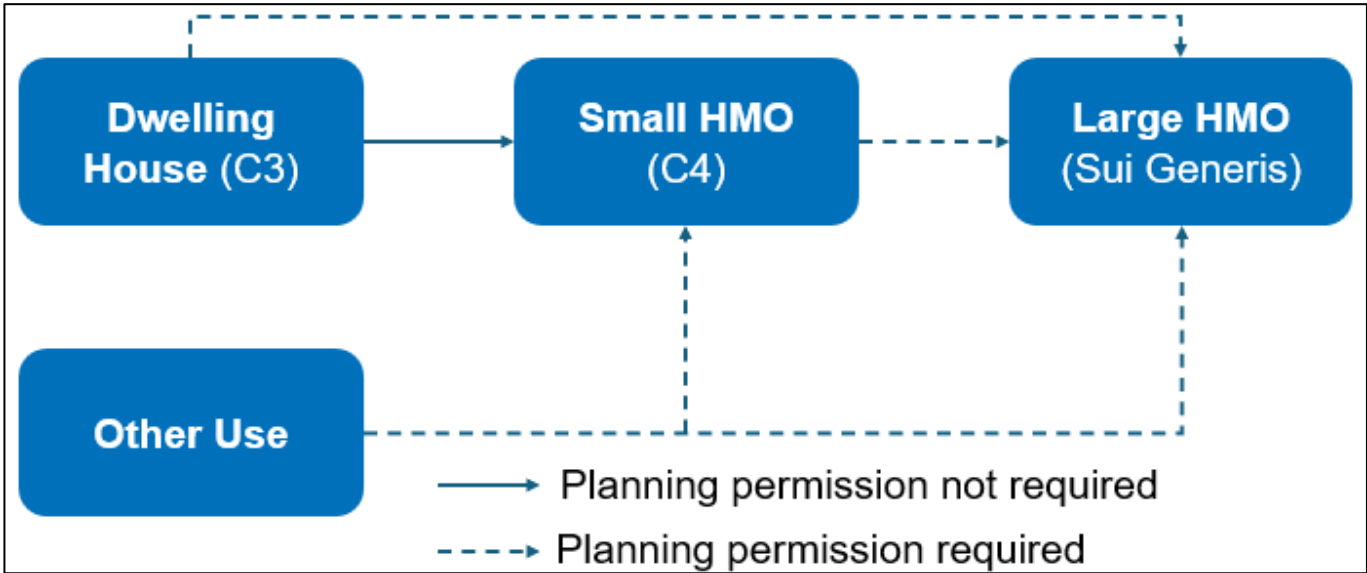
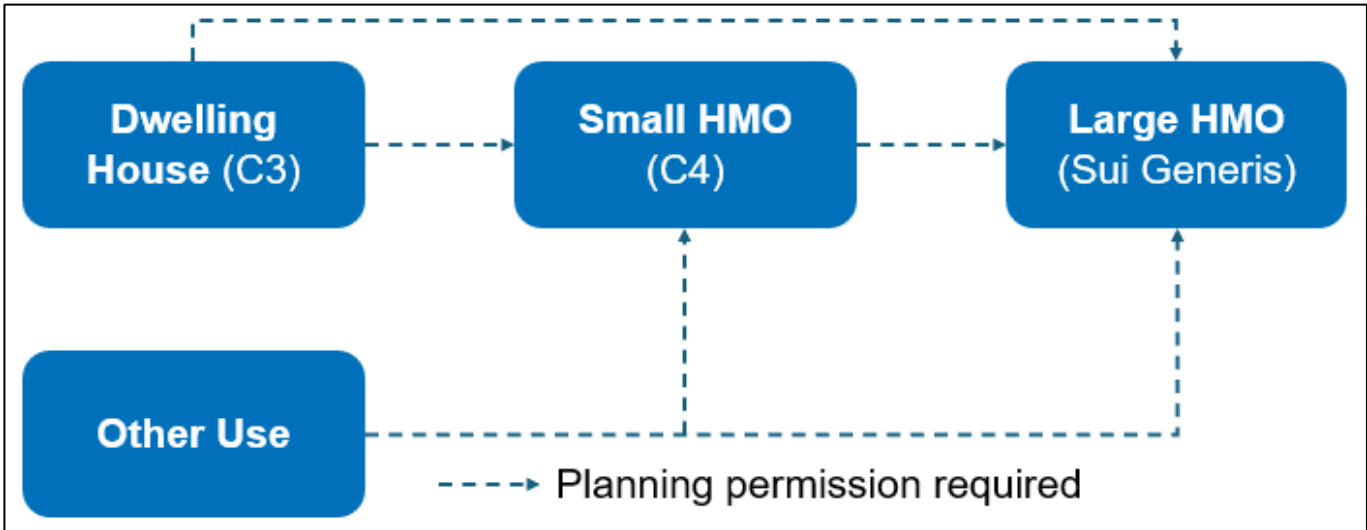


Figure 3: Requirement for HMO planning permission (following Article 4 confirmation)



Section 3: Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The Framework does not include any specific policies on HMOs but it does provide the following aspects which are of relevance:

- **Chapter 5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes-** includes a range of policies covering general housing issues.
- **Chapter 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities-** advises that decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which can be achieved through promoting social interaction, ensuring places are safe and accessible (so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion), and enabling and supporting healthy lives.
- **Section 4 Decision Making-** covers the Use of Article 4 directions advising that they be limited to situations where, amongst other elements, are necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area

The Framework is also supported by more detailed planning guidance set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). However, there is no specific guidance on HMOs contained within the PPG.

A draft NPPF was published in December 2025 as part of a wider consultation on 'proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system'. The consultation concludes in March 2026 and following any necessary amendment it is the Government's intention to replace the current NPPF (2024). The draft NPPF contains the following elements:

- **DM10: Removal of national permitted development rights-** advises, amongst other, things the potential to utilise Article 4 directions where it would prevent an over-concentration of uses which could affect the quality of life or community cohesion.
- **DP3: Key principles for well-designed places-** support healthy, mixed, vibrant and integrated communities

Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan (2019)

A range of policies from the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan are used in the determination of applications for HMOs. This includes those set out below:

- Policy SD1 - Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy SD2 – Strategic Development Needs
- Policy SD3 – Housing Strategy
- Policy SD8 – Sustainable Design Principles
- Policy H4 – Meeting Housing Needs
- Policy TI1 – Transport Infrastructure
- Policy ENV 1 – Energy Efficiency
- Policy ENV7 – Ground, Air, Water, Noise and Light Pollution
- Policy HE2 – Conserving and Enhancing Stockton's Heritage Assets

The most frequently used policies are SD8 'Sustainable Design Principles' and H4 'Meeting Housing Needs'. Key extracts from these policies are set out below:

"...new development... to respond positively to the... Privacy and amenity of all existing and future occupants of land and buildings"

"New development should contribute positively to making places better for people. They should be inclusive and establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit."

"Sustainable residential communities will be created by requiring developers to provide a mix and balance of good quality housing of appropriate sizes, types and tenures which reflects local needs and demand, having regard to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, its successor documents or appropriate supporting documents."

Applicants for planning permission should demonstrate through their applications that they have had regard to all relevant Local Plan policies. Supplementary Planning Documents, including this one and the Local Design Guide SPD (March 2023), are also material considerations in the determination of applications.

Section 4: Guidance

Overview

Both the Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme affirm the Councils commitment to driving economic growth to support community prosperity and well-being. The delivery of good quality, affordable housing in well-connected neighbourhoods is integral to this. HMO form part of the boroughs housing supply, contribute towards meeting housing needs, and can support the continued viable use or re-use of vacant buildings. However, they typically intensify the use of properties, often with more resident and visitor movements than a typical family home, and concentrations of them can impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the local area.

To ensure mixed and balanced communities and to ensure that new development does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on local amenity and quality of life, this section of the document sets out guidelines to limit the concentration of HMOs and to manage their proximity to one another. This will contribute to retaining local character, help to ensure a mix of house types and tenures, and reduce potential residential amenity issues. To achieve this, the following measures (or tests) will be applied when assessing planning applications for HMOs:

- [Avoiding concentrations of HMOs](#)
- [Avoiding a grouping of HMOs](#)
- [Avoiding sandwiching](#)

The remainder of this section provides further detail on the application of these measures. It should be noted that these measures are not stand-alone. i.e. achieving a positive outcome to one measure would not mean that the other measures can be disregarded. **All the above measures would need to be applied cumulatively.**

There are areas within the borough where high concentrations of HMOs already exist. These concentrations are in areas typified by medium and large terraced residential properties which have seen the conversion or use of these properties for C4 and Sui Generis HMOs. Concentrations of HMOs have an alignment with the areas selected for selective licencing (Central Stockton, North Thornaby, and Newtown) where all privately rented properties are required to have a selective licence. The extent of selective licensing areas within the borough can be viewed at on the Council website (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/14526/The-purpose-of-Selective-Licensing-and-who-it-applies-to>)

These areas currently experience high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour with the Ropner Ward currently a pilot for the Home Office “Clear, Hold, Build” initiative, under the localised name of ‘Project/Operation Harmony’; a multi-agency problem solving scheme undertaken by relevant local partner agencies, including Stockton Borough Council (SBC), to tackle crime and ASB.

It is likely that consent for an HMO (or extensions to an existing one) will not be acceptable within many parts of our selective licensing areas and some other central locations owing to the ‘avoiding concentrations’ measure within this document.

Avoiding concentrations of HMOs

Proposals for new HMOs or extensions to existing ones will not generally be permitted where the proportion of residential properties would exceed 10% of the residential properties within a 50-metre radius of the application property.

The 50m radius will be measured from the centre-point of the property (this being measured from the properties habitable external walls rather than the properties curtilage). All properties (residential and commercial) within this 50m radius will be counted towards the concentration calculation with the property the subject of the application being counted as being within its proposed use. An example calculation is presented below:

Figure 4: Concentration Calculation

Number of HMOs within 50m radius (including application property)

÷

Number of Address Points within 50m radius

×

100

=

% of HMOs within 50m radius

In our example below (see Figure 6):

- An application has been made for the change of use of a residential property to a Sui Generis HMO (blue dot)
- There are 40 other properties (residential or commercial) within 50m radius (green dots)
- In total there are 41 properties within 50m radius (green and blue dots)
- There are already 5 HMOs within the 50m Radius (excluding the proposed HMO)

This would be calculated as follows which creates an outcome of 14.6% meaning an HMO proposal would not generally be permitted:

Figure 5: Example Concentration Calculation

(5 + 1)

÷

41

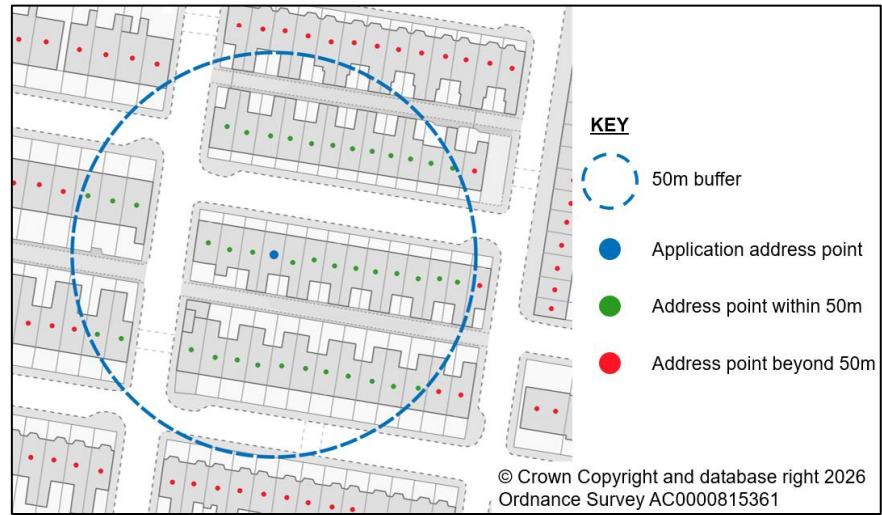
×

100

=

14.6 %

Figure 6- Example Concentration Mapping



When calculating the number of properties within 50m the following principles will be considered:

- **Residential Properties** – calculated based upon address points within the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG)
- **Flats** - existing properties that have been sub-divided into flats will be counted as single properties for the purposes of the calculation, as they represent the intensification of a property and some of the issues that can be associated with HMOs can also be associated with flat conversions (i.e. a terraced property converted to three flats will be counted as a single property for the purposes of this calculation). However, purpose-built flats will be counted on an individual basis (i.e. one flat counts as one property), as they are not subject to the same constraints as flat conversions and issues should have been fully addressed as part of the planning process.

Other considerations:

- **Physical barrier** – where there is a strong physical barrier such as a railway line with no crossing any properties separated from the application site may be removed from the calculation.
- **Less densely populated areas / more commercial areas** – there may be a particular circumstance where there is a limited number of residential properties within the 50-metre radius. This could present an inflated % outcome albeit an over concentration would not be present. This would need to be taken into consideration by the case officer when determining such an application.

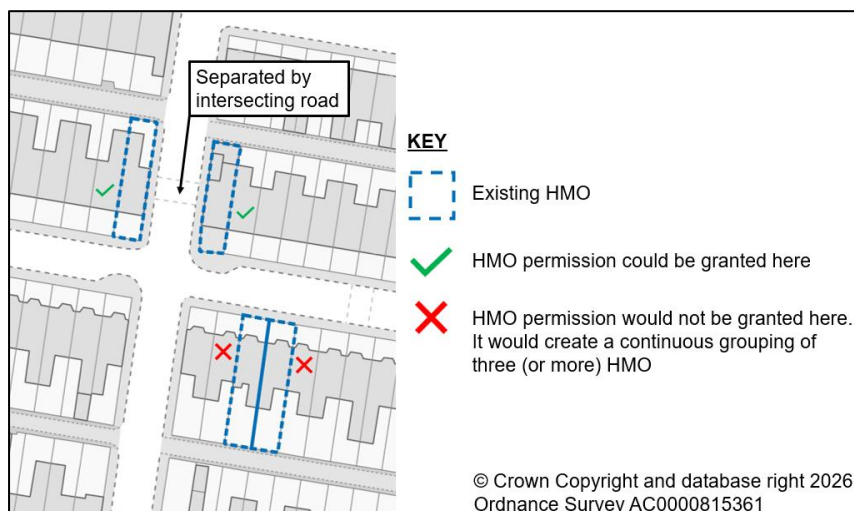
Avoiding groupings of HMOs

Proposals for HMOs will not generally be permitted where this would lead to a block of three or more adjacent HMOs or other non-family residential uses.

Figure 7 shows examples of three or more in a row being created and where planning permission would not generally be granted. This will not apply where properties are separated by a road (an 'alleyway' would not count as an intersecting road) or where properties have a back-to-back relationship in different streets. The case officer may consider flexibility of this measure in areas which are not predominantly residential subject to considerations of amenity.

For the purposes of this measure, 'other non-family residential uses' is defined as student accommodation, residential accommodation within C1 and C2 Use and self-contained flats as they present similar characteristics.

Figure 7- Grouping Example



Avoiding sandwiching

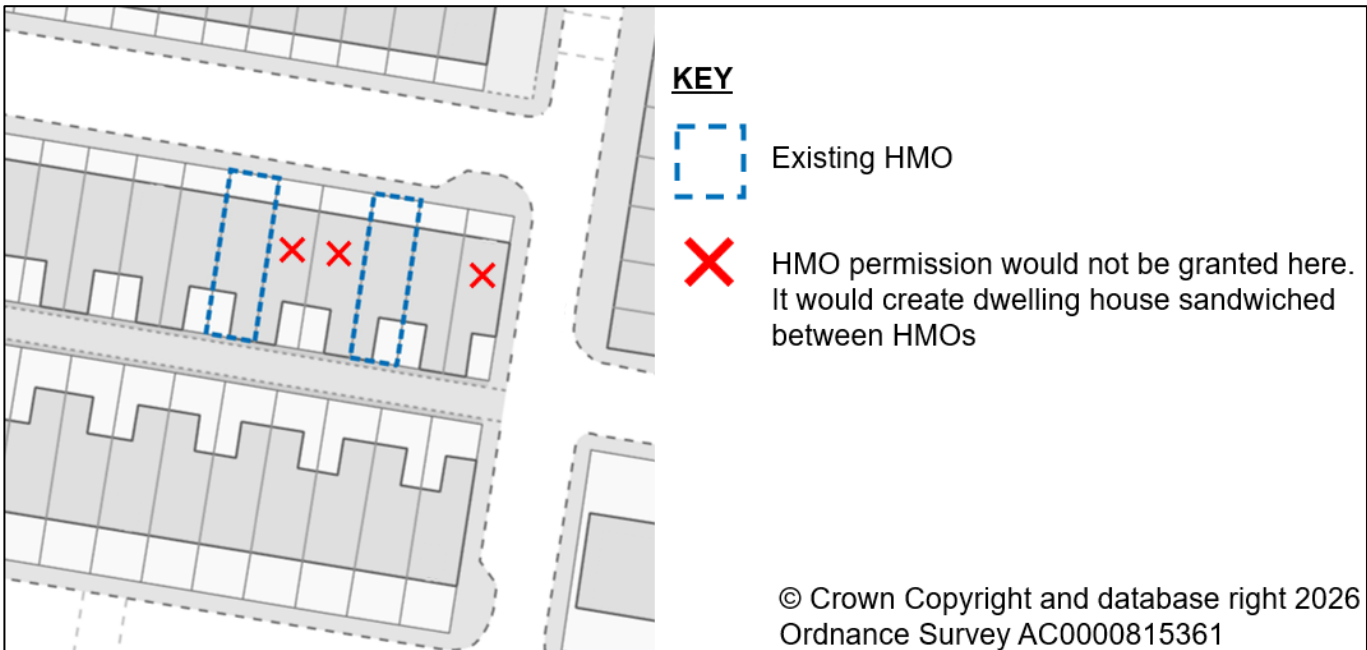
Proposals for HMOs will not generally be permitted where this would result in a C3 family dwellinghouse being sandwiched between two HMOs or other non-family residential uses

The sandwiching of a family house between two HMOs or non-family residential uses can have adverse impacts on the amenity of occupiers of the property that is hemmed in on both sides by such properties.

Non-family residential uses would refer to the same uses as detailed within the groupings measure.

Figure 8 below shows an example of ‘sandwiching’ and where planning permission would not normally be granted. As with the grouping example above this would not apply where the properties are separated by a road or where properties have a back-to-back relationship in different streets.

Figure 8- Sandwiching Example



Section 5: Achieving good accommodation standards

HMO Amenity Guidance

The Council's HMO Amenity Guidance provides various standards covering, room sizes and permitted occupation (bedrooms / communal rooms), washing facilities, heating, communal kitchens, kitchens provided within the unit of accommodation, fire precautionary facilities, lighting, water supply, refuse storage and disposal, and ventilation. It is not the purpose of this SPD to repeat information contained within the HMO Amenity Guidance. It is important that any proposals provide healthy living conditions for occupiers and the Council support the achievement of the highest possible amenity standards.

Example residential dwelling to small HMO (C4)

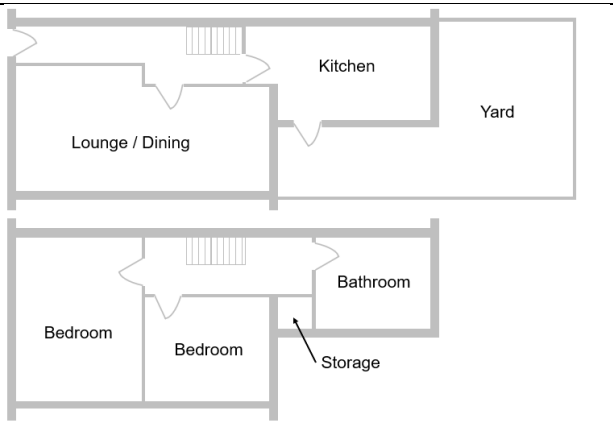
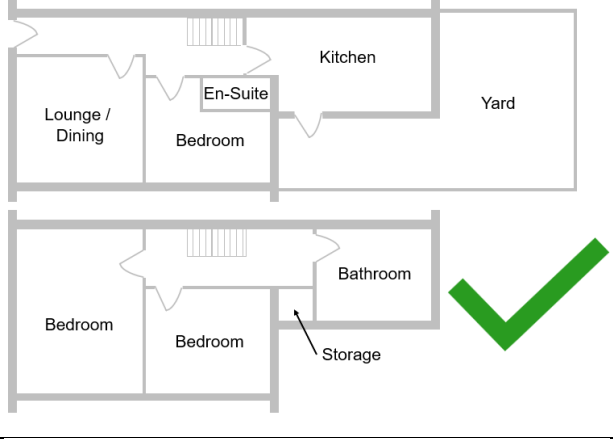
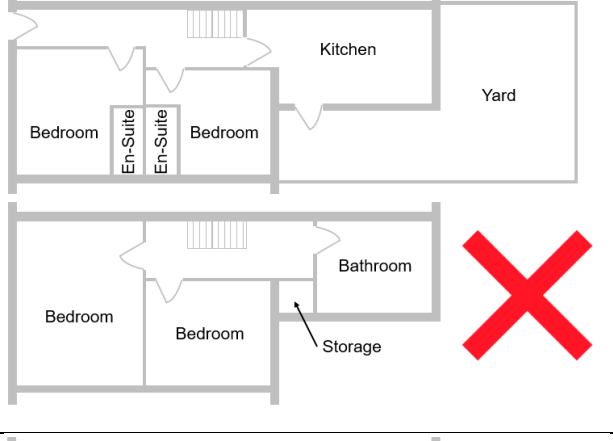
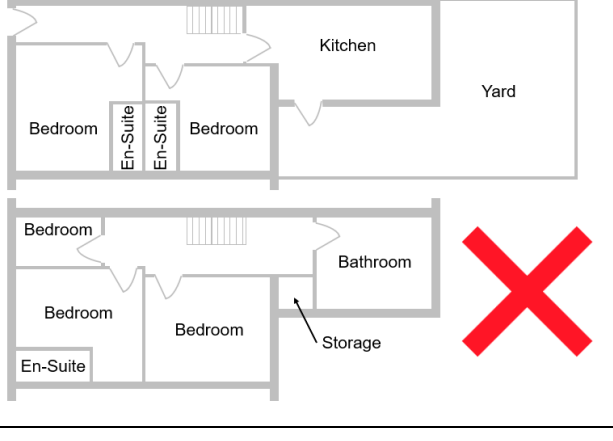
On the next page we have provided an example property to provide some high-level information in relation to what may be acceptable in terms of amenity standards when being considered for a change of use to an HMO (see Figure 10). This does not replace guidance within the HMO Amenity Guidance. Our example property is a 2-bedroom residential dwelling (C3 Use Class) in a terraced street of similar properties. The owner is considering renting out the property (following internal amendments) and obtaining planning consent.

Figure 9- Example C3 property being considered for a change of use to C4



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Ordnance Survey AC0000815361

Figure 10- Example Layouts (C3 property being considered for a change of use to C4)

Original Two Bedroom Dwelling House Property includes: • Large lounge/dining room • Kitchen • Two bedrooms • Bathroom • Rear yard	
Proposal to convert to a C4 HMO (3 Bedrooms) This is planned to be achieved through dividing the existing living / dining room into a smaller living / dining room and a bedroom (with En-Suite). No amendments are made to the upper floors. This is likely to be acceptable* *Subject to consideration against HMO Amenity Guidance	
Proposal to convert to a C4 HMO (4 Bedrooms) This is planned to be achieved through dividing the existing living / dining room into two bedrooms (both with En-Suites). No amendments are made to the upper floors. This will not be acceptable Whilst bedrooms are likely of an acceptable size the kitchen area would serve as the only communal area. It would not be of a sufficient size for cooking, eating and socialising when considering HMO Amenity Guidance.	
Proposal to convert to a C4 HMO (5 Bedrooms) In addition to the amendments made in the above example the upstairs front bedroom is divided into two bedrooms (one with an En-Suite) This would not be acceptable This is for the same reasons as the above example albeit the position is exacerbated through the addition of another bedroom. In addition, one of the bedrooms created is evidently of a size which would provide insufficient living standards owing to its dimensions.	

Outdoor amenity space

Outdoor amenity space is important to help create a better-quality living environment and should be provided in addition to space used for functions such as drying clothes, refuse and recycling storage and cycle storage. Whilst there are no specific requirements for the quantum of outdoor amenity space that should be provided within an HMO as part of the Council's HMO Amenity Guidance document it should be provided within HMO proposals.

HMOs are often created through the conversion of existing properties and are often located in, or near to, town centres where outdoor space may be limited, so all applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, but applicants should aim to provide useable outdoor amenity space with an area for drying clothes, wherever possible. The area of amenity space should be identified on the application site plan alongside the elements which are to be used for refuse and recycling storage and cycle storage. All amenity space should be overlooked from within the property by habitable rooms.

Lighting

All HMO proposals should provide healthy living conditions for occupiers and users. An important aspect of this is ensuring that all habitable rooms have adequate access to natural light.

Energy Efficiency

The Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme promote the delivery of good quality housing. In addition to this the Stockton-on-Tees Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (2022-2032) contains the aim to 'Achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions' and to achieve this a series of objectives have been identified including:

- Reduce energy demand wherever possible; and
- Accelerate the shift towards the use of sustainable energy

Where a new build HMO is proposed it will need to be delivered in accordance with building regulations which have seen increased standards introduced for energy efficiency. Where a proposal involves the conversion of an existing property this is the best time to make amendments to improve a property's energy performance. Energy efficiency is an important aspect of this with improved energy efficiency supporting reductions in utility bills and reducing inequality.

HMOs are also subject to the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (DMEES) relating to minimum energy performance ratings. This requires that all-domestic private rented properties must have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of at least band E. An EPC rating of a property is not all that's required - adequate heating and insulation must also be provided.

Landlords with properties that have an EPC rating of F or G cannot create or renew a tenancy until the property is improved. Non-compliance with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) can lead to a penalty of up to £5,000. If a landlord is not able to improve the property, a valid exemption must be registered on the PRS national exemptions register.

There is government aim to raise energy performance standards across the private rented sector with as many privately rented homes as possible being upgraded to EPC band C. We support this ambition and future legislation which would enact these requirements. We support HMO proposals which go beyond minimum national requirements.

Waste and recycling storage

The Councils HMO Amenity Guidance provides the following guidance in relation to refuse storage and disposal.

- Ensure that sufficient bins or other suitable containers are provided to meet the number of occupants within the HMO and that they are adequate for their requirements;
- All refuse containers shall be located on hard standings with suitable access for cleansing of the area and removal of containers. Such hard standings shall be located in an area away from habitable rooms and wherever practicable at the rear of the premises. If the hard standing has to be located at the front of the building or other exposed position it shall be provided with a suitable screen where practical. The hard standing shall be positioned so that the bins do not obscure natural lighting from windows below bin height; and
- Accessibility for collection of containers is a fundamental aspect and will need to be identified and demonstrated as accessible as part of the planning application process.

It is important that the location, design and size of external bin storage areas are suitable and that they do not have a negative impact on the amenity of HMO occupants or their neighbours, and do not detract from the general amenity and character of the area. Bins stored at the front of properties can look unsightly and clutter the street scene. Where possible they should be located to the side or rear of a property and screened from view to minimise their impact. Unless suitably screened, bins stored at the front of properties are unlikely to be acceptable. All waste and recycling storage areas should be clearly identified on plans submitted as part of the planning application.

Car parking / cycle storage

HMOs are typically home to more adults than a standard residential property, which could lead to increased pressure for car parking spaces. Many HMOs are conversions of existing properties and the level of parking provision that is possible within the property is often restricted. Therefore, it is not possible to have a 'one size fits all' approach to parking that is suitable for all HMOs.

To reduce parking pressures on the street, provision for parking within the property curtilage should be provided if possible and appropriate. However, any in-curtilage parking provision must complement the residential character of the area and not detract from the entrance and approach to the building. A balance must also be made between the provision of space for car parking and other needs, such as waste storage, cycle storage and the provision of outdoor amenity space.

All applicants for HMOs should set out the parking provision that is proposed as part of their scheme at the planning application stage. The appropriate level of parking provision will need to be agreed with the council based upon:

- The availability and suitability of parking within the curtilage of the property;
- The sustainability of the site in relation to services and amenities;
- The availability of public transport and access to bus stops and cycle routes;
- The availability of existing parking provision in the surrounding locality; and
- Parking demand compared to the use of the building as a standard residential property.

The Parking Provision for Developments SPD provides standards for the quantum of parking and cycling provision within for C4 (small HMOs).

In relation to cycle storage the following key principles will apply:

- It should be secure (with natural surveillance) and covered

- Corridors or landings will not be considered as adequate provision for cycle storage and residents should not be expected to carry a cycle upstairs; and
- Sensitively designed and sited to reduce the impact on neighbouring residents or the street scene.

Provision for car and cycle parking must be identified on site plans.

Entrance and approach

The entrance and approach to an HMO is an important part of how it functions in relation to its surroundings. The Local Design Guide SPD provides guidance in relation to entrances and approaches to properties advocating for active frontages to the street with front doors and windows of primary living spaces being located on this elevation to provide natural surveillance. Entrances to the side of properties will be discouraged as they create opportunities for hiding, increase feelings of insecurity amongst users and can cause other amenity issues for both neighbours and residents. Designing entrances to be visible from the street will mean that HMOs are more secure. HMOs should therefore normally be served by a main entrance at the front of the property.

External alterations

We advocate that any HMO applications make as few changes as possible to the external parts of a property as possible to maintain the established character in the area and maximise the residential amenity of the property. However, we acknowledge that amendments and extensions to properties can be undertaken acceptably as is the case with other existing homes.

Care and attention are required where a proposal is located within a conservation area or is a listed building. Applicants will be required to ensure that proposals accord with policies on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. If a building is located within one of the Borough's 11 conservation areas, we encourage review of the Conservation Area and Historic Environment Folder (CAHEF) Supplementary Planning Document (which incorporates conservation area appraisals and management plans) for guidance on appropriate external alterations.

Where a building is listed, external and internal alterations require listed building consent. Such alterations are required to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building. It is important to consider this requirement when designing internal layouts, formulating energy efficiency measures and when considering any alterations to improve natural light, introduce entrance points and provide external storage.

Supporting information

The Council will not specifically request management plans as part of an application for an HMO proposal. However, within planning statements we request that the applicant provide clarity to the Council in relation to matters which would traditionally be provided within a management plan as this provides the case officer, occupants/tenants, neighbours and other interested parties clarity in relation to how it is intended that the proposal will be operated and managed. The Council will seek further information and condition relevant elements where they are necessary to make proposals acceptable in planning terms.

Matters which we recommend to be covered through a planning statement include:

- **Occupancy Terms-** Clearly define the maximum number of residents allowed and demonstrating compliance with local standards. The maximum occupancy should also be outlined within the application description.
- **Maintenance-** process for regular property maintenance to ensure all facilities are in good condition (this includes all common areas and utilities).

- **Tenant Relations/Management-** This would primarily cover the approach to addressing and noise and annoyance caused by residents and any other relevant management procedures.
- **Waste management-** management proposals for the storage, transfer and collection of waste ensuring that appropriate arrangements and facilities are in place.
- **Security and safety-** detailing how proposals have considered safety and security measures including Secured by Design. ensuring all relevant facilities and measures are in place to ensure the safety of tenants is maintained (includes all aspects including fire safety).

This should not prove onerous for landlords and will allow them to highlight good management practices.

Section 7: Further Information

The links below provide further information in relation to aspects of this SPD should you be considering an HMO proposal:

- Stockton Council Information for Landlords (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/landlords>)
 - House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licences (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/hmo-licence>)
 - Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/mees>)
 - Houses in Multiple Occupation amenity guidance (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/2055/foreword>)
- Stockton Local Plan (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/local-plan>)
- Stockton Council Supplementary Planning Documents (<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/supplementary-planning-documents>)



Consultation Statement

Incorporating Determination of Likely Significant Environmental Effects Determination and Statement of Reasons

Supplementary Planning Document: Houses in Multiple Occupation

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Document Overview

Consultation undertaken in the preparation of the SPD

Introduction

The purpose of this statement is to provide details about the consultation which has taken place during the production of the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Houses in Multiple Occupation and the following supporting documents:

- [Strategic Environmental Assessment](#)
- [Habitat Regulation Assessment](#)

Regulation 12 of the 2012 Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations requires that before a Local Planning Authority adopt an SPD it must: Prepare a statement setting out:

- [the persons the LPA consulted when preparing the SPD;](#)
- [a summary of the main issues raised by those persons; and](#)
- [how those issues have been addressed in the SPD.](#)

In accordance with the relevant regulations, the draft SPD and supporting documents, were made available for public consultation. This Consultation Statement sets out how this was undertaken, the comments which were received and what changes have been made to the document as a result.

Public Consultation Period

The Council made the draft SPD and supporting documents available in accordance with relevant regulations and invited members of the public, relevant authorities, general consultation bodies, specific consultations bodies, duty-to cooperate partners, and any other interested party on the Council's Local Plan Consultation Database to make comments on the documents.

The consultation period within which representations could be made was between Thursday 19th March 2026 and Friday 17th April 2026. Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Consultation Plan which is contained within Appendix A. The organisations consulted is included at Appendix B.

Public Consultation Responses (main issues raised and how these have been addressed within the SPD)

A total of 13 responses were received on the contents of the draft SPD. These responses can be summarised as falling into three main categories.

- **Organisations-** Natural England, Coal Authority, Home Office, Prism Planning, North Yorkshire Council, Historic England
- **Local Resident-** 6 local residents
- **Ward Councillor**

There is a requirement that a summary of main issues raised and how these have been addressed in the SPD be undertaken. The table below provides a summary of the responses received and how they have been addressed within the SPD.

Responses by Organisations

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / how this has been addressed within the SPD
Home Office (Asylum Support)	We have noted the contents of your correspondence. Thank you once again for taking the time to write to the Home Office.	Comments noted
Rod Hepplewhite, Prism Planning	A very sensible move, IMHO, as I fail to understand why CoU from Class C3 to C4 was ever made permitted development in the first place. Class C3(c) should be enough (e.g. your typical student house) without needing planning permission. Good luck with bringing the SPD into force.	Comments noted
The Coal Authority	Is it noted that your Authority's boundary falls outside of the coalfield area. On this basis we have no interest in your plan area and no comments to make on the above consultation or on any future emerging planning policy documents.	Comments noted
Natural England	Whilst we welcome this opportunity to give our views, the topic of the Supplementary Planning Document does not appear to relate to our interests to any significant extent. We therefore do not wish to comment. Should the plan be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then, please consult Natural England again.	Comments noted
North Yorkshire Council	We have reviewed your document and conclude that there are no cross-boundary impacts or strategic matters which require cooperation and therefore have no comments to make.	Comments noted
Historic England	Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above. Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for. We note how HMOs form part of the boroughs housing supply, contribute towards meeting housing needs, and support the continued viable use or re-use of vacant buildings as set out in Section 4: (Guidance / Overview). They also intensify use of properties and hence concentrations of HMOs can impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the local area. The Council are proposing to put in place an Article 4 Direction, and associated SPD, to support mixed and balanced communities and ensure new HMOs do	General comments noted. In relation to the specific points raised the following response is provided: • Section 3- comments welcomed and no amendments required. • Section 4- comments noted in relation to this matter. However, in this instance, no amendments are to be made. The Development Plan should be read as a whole. The Local Plan includes, at policy HE2, confirmation that "In order to promote and enhance local distinctiveness, the Council will support proposals which positively respond to and enhance heritage assets". It will be for the case officer to balance matters such as this when determining planning applications. • Section 5- amendment has been made in relation to this matter as it provides more detailed guidance which will assist applicants.

	not result in adverse impacts on local amenity and quality of life. Draft SPD <u>Section 3</u> The adopted heritage policy is included in Section 3 / Policy Context / Local Plan 2019. We support the reference to Policy HE2 – Conserving and Enhancing Stockton’s Heritage Assets. We support the inclusion of this policy. <u>Section 4</u> Three measures (or tests) are set out in the SPD. These would be material in the assessment of planning applications for HMOs across the borough including in all conservation areas. These aim to 1) avoid concentrations of HMOs 2) avoid grouping of HMOs and 3) avoid a C3 use being sandwiched between HMOs. We support the positive statement that HMOs support ‘continued viable use or re-use of vacant buildings’ in Section 4, but question why the SPD does not give any weight to a proposal which brings a vacant building back into active use. For example, where an HMO is proposed within a vacant designated heritage asset, or non-designated heritage asset - including those on a Local List put in place by the Council in the future - this could be included as an additional test. We refer you to our publication and research on how repurposing built heritage can help create dynamic, comforting, and sustainable living places Heritage Works for Housing Historic England. Historic England research provides evidence on how empty traditional properties can contribute to housing delivery. Figures from 2025 indicated 670,000 new homes could be provided in vacant floor space within historic buildings across England. <u>Section 5</u> There is little reference to the historic environment other than in the Section 5 (Achieving good accommodation standards / External Alterations). The text in this section does not reference works to listed buildings being subject to additional controls. We suggest the following amendments and additions to this paragraph. Care and attention are required where a proposal is located within a conservation area or is a listed building. Applicants will be required to ensure that proposals accord with policies on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. If a building is located within one of the Borough’s 11 conservation areas, we encourage review of	
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	the Conservation Area Management Plan and the associated Character Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document - Conservation and Historic Environment Folder and management plan. As an example, there may be a requirement for features such as original timber windows to be incorporated into conversion schemes for guidance on appropriate external alterations. Where a building is listed, external and internal alterations require listed building consent. Such alterations are required to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building. It is important to consider this requirement when designing internal layouts (Figure 10), formulating energy efficiency measures and when considering any alterations to improve natural light, introduce entrance points and provide external storage. If you have any queries about any of the matters raised above or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.	
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Responses by Local Residents

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / how this has been addressed within the SPD
Local Residents	That there are too many HMOs and issues of anti-social behavior	The SPD has been produced to ensure proposals contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. No amendments are proposed to the SPD.
	Ensuring outside areas are kept clean and tidy and processes for evicting tenants who cause problems to neighbours.	The SPD includes provision for supporting information to be provided alongside planning applications. Conditions to a planning consent will be added to the consent where it is necessary to make proposals acceptable in planning terms. No amendments are proposed to the SPD.
	Priority to veterans over other groups	The SPD informs the determination of planning applications but does not consider the allocation lettings / tenancies. No amendments are proposed to the SPD
	Changes to properties to HMO should be undertaken in consultation and agreement with residents	Where planning permission is required a period of consultation will be undertaken in the determination of planning applications. During this period the views on the proposed development can be expressed by residents and others. No amendments are proposed to the SPD.

Response by Ward Councillor

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / how this has been addressed within the SPD
Cllr Dodds	Generally supportive of the proposed Article 4 Direction. Question relates to timing - i.e. if a proposed HMO has received planning but has not been completed prior to the formal adoption of the	At the current time there is no requirement for planning consent for change the use of a dwelling house (C3) to a small HMO (C4) but planning consent would be required for a large HMO (Sui Generis). Should the Article 4 direction be confirmed, there

	Article 4 Direction, will the original approval still be valid or will a new planning application be required as the previous scheme had not been implemented in planning terms?	would be the requirement for a planning application to be made for the change of use from a dwelling house (C3) to a small HMO (C4) once the direction came into force. Should properties change from C3 to C4 before a direction comes into force no planning consent would be required but the property owner would need to demonstrate that the change of use has occurred prior to this date should there be concerns that a property is being used in a manner without the required consent.
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SEA / HRA Screening Consultation

Preliminary SEA and Screening Report was prepared and forwarded to the 'Consultation Bodies' – the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England for comment. The consultation period was from Thursday 19th February to Thursday 12th March 2026. The comments received can be viewed in the SEA Determination and Statement of reasons document (see Appendix C). Following on, Stockton on Tees Borough Council determined that the draft SPD was not likely to have significant environmental effects. Accordingly, it was considered that an environmental assessment of the SPD was not required.

The SEA Screening Report and SEA Determination and Statement of reasons document were made available throughout the public consultation (between Thursday 19th March 2026 and Friday 17th April 2026).

No fundamental changes to the draft SPD have arisen from the public consultation and only minor non-material changes may be made prior to its publication which will not change the scope or purpose of the SPD, make 'new' policy. Therefore, it is considered that the initial determination (contained within Appendix C) remains valid.

The HRA Screening Report was made available to the 'Consultation Bodies' from Thursday 19th February to Thursday 12th March 2026 and also made available for public consultation from Thursday 19th March 2026 and Friday 17th April 2026. The HRA Screening Report concludes that the SPD is not likely to have significant adverse effects on the integrity of European sites or Ramsar sites and further Appropriate Assessment is not required. Following consultation the same outcomes remain.

Appendix A

Consultation period, requirements, and approach

Consultation Period

19th March 2026 to 17th April 2026 (4 weeks)

Statutory Requirements

To fulfil the requirements of:

- [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [The Stockton-on-Tees Statement of Community Involvement \(2016\)](#)

Approach to consultation

To ensure a transparent and holistic consultation the Council propose the following approach to consultation which meets statutory requirements.

How will decisions be made and what feedback will be given?

The Councils approach to this is detailed within the Statement of Community Involvement.

Identified activities

Brief description of activity	Date	Who is involved	Expected outcomes
Planning Committee Members Briefing Session – inviting planning committee to pre-consultation briefing session	Prior to consultation period	Planning Committee Members	Awareness Raising
Publish SPDs and Supporting Documents on website- Let's Talk section of website	Start of consultation period (19 th March 2026)	Planning Services / Communications Team	Awareness raising and consultation responses
Use of corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts- to publicise consultation	Throughout consultation period as appropriate	Communications Team	Awareness raising and consultation responses
Press release	Prior/during consultation	Communications Team	Awareness Raising
Letter/email to those on Consultation Database- stating where documentation is available. Those included on the Local Plan consultation database will be sent an e-mail/letter.	Both letters and e-mails to be sent prior to start of consultation period	Includes general/specific consultation bodies as well as local residents, local voluntary/community sector organisations, local businesses, and national organisations/agencies.	Awareness raising and consultation responses
E-mail to chair of Community Partnerships- stating where documentation is available	Start of consultation period	Forum members	Awareness raising and consultation responses

Email to all Council Members- stating where documentation is available	Start of consultation period	All Council Members to notify and allow them to raise awareness as considered appropriate	Awareness raising and consultation responses
Make documents available within libraries and customer service centres/principal office	Throughout consultation period	Planning Services / Library Service	Awareness raising and consultation responses
Attendance at meetings of groups	Subject to interest	Considered where formal invitation received by interested group.	Awareness raising and consultation responses

Appendix B

Organisations Consulted

Accent Group	Maltby Northern Edge Resident's Group
Adlington Planning Team	Maltby Parish Council
AECOM	Marine Management Organisation
Airport Operators Association	Marrons Planning
Anchor Trust	Matthew Trotter & Miller Architects
Appletons Chartered Surveyors	Metropolis PD
Arcus Consultancy Services Ltd (Planning Division)	Michael Mealing (Planning)
Arriva	Middlesbrough Borough Council
Arup	Middleton St George Parish Council
Atisha Buddhist Centre	Miller Homes
Augean PLC	Ministry of Defence
Avant Homes (North East)	Montagu Evans LLP
Avison Young	Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners
Baines Goldston	National Farmers Union
Baines Jewitt	National Gas Transmission
Bangladeshi Muslim Welfare Association	National Grid c/o Fisher German
Banks Developments	Natural England
Banks Property Ltd	Network Rail
Baptist Union of Great Britain	Newby Parish Council
Barclays Bank c/o Shire Consulting	NFU
Barratt David Wilson Homes North East	NG Bailey
Barratt Homes	NHS England North
Barton Willmore	NHS Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group
Barton Willmore (on behalf of Church Commissioners)	NHS Property Services Ltd
Bede Sixth Form College	NHS Stockton - Public Health
Bellway Homes	North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Big Tree Planning Ltd	North East Chamber of Commerce
Billingham Town Council	North East Civic Trust
Bishopton Parish Council	North East Community Forests
Blackett Hart and Pratt	North East Land and Planning Agency
BNP Paribas	North Star Housing Group
BOC Gases	North Tees Limited
British Geological Survey	North Tees NHS Trust
British Toilet Association	North Yorkshire County Council
BT Group plc	Northern Consortium of Housing
BTCV	Northern Gas Networks Ltd
Building Design Consultant	Northern Powergrid
Building Research Establishment	Northumbria Garden Trust

Business & Resident Action Group - Norton High Street	Northumbrian Water Ltd
Cameron Hall Developments c/o England and Lyle Ltd	Norton Village Association
Campaign for Real Ale	Npower Renewables
Canals and Rivers Trust	Ofcom
Carlton Parish Council	Office for Nuclear Regulation
Carter Jonas LLP	Office of Rail and Road
Carter Jonas LLP on behalf of DG Dale and Sons	Office of the Durham Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner
Catalyst	Office of the North Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Caterpillar Stockton	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland
CB Richard Ellis Ltd	Openreach
CH2M (Highways England)	Oxbridge Residents Association
Charles Church	P&M Properties
Childrens Society	PD Ports
Chris Thomas Ltd	Peacock and Smith
Church Commissioners	Pegasus Group
Churchill Retirement Living	Persimmon Homes
Civil Aviation Authority	Persimmon Homes Teesside
CLA North	Philips Petroleum
Cleveland Fire Brigade	Picton Parish Meeting
Cleveland Police Dedicated Designing Out Crime Officers	Places for People
Cleveland Police Headquarters	Plainview Planning Ltd
Coal Authority	PlanInfo
Coast & County Housing	Planning Potential
Colliers International	Planning Prospects
Community Welfare Trust	Planning Team, Bond Dickinson
Concept Town Planning Ltd	Planning Works Ltd
Connect Property North East Ltd	Planware Ltd
ConocoPhillips Petroleum UK	Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland
Co-operative Group	Preston Farm Developments
Council for British Archaeology	Preston on Tees Parish Council
Countryside Properties	Primeland Consultants Limited
Cowpen Bewley Village Residents Association	Prism Planning
CPRE	PX House
CPRE North Yorkshire	Quod
Crathorne Parish Council	Rae Watson Development Surveyors
CRC- Churches Regional Commission in the North East	Railway Housing Association
Crown Estate Office	Ramblers Association, Stockton
Cushman and Wakefield	Rapleys
Cussins (North East) Ltd	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Dalton Warner Davis Chartered Surveyors	Redmarshall Parish Council
Darlington Borough Council	rg+p Ltd
David Kitchen Associates	RGB Ltd
Davis Planning Partnership	Road Haulage Association - Northern Office
DEFRA	Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyor
Deloitte	RPS Group Plc
Deloitte Real Estate	RSPB
Department for Business Innovation and Skills	RSPB (Northern England Region)
Department for Transport	Rudby Parish Council
Design Council	Sabir UK Petrochemicals Ltd
DevPlan	Sadberge Parish Council
Dodds Brown	Saddington Taylor
DPDS Consulting Group	Sanderson Weatherall on behalf of Lidl UK
DPP (Newcastle)	Satnam Group
DPP Planning	SAVE
DTZ	Savills
Durham County Council	School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape
Durham Diocesan Secretary	Seamer Parish Council
Durham University	Sedgefield Town Council
Eaglescliffe Preservation Action Group	Sembcorp Energy UK
Education Funding Agency	Shri Guru Nanak Gurdwara and Sikh Community Centre
Education Training Collective	Shuttleworth Picknett & Associates LLP
EE	Signet Newcastle
Egglescliffe & Eaglescliffe Parish Council	Signet Planning
Egglescliffe Youth Group	Sita UK
ELG Planning	Smiths Gore
Elwick Parish Council	Society for the Promotion and Advancement of Romany Culture
Emery Planning	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
Endeavour Housing Association	Solutions Northern
Endeavour Partnership	Southlands Management Ltd
Environment Agency	sp&architects
Esh Developments	Spawforths
Estate Directorate, Ministry of Justice	Spacia c/o Network Rail
Fairhurst	Sport England
Federation of Small Businesses	SSA Planning Limited
FFT Planning	SSA Planning Limited (on behalf of KFC Ltd)
Fields in Trust	St Modwen
Firstplan	St. James's Street Property Management
Forest Enterprise	Stagecarriage
Forestry Commission (County Durham)	Stagecoach
Forestry Commission (Morpeth)	Stagecoach Transit
Forestry England	Stainton and Thornton Parish Council
Freight Transport Association	Stephenson Halliday

Friends of Tees Heritage Park	Steve Hesmondhaigh & Associates
Friends of the Darlington Stockton Railway	Stillington & Whitton Parish Council
Friends of the Earth - Middlesbrough & Redcar	Stockton Business Forum
Garden History Society	Stockton Renaissance
Gentoo Homes	Stockton Residents' Association
Geoplan Ltd	Stockton Sixth Form College
George F White	Stockton Town Pastors
Gerald Eve LLP	Story Homes
Girsby Parish Council	Taylor Wimpey
GL Hearn Property Consultants	Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Ltd
Gladman Developments	Tees Archaeology
GO Northern	Tees Valley Combined Authority
Great Stainton Parish Council	Tees Valley Local Access Forum
Greatham Parish Council	Tees Valley Nature Partnership
Greenenergy Terminal Limited	Tees Valley Rural Community Council
Grindon and Thorpe Thewles Parish Council	Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
Groundwork Trust	Teesside Humanist Society
H J Banks & Co. Ltd.	Teesside International Airport
Habiteg	Tesni Properties Limited
Hale	Tetlow King Planning
Hambleton District Council	The Ancient Monuments Society
Hanover Housing	The Co-operative Group
Hart Properties	The Council for British Archaeology
Hartburn Residents Association	The Energy Workshop
Hartlepool Borough Council	The Gardens Trust
Hartlepool Water	The Georgian Group
Health & Safety Executive	The Gypsy Council UK Office
Hedley Planning Services	The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups
Hellens Group	The Planning Bureau Ltd
Highways England	The Sirius Group
Highways England - Northumberland & Durham	The Theatres Trust
Highways England Tees Valley	The Twentieth Century Society
Highways England Tyne & Wear	The Victorian Society
Hilton Parish Council	The Woodland Trust
Hindu Culture Centre	Thirteen Group
Historic England	Thornaby Town Council
Historic Towns Forum	Thoroughbred Homes Ltd
HJ Banks & Co Limited	Thorpe Thewles Residents Association
Hobson 7 Smith, Builders	Three
Home Builders Federation	TM Urban Developments
Home Group	Tomlinson Hall
Home Office	Transco
Homes England	Traveller Law Reform Coalition
How Planning	Turley Associates

Husband and Brown Limited	Turley Associates on behalf of Tees Valley Airport
Ian Derby Partnership	U.K Land Estates
Indigo Planning	University of Durham
Industry Nature Conservation Association	Vernon and Co
INEOS Chlor Vinyls Ltd	Virgin Media
Ingleby Barwick Town Council	Vodafone and O2
Inovyn Enterprises Ltd	Vopak
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	Ward Hadaway
Inter Terminals	Wardell Armstrong
Interserve Construction Limited	Wellington 2004 Estate Company c/o Dalton Warner Davis
Jayline Travel	Wellington Square Shopping Centre
Jeffrey Tarren & Associates	Westbury Mosque
JG Eaglescliffe (Holdings) Ltd c/o Sanderson Weatherall	White Young Green Planning
JigSaw Planning	Williams Gallagher c/o Total Planning Solutions
Jomast Developments	Wolviston Parish Council
Jon Tweddell Planning	Woodland Trust
JWPC Limited	Worsall Parish Council
Karbon Homes	Wright Construction (Durham) Ltd.
Kirklevington & Castle Levington Parish Council	Wyevale Garden Centres Ltd
Kirklevington Property Co Ltd c/o Peacock and Smith	WYG
KLR Planning	Wynyard Estates c/o Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners
Knight Frank LLP	Wynyard Parish Council
KT Associates	Wynyard Park
Lafarge Aggregates Ltd	Wynyard Residents Association
Lambert Smith Hampton	Yarm and Willie Flats Residents Group
Letch Lane Residents	Yarm Chamber of Trade
Lexington Communications	Yarm Civic Society
Limes Developments	Yarm Residents Group
Local clinical commissioning group	Yarm Town Council
Long Newton Parish Council	York Diocesan Society
Lovell Johns	Yorkshire Gardens Trust
Lovells	Zero Waste Ltd

Appendix C

SEA Determination and Statement of Reasons

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Part 9 Determination of Likely Significant Environmental Effects

Determination and Statement of Reasons under Part 9 (1) and (3)

Consultation Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Part 9 (1) Determination

Stockton on Tees Borough Council has determined, having consulted Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England, that the Draft Supplementary Planning Document: Houses in Multiple Occupation is not likely to have significant environmental effects. Accordingly, it is considered that an environmental assessment of the SPD is not required.

Part 9 (3) Statement of Reasons

1. The preliminary SEA Screening Report contains the detail of the assessment and reasons. This statement is made to satisfy Part 9 (3) of the Regulations.
2. In making the determination, the Council has taken account of the fact the 'Parent Policies', Strategies and Priorities to which the SPD relates have, in the course of their preparation, been subject to Sustainability Appraisal including SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (with Appropriate Assessment).
3. The Council determined at Stage 1 of the Screening Process that SEA is relevant to the SPD. The Council's opinion at Stage 2 is that the SPD is unlikely to cause significant environmental effects in its application to decision taking, particularly as the parent policies in the adopted Stockton on Tees Local Plan have been subject to rigorous assessment in this respect both in preparation and in their final form through formal Examination in Public.
4. The SPD will provide information on the interpretation and implementation of the Council's Local Plan policies. The SPD primarily relates to Local Plan policy SD8 Sustainable Design and H4 Meeting Housing Need. The SPD seeks to ensure proposals contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours.

5. In view of the assessment at Stage 2, it is the Council's preliminary opinion, at Stage 3, that an Environmental Report would not be required.
6. Under Regulation 9 (2), the preliminary SEA Screening Report was forwarded to the 'Consultation Bodies' – the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England for comment on content and conclusion. The responses received from Natural England and Historic England did not dispute the Council's conclusions at Stage 3. A response was not received from the Environment Agency. A copy of responses is provided within Appendix 1 of this document.

Where can I find a copy of these Documents

A copy of this determination and the Assessment containing the reasons for this determination can be found on the Council's website at: <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/current-consultations>, or inspected at any of the libraries within the borough during opening hours (details are available at <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/find-library>) alongside our principal office Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6BJ.

Alternatively, by email request sent to planningpolicy@stockton.gov.uk; by telephone: 01642 393939 or by post to Planning Policy, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6BJ.

Appendix 1

Responses of Consultation Bodies to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

Historic England (received 11th March 2026)

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above. We note the consultation is on the screening opinion only. It does not request our comments on the content of the confidential draft HMO SPD also received via email on the 19th February 2026.

In terms of our area of interest, given the nature of the draft SPD we would concur with your assessment that the SPD is unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects. We accept the SPD is intended to provide clarity on the interpretation of policies within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan which has already been subject to a SA/SEA. As a result, we would endorse the Local Planning Authority's conclusions that it is not necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment of this particular SPD.

Historic England has produced guidance for all involved in undertaking SA and SEA exercises which covers issues relating to the historic environment and when SA/SEAs are necessary.

For the avoidance of doubt, this does not affect our obligation to advise you on draft versions of the SPD when it is subject to consultation. If you have any queries about any of the matters raised above or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Natural England (received 26th February 2026)

Thank you for your consultation request on the above dated and received by Natural England on 19th February 2026.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Our remit includes protected sites and landscapes, biodiversity, geodiversity, soils, protected species, landscape character, green infrastructure and access to and enjoyment of nature.

Whilst we welcome this opportunity to give our views, the topic of the Supplementary Planning Document does not appear to relate to our interests to any significant extent. We therefore do not wish to comment.

Natural England does agree with your conclusion that it does not require an SEA / HRA.

Should the plan be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then, please consult Natural England again.

Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment. A SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment only in exceptional circumstances as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance here. While SPDs are unlikely to give rise to likely significant effects on European Sites, they should be considered as a plan under the Habitats Regulations in the same way as any other plan or project. If your SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulation Assessment, you are required to consult us at certain stages as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance.

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Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Assessment

Houses in Multiple Occupation Draft Supplementary Planning Document (March 2026)

1: Introduction

There is no legal requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents to be accompanied by Sustainability Appraisal. However, “in exceptional circumstances” there may be a requirement for SPDs to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) where it is considered likely that they may have a significant effect on the environment that has not already been assessed within the SEA of the local plan¹. A screening assessment has been undertaken to assess whether such an assessment is necessary.

2: SEA screening criteria and procedure

To assess whether an SEA is required, there is a requirement to undertake a screening assessment, based on a standard set of criteria as set out in the Regulations, to determine whether the draft SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects. The screening must then be subject to consultation with the three statutory bodies Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Following consultation, the results of the screening process must be detailed in a publicly available statement.

The consultation with the three statutory bodies is to be undertaken between 19th February and 12th March 2026. Two responses were received within the consultation period with response summarised below:

- **Natural England-** the topic of the Supplementary Planning Document does not appear to relate to our interests to any significant extent. We therefore do not wish to comment. Natural England does agree with your conclusion that it does not require an SEA / HRA. Should the plan be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then, please consult Natural England again.
- **Historic England-** given the nature of the draft SPD we would concur with your assessment that the SPD is unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects. We accept the SPD is intended to provide clarity on the interpretation of policies within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan which has already been subject to a SA/SEA. As a result, we would endorse the Local Planning Authority's conclusions.

3: SEA screening assessment

The table outlined within Appendix 1 sets out the Council's assessment of whether significant environmental effects are likely and is based on the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

4: Conclusions

As a result of the assessment carried out in Appendix 1, it is considered that it is unlikely that any significant environmental effects will arise because of the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD.

Notably, the SPD does not propose any policies or allocations, instead offering clarity on the interpretation of policies within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan and sets out guidance and good practice for planning applicants to enable the delivery of better planning outcomes. The SPD will not result in any significant new development; it simply provides additional guidance on proposals for HMOs.

The Council has therefore determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not necessary for the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD.

However, it is important to note that this screening assessment is based on a draft version of the SPD. Consequently, if the content or purpose of the SPD should materially change then the SEA screening will need to be re-assessed and updated.

¹ Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 008, Reference ID: 11-008-20140306)

Appendix 1: Screening Assessment

Determining the likely significance of effects on the environment

Criteria		Assessment	Likely significant effect?
1	Characteristics of the plan or programme		
1a	The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	The SPD provides supplementary guidance to support the implementation of Local Plan policies (principally SD8 and H4). Whilst the SPD will establish a framework for the implementation of policies within the Local Plan it does not determine the detail of the framework i.e. it does not establish policy.	No
1b	The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The SPD adds further detail to existing policies within the Development Plan. It is not intended to influence other plans and programmes.	No
1c	The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The SPD is relevant in terms of promoting sustainable development as it ensures HMO proposals meet appropriate standards and seeks to reduce potential for negative impacts. Given the topics in the SPD, it is not likely that there would be any significant environmental effects arising from the SPD.	No
1d	Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The SPD provides supplementary guidance to support the implementation of Local Plan policies aiming to ensure that appropriate standards for HMOs are met. It is not anticipated that there will be any environmental problems introduced because of the SPD.	No
1e	The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	The SPD supplements Local Plan policies and seeks to ensure that appropriate waste management provision is made for HMOs. It is not likely that there would be any significant environmental effects arising from the SPD.	No
2	Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected		
2a	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The anticipated effects are expected to be positive as the SPD will ensure that HMOs provide appropriate standards of accommodation and seeks to reduce potential for negative impacts. The duration of the effects will depend upon the long-term use of premises but could be considered permanent unless HMOs are subsequently converted to other uses. The frequency of effects will be	No

Criteria		Assessment	Likely significant effect?
		linked to the number of planning applications for HMOs that are submitted.	
2b	The cumulative nature of the effects.	Its implementation will assist in mitigating potential negative effects that may arise from development of HMOs.	No
2c	The trans-boundary nature of the effects.	The SPD is to be applied borough wide where HMO applications are received. However, no trans-boundary effects anticipated from the SPD owing to the nature of its content.	No
2d	The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents).	No risks identified as the SPD seeks to ensure suitable standards are met in applications for HMOs.	No
2e	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The SPD will be applied to all HMO planning applications in the borough. Its effects will be more likely felt at a more local scale (i.e. street or neighbourhood level) but it would not result in any additional development than would otherwise be the case.	No
2f	The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii. intensive land-use	The SPD supplements the higher level Local Plan policies and will not in itself result in any additional development. The SPD will not give rise to any significant effects on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage. The SPD provides guidance on determination of planning applications for HMOs. It does not promote development which is likely to lead to environmental quality standards or limit values being exceeded. The SPD will not give rise to any significant effects because of the intensification of land use – it will not in itself result in any additional development. Any applications for development will be required to satisfy the relevant policies for the protection of the character of the area before permission is granted.	No
2g	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	The SPD will not give rise to any significant adverse effects on nearby protected areas or landscapes.	No



Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening Assessment

Houses in Multiple Occupation Draft Supplementary Planning Document (March 2026)

1: Introduction

It is a requirement under the Habitats Directive to establish the potential effects of “plans or projects” on designated European sites, and therefore Ramsar sites. The first stage in the HRA process is to establish whether a “significant effect” is likely. This is referred to as the “screening stage”. If it is found that a significant effect is not likely, then no further action is required. If potential effects are identified and deemed to be significant then Appropriate Assessment is required and used as a tool to help modify the plan or project to ensure that impacts are removed, or if this is not possible mitigated to prevent an adverse effect upon the integrity of the site.

2: HRA screening assessment

The purpose of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of land use plans is to ensure that protection of the integrity of European sites is part of the planning process. The requirements for HRA of plans and projects is outlined in the European Communities (1992) Council Directive 92/43EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora otherwise known as the Habitats Directive. The Habitats Directive requirement to carry out HRA for land use plans is primarily transposed into English law under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

European sites are Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. The Borough of Stockton-on-Tees contains one designated site - the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA. The site has also been recognised as a wetland of international importance for nature conservation, under the Ramsar Convention. Other SPAs / SACs and Ramsar sites located within adjacent of more distant authorities include North York Moors SPA/SAC (approx. 9 km), Thrislington SAC (approx. 9 miles), Castle Eden Dene SAC (approx. 10 miles), Durham Coast SAC (approx. 10 miles), and Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar (approx. 10 miles).

3: HRA screening conclusions

The SPD does not propose any policies or allocations, instead offering clarity on the interpretation of policies within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan and sets out guidance and good practice for planning applicants to enable the delivery of better planning outcomes. The SPD will not result in any significant new development; it simply provides additional guidance on proposals for HMOs. The Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD is therefore not likely to have significant adverse effects on the integrity of European sites or Ramsar sites and further Appropriate Assessment is not required

It is important to note that this screening assessment is based on the consultation version of the SPD. Consequently, if the content or purpose of the SPD should materially change then the HRA screening will need to be re-assessed and updated.

THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF STOCKTON-ON-TEES
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT)
(ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 (AS AMENDED)
DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4(1)

WHEREAS The Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees ("the Council") being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of article 4(5) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 ("the Order"), are satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description set out in Schedule 1 below should not be carried out on the land described in Schedule 2 below unless planning permission is granted on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

NOW THEREFORE the Council in pursuance of the power conferred on them by article 4(1) of the Order hereby direct that the permission granted by article 3 of the Order shall not apply to development of the description set out in Schedule 1 below on the said land of the description set out in Schedule 2 below:

SCHEDULE 1

Development consisting of a change of use of a building from a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of Schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) of that Schedule being development comprised within Class L(b) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the Order and not being development comprised within any other Class.

SCHEDULE 2

Land comprising the entire area of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees shown edged red on the attached map.

THIS DIRECTION is made under article 4(1) of the Order and in accordance with Schedule 3 to the Order and shall come into force, if confirmed, on 22 March 2027.

Made under the Common Seal of The Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees this 18th day of March 2026.

The Common Seal of The Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees was affixed to this Direction in the presence of:



Authorised Signatory

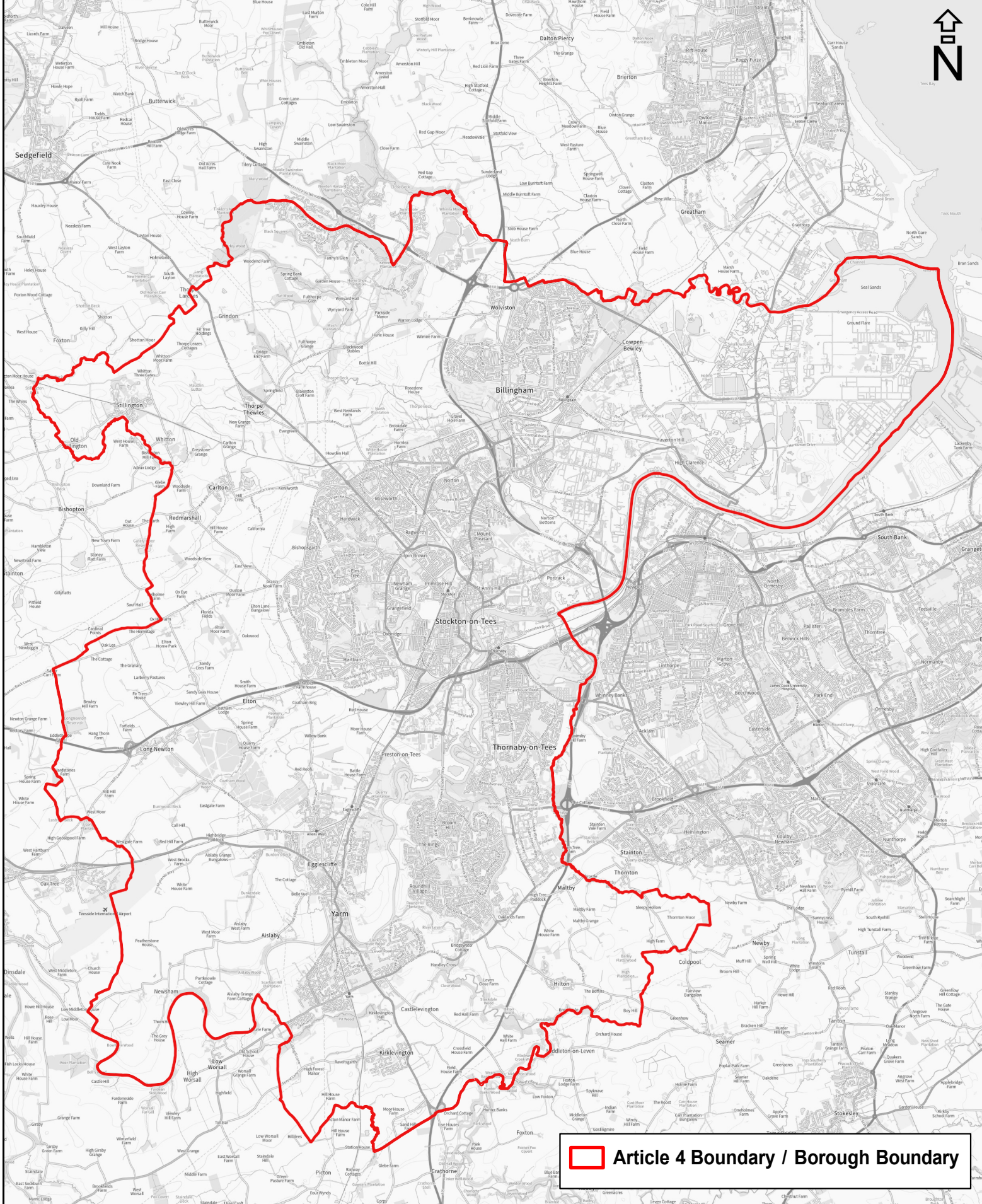


46251
Delegated

Confirmed under the Common Seal of The Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees this day of
202

The Common Seal of The Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees was affixed to this Direction in
the presence of:

Authorised Signatory



 **Article 4 Boundary / Borough Boundary**



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Map Produced by Planning Policy
Planning Services

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Dunedin House, Columbia Drive,
Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6BJ
Telephone: (01642) 393939

Title

Article 4 Direction

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THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF STOCKTON-ON-TEES
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT)
(ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 (AS AMENDED)

NOTICE OF MAKING AN ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION

NOTICE is hereby given that the Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees (“the Council”) has made a Direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) on Wednesday 18th March 2026 (“the Direction”).

The Direction relates to development consisting of a change of use of a building from a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of Schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) of that Schedule being development comprised within Class L(b) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) and removes permitted development rights for this type of development from the date on which the Direction comes in force. Therefore, from that date, planning permission will be required for this type of development.

The Direction, subject to confirmation by the Council, shall come into force on Monday 22nd March 2027 (unless a different date is specified by the Secretary of State).

The Direction applies to the entire area of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees shown edged red on the map attached to the Direction. A copy of the Direction including the map can be viewed at Stockton Central Library and Customer Service Centre, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1TU and all other libraries within the borough during normal opening hours. A copy of the Direction including the maps can also be viewed online at www.stockton.gov.uk/current-consultations.

Representations may be made concerning the Direction between Thursday 19th March 2026 and Friday 17th April 2026. If you wish to make representations you may do so using the online response form at www.stockton.gov.uk/current-consultations, in writing to Planning Policy, Stockton on Tees Borough Council, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6BJ or alternatively by email to planningpolicy@stockton.gov.uk.

Dated: 18th March 2026

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Consultation Representations

Article 4 Direction

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Overview and Representations

Consultation undertaken in the preparation of the Article 4 direction

Introduction

Notice has been given on the 18th March 2026 that the Council has made a Direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). A period of consultation was undertaken from 19th March and the 17th April 2026 inviting representations with consultation activities aligned with those of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and requirements within the Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

Confirmation of the direction would require planning consent for the change of use of a building within Class C3 (dwelling houses) to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) through the removal of permitted development rights for this type of development. The Direction would apply to the entire area of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

Representations Received / Council Consideration

During the consultation period 18 representations were received. These representations can be summarised as falling into 2 categories:

- **Organisations-** Natural England, Coal Authority, Home Office, Prism Planning, National Residential Landlords Association, Stockton Liberal Democrats, The Canal & River Trust, North Yorkshire Council, Historic England.
- **Local Resident-** 9 local residents

In deciding whether to confirm a direction made under Article 4(1), the local planning authority must take into account any representations received during the period. Responses received are detailed below alongside consideration given the Council

Representations by Organisations

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / consideration
Home Office (Asylum Support)	Thank you for your correspondence of 19 March 2026 to the Home Office regarding the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Supplementary Planning Document and the proposed Article 4 designation. We acknowledge receipt of your letter confirming that Article 4 Direction for the Stockton-on-Tees area is scheduled to come into effect on 22 March 2027. We have noted the contents of your correspondence. Thank you once again for taking the time to write to the Home Office.	Comments noted
Rod Hepplewhite, Prism Planning	A very sensible move, IMHO, as I fail to understand why CoU from Class C3 to C4 was ever made permitted development in the first place. Class C3© should be enough (e.g. your typical student house) without needing planning permission.	Comments noted and support welcomed

	Good luck with bringing the SPD into force.	
The Coal Authority	Thank you for your recent consultation on the draft houses in multiple occupation consultation The Coal Authority are a Statutory Consultee in the planning process in coalfield areas across England, Scotland and Wales. Is it noted that your Authority's boundary falls outside of the coalfield area. On this basis we have no interest in your plan area and no comments to make on the above consultation or on any future emerging planning policy documents.	Comments noted
Natural England	Thank you for your consultation request on the above dated and received by Natural England on 18th March 2026. Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. Our remit includes protected sites and landscapes, biodiversity, geodiversity, soils, protected species, landscape character, green infrastructure and access to and enjoyment of nature. Whilst we welcome this opportunity to give our views, the topic of the Supplementary Planning Document does not appear to relate to our interests to any significant extent. We therefore do not wish to comment. Should the plan be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then, please consult Natural England again.	Comments noted
North Yorkshire Council	Thank you for your email of 8th April 2026 providing us with the opportunity to comment on your current consultation on the above Supplementary Planning Document and Article 4 designation. We have reviewed your document and conclude that there are no cross-boundary impacts or strategic matters which require cooperation and therefore have no comments to make. We look forward to continued engagement between ourselves as we progress with planning documents.	Comments noted
National Residential Landlords Association	The NRLA is an association following the merger of the National Landlords Association and the Residential Landlords Association. Our membership represents over 110,000 landlords and agents, the largest 2enализes2on in the sector. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on the consultation concerning the introduction of a borough wide Article 4 Direction in Stockton-on-Tees. The NRLA strives for a just legislative and regulatory framework for the private rented sector, ensuring that landlords are aware of their legal rights and obligations.	Both the Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme affirm the Councils commitment to driving economic growth to support community prosperity and well-being. The delivery of good quality, affordable housing in well-connected neighbourhoods is integral to this. Alongside this 'housing and the physical environment' is a focus area within A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. HMOs form part of the

	<u>Main Objections</u> The need for HMOs in specific communities Certain segments of the community necessitate HMO accommodation, especially in student neighbourhoods and rural regions, for instance. It is exclusively the private rented sector that provides such housing alternatives. The council's proposal for an Article 4 Direction of this nature in a rural setting poses challenges. Rural areas usually have lower demand for HMOs; plus, rural areas often face housing shortages especially for young adults or low-income individuals or people seeking affordable shared living arrangements for example. Furthermore, in some rural areas, small scale HMOs support local economies by housing seasonal workers, apprentices or tourism employees. Restricting this option can undermine business needs and local vitality. Limiting C3 to C4 conversions removes a flexible, low-cost housing option in places that may already be struggling provide that type of property in the first place. Rent increases and costs As previously mentioned, an Article 4 Direction will diminish the availability of small HMOs in areas where there is both demand and necessity for such accommodation. Consistent with the principles of supply and demand, this will result in higher rental prices in those areas, particularly if they are in proximity to such things like major work places, infrastructure and services like hospitals. Pushing up rental levels will not help those who are seeking this type of housing. There is also added planning for what was previously a permitted change for a landlord, which includes planning fees, potential consultant costs and time delays. There is no guarantee of approval, even if the HMO meets safety and amenity standards. Enforcement activity Local authorities have many existing and robust enforcement powers which can be used to rectify problems in HMOs, such as- • Criminal Behaviour Orders • Crime Prevention Injunctions • Interim Management Orders • Improvement Notices • Litter Abatement Notices (Section 92 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) • Fixed Penalty Notices or Confiscation of equipment (Sections 8 and 10 of the Noise Act 1996) • Directions regarding the disposal of waste (for example, Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990)	borough's housing supply and contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited. Whilst the Article 4 direction proposed would cover the entirety of the Borough we would not consider the entirety of the borough to constitute a 'rural area' as indicated within the response. The Article 4 Direction does not restrict HMOs but requires an application for the change of use from C3 to C4 via the removal of permitted development rights. A Supplementary Planning Document is being prepared alongside the Article 4 direction which seeks to ensure proposals for HMOs contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. Within the SPD guidance are a series of measures which seek to avoid over-concentrations of HMOs which could lead to a community becoming unsustainably balanced and at risk of associated effects. Therefore, these measures are considered to be a pragmatic approach to achieving balanced communities and does not constitute a blanket ban. Enforcement powers will be used as and when appropriate. However, the approach of implementing and Article 4 direction alongside SPD is considered appropriate and pragmatic.
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	• Notices to remove rubbish from land (Section 2-3 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949) • Civil Penalties under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 • Prohibition Orders These powers do not require consultation to implement. The local authority can work with private landlords to deal with these concerns wherever they arise. <u>Conclusions</u> The NRLA's position on Article 4 Directions is that they distort the housing market and that local authorities should use already existing enforcement powers rather than planning permissions to address the condition, quality and environmental issues that affect HMOs. We believe that landlords should retain permitted development rights as determined by demand in the market. Article 4 Directions fail to address criminal landlords and poor management as they can still operate outside of the law and acceptable standards. It is important that elected councillors and officials consider the overall impact on their area. There is no guarantee that planning powers will have any impact overall.	
The Canal & River Trust	We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process, and as such we welcome the opportunity to input into planning policy related matters to ensure that our waterways are protected, safeguarded and enhanced within an appropriate policy framework. The Trust have reviewed the document/policies contained within the document and based on the information available we have no comment to make.	Comments noted
Stockton Liberal Democrats	The introduction of an Article 4 Direction on HMOs is a significant step, and it's vital that it strikes the right balance between protecting communities and maintaining access to affordable housing. While there are legitimate concerns about the concentration of HMOs in certain areas, particularly around issues like anti-social behaviour, pressure on local services, and changes to neighbourhood character, this policy must not become a blunt instrument that limits housing supply or unfairly penalises responsible landlords. Stockton already faces real challenges in housing availability and affordability. HMOs, when well-managed,	Both the Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme affirm the Councils commitment to driving economic growth to support community prosperity and well-being. The delivery of good quality, affordable housing in well-connected neighbourhoods is integral to this. Alongside this 'housing and the physical environment' is a focus area within A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. HMOs form part of the borough's housing supply and

	play an important role in providing flexible, lower-cost accommodation for working people, young residents, and those in transition. Restricting them without a clear, evidence-led approach risks pushing people into more precarious or unsuitable housing situations. The key here is enforcement and standards, not just restriction. Poorly managed properties and rogue landlords should be the priority for action, rather than imposing blanket controls that impact everyone. The Council must ensure: • Decisions are based on robust local data, not perception • There is clear engagement with residents, landlords, and tenants • The policy is regularly reviewed for unintended consequences • Resources are in place to enforce existing regulations effectively If this directive is to work, it must be part of a wider housing strategy, one that increases supply, improves standards, and supports sustainable communities across Stockton. Without that, there is a real risk this becomes more about optics than outcomes.	contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited. A Supplementary Planning Document is being prepared alongside the Article 4 direction which seeks to ensure proposals for HMOs contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. Within the SPD guidance are a series of measures which seek to avoid over-concentrations of HMOs which could lead to a community becoming unsustainably balanced and at risk of associated effects. Therefore, these measures are considered to be a pragmatic approach to achieving balanced communities and does not constitute a blanket ban. The LA has two regulatory controls which can be applied that require landlords to effectively manage HMOs. These are mandatory HMO licensing and selective licensing. Once adopted the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning application. Once a new local plan is adopted, existing Local Plan policies and SPDs would be considered out-of-date. Therefore, the appropriate place to consider policy review will be through the preparation of the Local Plan for the borough.
Historic England	Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above. Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for. We note how HMOs form part of the boroughs housing supply, contribute towards meeting housing needs, and support the continued viable use or re-use of vacant	Comments noted. Matters relating to the draft SPD have been considered within the consultation statement associated with the SPD.

	buildings as set out in Section 4: (Guidance / Overview). They also intensify use of properties and hence concentrations of HMOs can impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the local area. The Council are proposing to put in place an Article 4 Direction, and associated SPD, to support mixed and balanced communities and ensure new HMOs do not result in adverse impacts on local amenity and quality of life. Article 4 Direction We note the intention is for the Article 4 to apply to all land within the administrative area of the Council including all conservation areas. Stockton Borough Council has 11 in total. We have no comments on the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Article 4 Direction itself but refer you to our comments below. Draft SPD <u>Section 3</u> The adopted heritage policy is included in Section 3 / Policy Context / Local Plan 2019. We support the reference to Policy HE2 – Conserving and Enhancing Stockton's Heritage Assets. We support the inclusion of this policy. <u>Section 4</u> Three measures (or tests) are set out in the SPD. These would be material in the assessment of planning applications for HMOs across the borough including in all conservation areas. These aim to 1) avoid concentrations of HMOs 2) avoid grouping of HMOs and 3) avoid a C3 use being sandwiched between HMOs. We support the positive statement that HMOs support 'continued viable use or re-use of vacant buildings' in Section 4, but question why the SPD does not give any weight to a proposal which brings a vacant building back into active use. For example, where an HMO is proposed within a vacant designated heritage asset, or non-designated heritage asset - including those on a Local List put in place by the Council in the future - this could be included as an additional test. We refer you to our publication and research on how repurposing built heritage can help create dynamic, comforting, and sustainable living places Heritage Works for Housing Historic England. Historic England research provides evidence on how empty traditional properties can contribute to housing delivery. Figures from 2025 indicated 670,000 new homes could be provided in vacant floor space within historic buildings across England. <u>Section 5</u> There is little reference to the historic environment other than in the Section 5 (Achieving good accommodation standards / External Alterations). The text in this section does not reference works to listed buildings being subject to additional controls. We suggest the following amendments and additions to this paragraph.	
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	Care and attention are required where a proposal is located within a conservation area or is a listed building. Applicants will be required to ensure that proposals accord with policies on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. If a building is located within one of the Borough's 11 conservation areas, we encourage review of the Conservation Area Management Plan and the associated Character Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document - Conservation and Historic Environment Folder ~~and management plan. As an example, there may be a requirement for features such as original timber windows to be incorporated into conversion schemes~~ for guidance on appropriate external alterations. Where a building is listed, external and internal alterations require listed building consent. Such alterations are required to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building. It is important to consider this requirement when designing internal layouts (Figure 10), formulating energy efficiency measures and when considering any alterations to improve natural light, introduce entrance points and provide external storage. If you have any queries about any of the matters raised above or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.	
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Representations by Local Residents

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / how this has been addressed within the SPD
Response 1	I agree that the change proposed will be of benefit to local communities within Stockton, and i commend officers for working to deliver this change.	Comments noted and support welcomed
Response 1	I wish to be consulted on Article 4 notification. Around 3/4 years ago a property developer purchased the property next door to ours. We were told at the time it was for student accommodation. When occupants were put into the property we found out it was actually an HMO. Since this point we have had to endure the slamming of the front door of the property and loud banging noises from within the property through the night. The exterior of the property is poorly maintained and falling into disrepair. We have approached the 'owner / operator' <i>#response moderated to remove identifiable information#</i> on numerous occasions to voice our concerns though nothing seems to be done about it. We are not happy that nothing is being done to improve matters.	The article 4 notice was served in accordance with Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Should the Article 4 direction be confirmed it will also be undertaken in accordance with the same legislation. Respondee has been contacted in relation to remaining elements of the response.
Response 3	I fully support this proposal as described on this website.	Comments noted and support welcomed
Response 4	You should also include change of use from C3 to C2 as well as C3 to C4 to create the need for a planning application instead of just an application for lawful permission. This would allow local people to have a	Change of use from C3 to C2 does not constitute permitted development and as such planning consent is normally required. It should be noted that there

	say in their local area, which at present, on this matter, we do not.	is case law that indicates exceptions where a material change of use has not occurred. However, this would be on a case-by-case basis, and would not be resolved through the introduction of an Article 4 direction.
Response 5	I don't know what this means.	Comments noted
Response 6	Anybody who wants to turn a house into a HMO should require planning permission. Irrelevant of the size of the property.	Comments noted
Response 7	We dont want it	Comments noted
Response 8	Self	Comments noted
Response 9	Restricting the HMO business in anyway takes away the chance for creating new business, revenue, jobs and economic advantages. There are many abandoned buildings available for new business. The landlords have already sold their cheaper stock and are hanging on the open market. Making more barriers for business does provide growth,, which is what the country needs to present.	HMOs form part of the borough's housing supply and contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited. The Article 4 Direction does not restrict HMOs but requires an application for the change of use from C3 to C4 via the removal of permitted development rights. The associated SPD seeks to ensure proposals for HMOs contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. Within the SPD guidance are a series of measures which seek to avoid over-concentrations of HMOs which could lead to a community becoming unsustainably balanced and at risk of associated effects. Therefore, these measures are considered to be a pragmatic approach to achieving balanced communities and does not constitute a blanket ban.

Outcome

Having considered and taken into account the representations received, the local planning authority intends to confirm the Article 4 Direction. Necessary processes will be undertaken, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) to confirm the Direction which will come into force on Monday 22nd March 2027.

REPORT TO CABINET
14th May 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION

Access, Communities and Community Safety – Lead Cabinet Member Councillor
Norma Stephenson

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Consent Street Trading Policy Review 2026

Summary

The whole Borough has been designated as a consent area for the purposes of street trading. The Consent Street Trading (CST) policy details how the regime is managed. The policy document has been reviewed following a valid petition, a public consultation and comments received from the general licensing committee.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, Schedule 1 lists licensing functions under the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act such as Consent Street Trading as a non-executive function, as such the full Council has the final decision-making powers in respect of the CST policy.

Recommendations

1. Cabinet members note the contents of this report
2. Cabinet members recommend to Council, to agree the proposed consent street trading policy document.

Detail

1. The CST regime has been in place since 1 March 2024. Over 60 consents have been considered and granted across Stockton-on-Tees since the beginning of the scheme.
2. The CST policy guides the Council when it considers applications for street trading consents. It also serves to inform applicants of the criteria against which applications

will be considered as well as setting out the Councils framework and approach for the management of street trading in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

3. A petition asking for certain events to be excluded from the regime was received and duly considered at full council on 19th November 2026. It was moved by Councillor Norma Stephenson, seconded by Councillor Naill Innes that the petition be referred to the General Licensing Committee for further consideration.
4. The CST policy was subsequently reviewed and includes several changes in response to the valid petition, operational procedures and comments received from General Licensing Committee including recommendations.
5. As part of this review, a public consultation was also undertaken to help inform the changes. The responses received to the public consultation are available via the link below.
6. The review also considered the design principals:
 - Put communities at the heart of everything we do - sensitive to the needs of residents, provides diversity and consumer choice.
 - Has a 'place-based' approach - compliments regeneration and business growth.
 - Has efficient processes and be digital by design - process reviews and feedback provide efficiencies.
 - Uses data and intelligence to inform our decision - consultation drives the policy framework.
7. The matter was referred to the General Licensing Committee on the 24th March 2026. The committee agreed unanimously on the revised CST policy. The simplification of the CST process was acknowledged along with a new fairer criterion for commercial, charity and hobbyists trading at events within the borough.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

8. The CST policy is borough wide and has been operational since 2024 and the proposed changes will bring benefits for the community, licensing service, existing traders/event organisers and potential traders/event organisers.
9. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, reviewed and signed.

Corporate Parenting Implications

10. The report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

Financial Implications

11. The fees associated with consent street trading are set to cover the costs incurred by the Council in administering the licensing scheme. The fees are reviewed annually and do not form part of the Councils approved Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

12. Locally set fees are a vital means of ensuring both that costs can be recovered, reducing the risk of a subsidy or overpayment.

Legal Implications

13. Street trading is covered by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Schedule 4. [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1982 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1982/24/schedule-4)
14. On the 21 January 2024 the Council agreed the resolution in accordance with Paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 4 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 following full public consultation to designate the whole Borough as a consent area for the purposes of street trading.
15. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, Schedule 1 lists licensing functions under the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act such as Consent Street Trading as a non-executive function.

Risk Assessment

16. The consent street trading policy 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 (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

17. The Council agreed the resolution in accordance with Paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 4 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 following full public consultation to designate the whole Borough as a consent area for the purposes of street trading.

Background Papers

- Copy of consultation responses received. [Consultation responses 2026.docx](#)
- A full list of temporary event street trading consents which have been granted since the beginning of the regime can be found at: www.stockton.gov.uk/licensing-registers
- Street trading is covered by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Schedule 4. [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1982 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1982/24/schedule-4)
- [Agenda for Council on Wednesday 19th November 2025, 6.00 pm - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)
- General Licensing Committee Minutes [Browse meetings - Council - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)
- A copy of the revised CST policy including changes/additions marked in yellow can be found at: www.stockton.gov.uk/street-trading-consent

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REPORT TO CABINET

14 May 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

Anti-Poverty Action Plan Update 2026

Summary

This report, along with **Appendix A** outlines the progress made by the Council and partners since the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan were adopted by Cabinet in July 2024. It highlights the work undertaken across the Council during this time to address poverty in the Borough and gives examples of achievements across the four key areas identified in the Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The Council's [Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2027](#) confirms the Council's commitment to addressing and alleviating poverty. The Anti-Poverty Strategy is integral to the aims of the [Stockton-on-Tees Plan](#), specifically the priority to create 'Healthy and resilient communities.' Powering our Future has a strong commitment to reducing inequalities and prioritising prevention, putting our communities at the heart of what we do, enabling them to thrive and support each other.

At the time of its introduction, it was agreed that an update on the Anti-Poverty action plan would be presented back to Cabinet after 18 months.

Recommendations

1. This report is for information only. Cabinet is asked to note the report and actions taken to address and alleviate poverty during the 18-month period from July 2024.

Detail

Background

2. The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan was co-produced with local partner organisations and residents with lived experience; it sets out the Council's commitment to reducing inequality and poverty in the Borough. Over the last 18 months, the Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group has met regularly to coordinate actions undertaken by both internal and external partners. The Positive Living Forum, previously named the Anti-Poverty Lived Experience Group, continues to meet six-weekly to feed in residents' experiences and to evaluate the work being carried out by the Council and its partners.

Examples of key achievements

3. **Appendix A** provides examples of highlights from each of the four priority areas. A notable achievement for each area is summarised below, with further detail, testimonies and photographs provided in Appendix A.
- **Household Poverty:** The Bread-and-Butter Thing (TBBT) supports residents at five volunteer run hubs across the Borough. During 2025, residents saved over £339,738 by shopping with TBBT and there has been a significant decrease in the number of emergency food parcels since the scheme's introduction.
 - **Child Poverty:** The Free School Meals Auto-Enrolment Project has resulted in almost 400 pupils being auto-enrolled for free school meals in 2025, with an increase in almost £500,000 in pupil premium for schools across the Borough.
 - **Participation and Voice:** As previously noted the Positive Living Forum meets every six weeks. Their experiences have guided new initiatives and helped the Council shape services.
 - **Health and Wellbeing:** 68 Community Spaces and 10 Warm Welcome venues provide welcoming places across the Borough for residents to connect with each other, try new things and access advice and support. This is helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness, supporting residents to stay well for longer.

Consultation and engagement

4. As previously noted, (para 2 and above) the Council engages on an ongoing basis with residents and stakeholders to inform its anti-poverty approach.

Next Steps

5. Further detail on our ongoing approach is detailed within **Appendix A** (section 3). In summary key actions will include:
- Co-production of an updated action plan (for the remaining 18 months of the strategy). Any outstanding objectives will be carried forward onto the updated plan.
 - Continued engagement with our partners, including the Positive Living Forum and the Anti-Poverty Delivery Group, alongside our wider network of Community Partnerships and organisations to identify and agree these renewed actions.
 - A further progress report will be presented back to Cabinet at the end of the next 18-month period.

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Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Update Report 2026

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council's [Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2027](#) confirms the Council's commitment to reducing inequality and poverty, as previously set out in the [Fairer Stockton-on-Tees \(FSOT\) Strategic Framework](#). The FSOT framework is also integral to the aims of the [Stockton-on Tees Plan](#), and specifically, the priority to create 'Healthy and resilient communities.'

1.2 To support co-ordination of the strategy, the Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group continues to meet regularly to discuss and provide updates on the progress of the strategy's action plan. Members of the group include Council Officers, Thirteen Housing, SDAIS, Catalyst, Moneywise, and Thrive Teesside. In addition, the Positive Living Forum continues to feed their views via regular meetings. The Forum is the Council's Anti-Poverty Lived Experience Group, which was first set up to gather residents' voice on poverty related issues and co-produced the strategy and action plan in 2024.

1.3 This report highlights some of the work undertaken since the implementation of the strategy and initial action plan in July 2024 and is structured according to the strategy and action plan's 4 main priorities:

1. Household Poverty (including food insecurity and poverty, fuel poverty and income maximisation)
2. Child Poverty
3. Participation and Voice
4. Health and Wellbeing

The report also outlines the next steps for developing a phase two action plan for the next 18 months.

2.0 Action Plan Progress 2024-2026

2.1 As agreed, when the strategy was approved in July 2024, the following update highlights progress achieved within the first 18 months of the action plan's implementation. There have been a range of interventions and projects across the Council that have contributed to this action plan; listed below are some examples from each area to provide a flavour of the work undertaken, but this is not an exhaustive list. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

Priority 1: Household Poverty

Food insecurity and poverty

2.2 The Bread-and-Butter Thing (TBBT): Established in 2024, supports residents at five hubs across the Borough. During 2025, residents bought 13,590 sets of shopping at TBBT, saving over £339,738. The scheme has contributed to a significant reduction in the number of emergency food parcels in the Borough with numbers having fallen by around 50% since 2023. The service is available to all, helping reduce stigma and positively impacting levels of unnecessary food waste. Each hub is run by a team of volunteers.



2.3 Community Cookery: Our Community Engagement Team have collaborated with Learning and Skills to deliver 30 cookery classes to help over 240 residents learn new skills so that they can create healthier meals on a budget. These sessions have been delivered via Warm Welcomes and other groups in some of the more deprived parts of the Borough, such as our four Test, Learn and Grow areas. A donation from business, Galiford Try, paid for 15 slow cookers and air fryers which participants take home after the cookery session.

2.4 Food Aid Fund: Over the last 18 months, central government funding from the Household Support Fund has provided several rounds of Food Aid Funding which have been offered to community organisations supporting residents to reduce food insecurity. £60K of funding has been distributed to 47 organisations in Summer 2024, 54 organisations in Winter 2024/25 and 43 organisations in 2025/26.

2.5 Homeless Team: The homeless team have distributed vouchers to those at risk of food poverty and in a homeless situation and or in need of emergency accommodation. Families that have been placed in hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation have also been given vouchers for food.

2.6 Public Health Funding: Through a range of schemes, Public Health have funded food activity by supporting growing projects and organisations addressing food insecurity. The Grow Your Own project, led by Groundwork, has increased community knowledge and skills around growing and cooking in local community spaces. In Year 1, 40 cooking and 46 growing sessions took place over two sites, and this is continuing to expand. The Public Health Small Grants scheme, further detailed at 2.23, funded Cultivate Tees Valley to deliver growing projects across the Borough, with 80 regular attendees. The Catalyst Healthy Food Options Small Grants scheme, funded through this scheme, offers up to £250 to support individual organisations in piloting new or improved healthy food initiatives.

2.7 Staff Information on Food Support: The FSOT and Community Engagement teams created an information video explaining the different levels of food provision available in the Borough. From foodbanks to pantries, The Bread-and-Butter Thing to hot community food, this video helps support staff better understand the services available to help residents.

Fuel Poverty

2.8 Winter Warm Boxes: In January 2025, 40 warm boxes were distributed to those in need thanks to donations from SDAIS with funding provided by Corona Energy, attendees at the Winter Health Conference, and through the Multibank.

2.9 Stockton Rotary Club Winter Coat Collection: Council staff supported the Stockton Rotary Club to introduce their first 'Wrap Up' campaign by liaising with Tees Active to set up collection points and then arranged distribution of the 724 (300+ for children and young people) winter coats, fleeces and scarves via Council services and local VCSE organisations.

2.10 Homelessness Christmas Event: In December, the Fairer Stockton team worked in partnership with the Homelessness team to organise a Christmas event for people in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping. The event was held at Salvation Army and several support organisations attended. Recovery Connections, CGL, Moses Project, Citizens Advice, Moneywise, Wellbeing Hub and NHS colleagues supported around 85 people who accessed blood borne virus testing, health checks, free winter coats, toiletries, clothing and a Christmas buffet and gift bag to bring some festive cheer.

2.11 Switch Together Energy (formerly known as Big Community Switch) and Warm Homes Healthy People – Between April and December 2025, 684 Stockton residents registered for Switch Together Energy. If each resident proceeds to switch this will result in just over £618,000 worth of savings for Stockton

residents. Between April 2025 – December 2025, 80 Stockton residents benefitted from boiler servicing or boiler repairs from the Warm Homes Healthy People Scheme. Funding has been allocated to ensure the scheme will continue, reopening to applications in July 2026.

Income Maximisation

2.12 Pension Credit Campaign – The first targeted Pension Credit campaign began in October 2024. Officers contacted 695 customers (just under 700), and 234 of them went on to receive a Pension Credit award. In July 2025, a targeted bimonthly Pension Credit campaign was introduced. Residents that have recently turned pensionable age are contacted and told how to apply for PC and also have a council phone number that they can phone for good advice. So far, 233 residents have been contacted, generating 45 claims. Overall, the Pension Credit campaigns have achieved a 30% success rate.

2.13 Learning and Skills: During the 24/25 Academic Year, Learning and Skills saw over 3200 residents enrol on courses with a 90.3% Adult Skills Achievement Rate. The Apprenticeship Achievement Rate of 82.9% was 22.4% higher than the national benchmark. 84.4% of learners progressed to higher level learning or employment following completion of the learning programme and notably, 47.5% of all learners engaged came from a recognised disadvantaged area.

2.14 Employment and Training Hub: Over the past 18 months, the Hub has delivered a comprehensive programme of support, enabling residents to access work, progress into better employment, and improve their financial resilience. During this time, the Hub on Tour has taken the full range of Employment & Training Hub services directly across the Borough, delivering support across 54 locations. This outreach model has enabled us to engage residents who may otherwise face barriers to accessing the town centre.

The Hub delivers tailored programmes, including Connect to Work, Youth Guarantee Trailblazer and Workwell, supporting economically inactive residents with personalised, one-to-one guidance. These programmes address barriers such as health conditions, confidence, and lack of work experience, helping people move closer to or into employment. Since its official launch in September 2025, the Tees Valley Youth Guarantee Trailblazer has already delivered tangible outcomes for young people in Stockton. To date, 48 young people have been supported into paid work placements in Stockton.

2.15 Here to Help Events: The Here to Help programme delivers three events which support residents with the Cost of Living and related issues. Each event has a specific focus and target audience. The summer Here to Help is aimed at families, providing donated school uniforms and a wide range of family support. The Winter Health and Wellbeing Festival brings together a wealth of information and support, helping people prepare for winter. Something New for You tackles the January blues by helping people connect with others, try new things and access vital information and support. Since our first event in 2024, over 3,000 residents have attended a Here to Help event.



2.16 Here to Help Hub: The programme is supported by our [Here to Help](#) 'one-stop' online hub, printed booklet and Cost of Living newsletters which provide accessible year-round information. The FSOT team have attended various SBC employee events to make sure colleagues also have access to this information

2.17 Multibank: Since the launch of the Multibank in November 2024, local organisations, NHS and council teams have been able to access hundreds of thousands of free, donated products to support residents. From toys to toiletries, cleaning products to clothing, these items, donated by Amazon, are making a real difference to families in need. For example, children have received Christmas gifts, school supplies, backpacks and sports equipment, ensuring they are not excluded from important experiences and learning due to their family's income. Since the launch, 725,418 units have been distributed across Stockton-on-Tees with an estimated value of £4,236,442.



Priority 2: Child Poverty

A [report](#) on the progress made by the Council and its partners during 2025 to alleviate child poverty across the borough was taken to Cabinet in March 2026.

2.18 Child Poverty Network: The Stockton-on-Tees Child Poverty Network continues to meet quarterly, bringing together Council staff and external partners to discuss the key issues children and families living in poverty are experiencing across our Borough. This is a collaborative group which also works to find solutions to these issues and improve the lives of our young people. A member of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees team also represents SBC at the North East Child Poverty Commission and sits on the Commission's Executive Group.

2.19 Free School Meals Auto-Enrolment Project: This cross-directorate project, resulted in almost 400 pupils being auto-enrolled for free school meals in 2025, with an increase in almost £500,000 in pupil premium for schools across the Borough.

2.20 A Second Dance Prom Project: A member of our Positive Living Forum raised the issue of the impact of school proms on family budgets with young people often being excluded due to poverty. This led to the 'A Second Dance Project'. This is a partnership between SBC and Wellington Square and provides an alternative way to prepare for prom. All items are donated by residents and local businesses and to date we have provided around 80 young people with their dream prom outfit.



2.21 Kit Out Campaign: Sports clothing and equipment were provided to 40 families (identified by local schools) for free to encourage them to get active together.

2.22 Back to School Campaign: During Summer 2025, the Council worked in partnership with the Junction Multibank to provide 600 backpacks to children and families across the Borough. The backpacks ranged in design so that they could not be identified as 'free backpacks' and to avoid stigma.

2.23 School Uniforms: Our summer Here to Help event collected hundreds of pre-loved and donated new school uniforms. These were given out at the Here, pop-up shops and other community events. Pre-loved school uniform is now available to collect from any of the 4 Family Hubs. This provides a year-round offer that families and professionals can access when needed.



Priority 3: Participation and Voice

2.24 BMBF: Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) continue to hold monthly meetings for young people to act as a voice for the young people of the borough. The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People attend the meetings bimonthly, and the young people hold a 'question time' style session with them. The BMBF young people set the agendas for their meetings and have invited SBC services and external organisations who have, for example, undertaken first aid specifically for young people related to knife crime. Through an annual priority setting event, the young people decide which projects and activities they would like to focus on for the year. The young people continue to volunteer at BMBF events with over 700 volunteering hours contributed annually.

2.25 Positive Living Forum

The Fairer Stockton team continues to hold Positive Living Forum meetings every six weeks. Their experiences have guided initiatives like the prom project detailed above. Our Positive Living Forum has invited other SBC services to attend their meetings and have fed their experiences back to them, helping them to evaluate and improve their offer.

2.26 Equality & Poverty Impact Assessments

To support the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees strategy, it is vital that all decisions taken within the Council are viewed through a poverty lens. To ensure we are doing this consistently, launched in early 2025 an updated Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA). Key progress made as an example is that in the first year alone 53 EPIA's were completed and over 20 Officers have received training on the EPIA's process. It is now compulsory for all colleagues to complete an Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment when developing a new or revised service, policy, strategy, practice or plan. Further work is now planned as part of a Phase 2 roll out plan to further embed EPIA's into how the organisations decision making.

2.27 Test, Learn and Grow areas/Early Intervention and Prevention examples:

Through the 'Let's Talk' Hardwick & Salters Lane session with residents and organisations delivering in the area such as Thirteen, North Star and Cleveland Police, an action plan has been developed highlighting residents' priorities. One of these priorities was for diversionary activities for young people. Working with Hardwick in Partnership and Evolve Sports Charity, a 10-week boxing session was introduced taking place in the community. The sessions have continued to be a huge success with up to 30 young people attending every session.



Through engagement with residents as part of the Mandale Early Intervention & Prevention project, it transpired that families were not accessing the Thornaby Family Hub due to its location. Through working with Mandale Mill Primary School, the community and Thornaby Family Hub, Family Hub sessions are now delivered out of Vineyard Church. Vineyard also run a baby bank and other family activities so it is hoped that the community will now access more of these services too. Families also spoke about a need for SEN support for their children. Peer to Peer support sessions are now held in the community on a weekly basis.



Priority 4: Health & Wellbeing

2.28 Community Spaces, Warm Welcomes and Social Isolation and Loneliness Working Group

Currently, there are 68 Community Spaces venues and 10 Warm Welcomes sessions operating across the Borough. The scheme has benefitted from £60,000 of Public Health funding and continues to provide residents with a wide range of opportunities to access social activities, support and advice services (e.g. welfare advice and Employment and Training Hub's *Hub on Tour*). A Council-led social isolation and loneliness working group has also been created to develop a strategic approach to tackle these issues and strengthening community connections.



2.29 Public Health Small Grants Scheme:

This focuses on funding grass roots organisations to improve health and wellbeing, connecting communities and reducing inequalities. Successful organisations were awarded up to a value of £5,000 to deliver projects that meet the key criteria of being active, connecting with others and/or eating well. Since July 2024, £140,000 of funding has been given to 36 organisations.

2.30 Migration Support Team: The team utilised Government funding to support Refugees and Asylum Seekers by holding quarterly Services Fairs at a central venue. They are held in partnership with Refugee Futures based on research carried out by Durham University, with an aim to address and overcome barriers in accessing services, providing practical financial advice and support including debt advice, budgeting, and managing money, as well as promoting community pantries to access low-cost food provisions. The fairs also provide an opportunity for the many attendees to understand how various systems work and make it easier to access housing, employment and training as well as health services to overcome disparity. They have grown significantly since the first pilot fair, are very well attended, with over 20 organisations now

regularly attending after recognising the value of coming together to support refugee and asylum seeker communities.

2.31 Stockton Volunteer Driver Service:

SBC have commissioned Volunteering Matters to develop a volunteer driver service aimed at reducing barriers to services and enabling residents to connect both with each other and vital support. Through the Stockton Volunteer Driver Service (SVDS), trained volunteers now provide safe, door-to-door journeys for those unable to use conventional transport to access medical appointments or social groups that combat loneliness, restoring confidence and independence. The SVDS now has over 300 beneficiaries, supported to date on over 4,000 journeys. Many using the service describe what a lifeline it is for them and how they have accessed opportunities that they would otherwise have missed due to financial costs or a lack of confidence in public transport.

3.0 Next Steps

3.1 Considering the continuation of the cost of living negatively affecting the Borough's residents, it is necessary to co-produce an updated action plan to underpin the remaining 18 months of the strategy. Therefore, it is proposed that:

- Any current actions which have not been fully achieved are carried forward and included in the updated action plan.
- The Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group will meet to discuss and propose actions for the updated action plan.
- The Positive Living Forum will meet to discuss and propose actions for the updated action plan.
- Progress against the renewed action plan will be brought back to Cabinet in a further 18 months' time.

Conclusion

The first 18 months of delivering the Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024–2027 demonstrate clear progress in tackling the causes and impacts of poverty across Stockton-on-Tees. Through strong partnership working, targeted interventions, and the continued involvement of the Positive Living Forum, the Council and its partners have delivered measurable improvements for residents supporting thousands of households with food, energy, income maximisation, health and wellbeing, and increased opportunities for children and families.

The outcomes highlighted in this update show that the strategy is functioning as intended: reducing inequalities, improving access to essential services, and strengthening resilience within our communities. Initiatives such as The Bread-and-Butter Thing, the Pension Credit campaign, the Free School Meals auto-enrolment project, Warm Welcome spaces, and community-based health and wellbeing programmes are all driving positive, tangible results.

However, with the cost-of-living pressures continuing to affect residents, it is essential that the Council maintains momentum. A refreshed action plan for the next 18 months with the Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group, partners, and people with lived experience will ensure that the next phase remains relevant, ambitious, and aligned to the needs of our communities.

Appendix 1

1. The Bread-and-Butter Thing

Volunteers prepare and pack shopping at each hub and strong teams are now well established. Volunteers have told us about the benefits of giving their time to TBBT and we celebrate their contributions with an annual 'Thank you' event. One told us, 'Volunteering at Bread and Butter has changed my life for the better. It gives me a sense of purpose. The relationships I have formed with the other volunteers and customers have helped me be more understanding of others.'

2. Food Aid Fund

Local knowledge has helped us focus each round of funding to ensure residents were able to be met. One round asked providers to think specifically about culturally sensitive foods, another allowed for funding to be used to purchase hygiene products, responding to needs identified by the Stockton Food Power Network.

3. Here to Help Programme - feedback

Following this year's Something New for You in Billingham, one 92-year-old lady told us her good health was 'all down to coming to things like this event, Warm Welcomes and the trips we go on together.' She said it keeps her mobile and her mind active, being with her friends and doing things together.

Another resident attending last year said, 'The Something New for You event was very interesting, I wasn't expecting the event to have so much to see and do. I got some great advice from CAB, I had put off going into town to see them, so it was very convenient for me that they were at the event. I got the help I needed as well as taking part in a boxing demonstration, creating my own piece of lino printing and enjoying a cup of tea with friends.'

One professional spoke about being able to, 'help some customers directly with their personal energy accounts, give advice to 2 more and re-direct people to CAB and NEA support. I have also promoted eco measures to several people.'

Two ladies from the Salters Lane Warm Welcome session said that they really enjoyed the event, especially the cooking demonstration as they had never tried avocados before. They have recreated the recipe at home since the event and even added their own little extra bits! They have also signed up to the wood carving group in Billingham and are looking forward to that.

At our Summer Family Fun Day, one resident praised the council for offering free transport to bring families in from the Clarences and for the items they all received to help reduce the cost of preparing children for the new academic year.

Organisations attending praised this event saying, 'It was a great event, perfect for promoting valuable services in the community.' Salvation Army added, 'About 40 people spoken to on Saturday attended our Messy Church on Sunday.'

4. A Second Dance Prom Project - feedback

People have spoken to us about how welcoming and inclusive our A Second Dance events have been. People praised the quality of the outfits, the choice available and how helpful the Prom Project team were in helping people find their perfect outfit. One parent said, 'Amazing event! A lovely idea for families on low incomes especially.' Another said, 'Absolutely brilliant idea – recycle/reuse and making prom affordable and accessible for all.'

5. Test Learn and Grow and Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)

At the first Boxing session in Hardwick, one dad commented how pleased he was that his son was interested in attending the boxing so he would use his computer less, enjoy some physical activity and make some new friends. He has attended 9 out of the 10 sessions so far and his dad has mentioned how he is becoming more confident and interested in what he is eating, trying to eat more healthily and enjoy more physical activity by coming to the sessions riding his bike. He is enjoying working with a professional

boxer who has inspired him in a positive way. Further funding to continue these sessions has been secured from North Star Housing and through National Lottery Funding which will secure the sessions for the next year.

Alongside the SEND sessions in Thornaby, Learning & Skills delivered a story telling 4 week course with parents from Mandale Mill Primary School, with one parent commenting, "courses like this at the school organised by the team have been a lifeline to me. I was involved in the hot chocolate session at Christmas and made friends with parents who I haven't spoken to before and I now meet them on a regular basis and go to different groups with them".

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REPORT TO CABINET
14th May 2026
REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Adult Social Care Fees and Charges Consultation

Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing - Cllr Pauline Beall

Summary

A Council's Adult Social Care Charging Policy outlines how they will charge for care and support, ensuring that charges are fair and based on a financial assessment.

The aims of a Charging Policy that is applied consistently to everyone with eligible adult social care needs are to ensure that people are not charged more than they can afford, and to ensure that the process is transparent and equitable.

Adult Social Care provides a range of financial management services for people in receipt of services at no cost to the individual. These services require a significant amount of resource and capacity to ensure we are meeting our requirements and managing individual's finances appropriately. We are one of the last Local Authorities in the region and across the national landscape who do not apply administration and management costs against these services.

We already apply charges to individuals who are in receipt of Court appointed Deputyship. Local authority financial deputyship is a court-appointed role under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 that authorises the Council to manage the property and financial affairs of an adult who lacks mental capacity and has no suitable person able to act on their behalf. The appointment is made by the Court of Protection and allows the local authority to undertake ongoing financial management, such as paying bills, managing income and assets, and meeting care charges, within the specific powers granted by the court and subject to statutory oversight by the Office of the Public Guardian. For those people who have a court appointed deputy for property and finance we charge the following amounts:

- Application Fee: £421
- Hearing Fee (if required): £259

Deputyship costs

- Deputyship work up to order £745.00
- Subsequent years is £824 for net assets over £20,300.00 and up to 3.5% of net assets below £20,300.00.

- OPG report £216.00.
- Basic HMRC return: £89
- Property management, HMRC, travel and other claimable costs are only where applicable and have very limited scope of when they can be claimed.

As a result, we want to ensure equity of charging across several financial management services and therefore undertake a public consultation to introduce a new fees and charge policy. As this is a significant change to policy and approach there is a requirement for the local authority to consult with the public to ensure open and transparent decision making. Adult Social Care has had a working group including finance officers exploring this at a national and regional level to ensure any proposed charges are reasonable and appropriate and in line with others.

The consultation will be an open consultation with all residents of Stockton and will be available on the council website, via a survey. This will cover the proposed fees for Appointee charges and deceased estates. Accessibility requirements are being built in, including multiple response formats and support for people who require reasonable adjustments. All people who are currently being supported with appointeeship within Stockton Council will be advised of the consultation process (via letter or telephone call) and supported to respond if they require it. Drop-in sessions will also be available for the public to attend, and support will be offered at these. All communication is available both in accessible format and easy read format.

These charges will provide a forecasted income of £167,000 in year one rising to £386,000 in year three. The Council is facing a difficult budget gap, and this income will support the sustainability of the service offer in the future.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

- The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Cabinet for a new Adult Social Care Charging Policy, following public consultation.
- Cabinet to approve a Borough wide consultation process for introducing fair and transparent charging costs in line with other areas.
- To ensure equity of access and application to people within the Borough.

Recommendations

1. To authorise the commencement of consultation on the proposed introduction of fees and charges as set out in this report
2. To delegate authority to the Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, to agree and introduce a Care Charging Policy subject to the outcome of the consultation

Detail

1. Local Authority Appointeeship

1.1 Local authority appointeeship is a service provided to individuals who lack the mental capacity to manage their own financial affairs and where there is no suitable family member or other appropriate person able to act on their behalf. Under appointeeship, the Council is authorised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to receive, manage and use a person's welfare benefits to pay for their essential living costs and care contributions. The service ensures that individuals' finances are managed safely, responsibly and in their best interests, supporting financial stability and safeguarding vulnerable adults. We currently have 346 people who are accessing appointeeship services.

1.2 The provision of appointeeship involves ongoing administration and financial management, including budgeting, paying bills, managing contributions toward care costs, maintaining records, and responding to changes in circumstances. While many local authorities apply a reasonable charge to cover the cost of delivering this service, the Council does not currently charge for appointeeship. Introducing a charge would contribute towards the costs of delivering the service, ensure fairness and consistency with other authorities, and align appointeeship with similar arrangements such as Court of Protection deputyships, where fees are routinely applied. Any proposed charge would be proportionate, transparent, and applied in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance.

1.3 Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough charge for appointeeship and Hartlepool have introduced charges from April 2026. Where the council is required to act as appointee for people who are unable to manage their benefits.

1.4 It is proposed that administrative costs are recovered as detailed below:

- Charge 3.5% of capital assets over £3,000 for appointee.
- Setup fee of £70
- Relinquishing fee £46

Local authorities Appointee charges

Durham	Doncaster	Walsall	North Yorkshire	Hartlepool	M'bro	R&C	Sunderland	Newcastle	Money Carer Private company	Stockton
Unable to obtain	£35 to £710 per annum	savings more than £1000 £780 per annum	Under review	setup fee £150 and charge of £660/£1020 per annum	£192 and £252 Per annum	£210/ and £72 Per annum	£283 Per annum	£260 and £390	£62.50 per month for light touch appointee £92.50 per month for comprehensive plan £62.50 per month care home based appointee plan	No charge for < £3,000 Set up £70. The charge for ending this is £46

2. Deferred Payments

2.1 A Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA) is an arrangement offered by local authorities that allows a person to delay paying some or all of the costs of their long-term care, usually when they move into a care home.

2.2 Instead of having to sell their home immediately to pay care fees, the local authority pays the care costs on the person's behalf and recovers the money later, typically when the property is sold or from the person's estate after death.

2.3 The purpose of a DPA is to ensure that people are not forced to sell their home during their lifetime to pay for care and are given time and flexibility to consider their financial options.

2.4 Local authorities in England must offer a DPA to individuals who meet the qualifying criteria set out in the Care Act 2014 and regulations. In general, a person will be eligible if:

- They are moving into long-term residential care (including those who arrange and pay for their own care);
- They are assessed as having eligible care and support needs;
- Their savings and assets (excluding the value of their main home) are at or below the upper capital limit (£23,250);
- They own a property that is not disregarded in the financial assessment;
- The local authority is satisfied that the deferred amount can be repaid.

Under a DPA:

- The local authority pays the agreed care costs on an ongoing basis;
- These costs are deferred and treated as a loan;
- The agreement is usually secured against the person's property by a legal charge registered with the Land Registry (similar to a mortgage);
- The total amount deferred increases over time, up to a set equity limit to protect both the individual and the council.

2.5 A Deferred Payment Agreement can cover:

- Care home fees agreed with the local authority;
- Some additional charges, such as:
 - Interest (set nationally and linked to government borrowing rates);
 - Reasonable administration and legal costs, including setting up the property charge;
 - Local authorities cannot charge more than the actual cost of running the DPA scheme.

2.6 The deferred amount is normally repaid:

- When the person sells their property;
- From the person's estate after death;

- Or earlier, if the person chooses to repay at any point.

2.7 The agreement will end once the debt is repaid in full, or if the individual no longer meets the DPA conditions.

2.8 Stockton Borough Council does not currently charge for the interest on Deferred Payments. Through consultation it is proposed that an administration charge and interest is applied on a compound basis, aligned with the frequency of payments made to residential care providers. This means interest would typically be calculated and applied monthly, for the duration of the individual's care or until sufficient resources become available.

2.8 To recover the administrative costs associated with setting up and managing these agreements, it is proposed that:

- A £382 administration fee is applied to all new DPAs;
- Interest will be applied to new cases only, in line with the Care Act 2014.

2.9 Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have the discretion to apply interest to Deferred Payment Agreements (DPAs). To ensure consistency and fairness across the country, a national maximum interest rate has been established. The interest rate is variable and may reduce in future years, which will impact on the level of income generated. From January 2026 the interest rate was set nationally at 4.75%

Local authorities Deferred payment charges

Durham	Doncaster	Suffolk	North Yorkshire	Hartlepool	M'bro	R&C	Sunderland	Cumberland	Newcastle	Stockton
£345 set up fee £107 annual fee admin fee £50	£356. £155.00 annual fee	£250	£199.00 set up fee. £157.00 Admin fee annual recurring fee £10.00 per invoice raised	£550	£407 and £190.00 annual fee	£848 plus	£854.90	£250 set up fee £350 Annual review	£500.00	£382 (one off set up cost)

3. Deceased Estate Management

3.1 Local authority deceased case management refers to the process undertaken by the Council to manage and finalise a person's financial and administrative affairs following their death, where the local authority had been acting in a formal role such as financial deputyship or appointeeship, or where the authority is required to step in due to the absence of an executor, next of kin, or personal representative.

3.2 This process includes confirming death, securing and reconciling financial records, settling outstanding liabilities (such as care charges), closing accounts, and liaising with executors, probate services, or the Treasury Solicitor where appropriate. Where the local authority had formal legal responsibility during the person's lifetime, it also has a duty to

provide accurate final accounts and ensure assets are managed lawfully until responsibility can be transferred or concluded.

3.3 Deceased case management ensures that the individual's estate is handled lawfully, transparently and proportionately, while enabling the Council to meet its legal duties, recover any lawful debts owed, and bring its involvement to a timely and appropriate close.

3.4 Our neighbouring authorities already charge for this service and within Middlesbrough and Hartlepool they are currently reviewing their charge. Redcar and Cleveland currently charge:

- Deceased with a Will or Next of Kin £890;
- Deceased with no Will or Next of Kin £1030.00 plus an admin fee of £25.00 per hour.

3.5 Where the council is required to administer a deceased estate and assets are available, it is proposed that an administration fee is applied to recover costs. This cost has been calculated on the average officer time required for each case.

- Proposed Fee: £799 per case if no will or Next of Kin
£550 per case if will or Next of Kin

Local authorities Deceased Estate charges

Durham	Doncaster	Walsall	North Yorkshire	Hartlepool	M'bro	R&C	Sunderland	Cumberland	Newcastle	Stockton
Not published	Not published	Not published	Not published	£100 fee under review	£300	£890 with a will/NOK. £1030 with no will plus £25 admin fee	Winding up £360 + VAT, if arrange funeral additional £200.00 + VAT	£312.00 for closure of services	Not available	£550 with a will/NOK £799 no will/NOK

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

An EPIA has been completed and risk mitigation for impacts are in place. This will be further developed post consultation process.

Corporate Parenting Implications

There are no specific implications as this applies to adults in receipt of care and support.

Financial Implications

The introduction of the proposed Adult Social Care fees and charges, subject to the outcome of public consultation and formal decision making, is forecast to provide an income stream for the Council to help cover the cost of providing the services outlined. The table below

summarises the projected income arising from the implementation of charges related to appointeeship and deputyship, Deferred Payment Agreements (administration and interest), and deceased estate case management.

Proposed Fee	2026/27*	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Appointeeship/Deputyship	£124,000	£165,000	£165,000	£165,000
Deferred Payment Admin	£9,000	£11,000	£11,000	£11,000
Deferred Payment Interest	£5,000	£34,000	£88,000	£171,000
Deceased Cases	£20,000	£27,000	£27,000	£27,000
Total: Forecast Income	£158,000	£237,000	£291,000	£374,000

* Assumes fees will be introduced from 1st July 2026.

If the decision is taken to proceed following consultation, the implementation of these fees will contribute to the ongoing financial sustainability of Adult Social Care by supporting the recovery of reasonable administrative and financial management costs that are currently met by the Council.

Income in the first year reflects partial-year implementation and a focus on new cases only, particularly in relation to Deferred Payment Agreements. Over time, income increases as the cumulative impact of interest applied on a compound basis to deferred balances grows, in line with the Care Act 2014 and nationally set interest rates. Forecasts are therefore sensitive to both the number of agreements in place and future movements in the national Deferred Payment interest rate.

The proposals align Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council with common practice across neighbouring and comparator authorities, where charges are routinely applied for these services. The income generated will assist in closing budget gaps within Adult Social Care and support the continued delivery of statutory services, while ensuring charges remain proportionate, transparent, and compliant with legislation.

Legal Implications

Sections 14 and 17 of the Care Act 2014 provide the legal framework for charging for adult social care and support. Section 14 of the Act provides a local authority with the power to charge for meeting needs under sections 18 to 20 of the Act. Section 17 of the Act creates a duty for a local authority to carry out a financial assessment which would arise where the local authority thinks that if it were to meet an adult's needs for care and support, or a carer's needs for support, it would charge the adult or carer under section 14(1) of the Act.

The Care and Support Charging and Assessment of Resources Regulations 2014 describe the limitations on local authority powers to make a charge for meeting needs under section 14 of the Act; and provide details about the requirements for carrying out financial assessments for the purposes of section 17 of the Act. Section 2(1) of the Act requires a local authority to provide or arrange for the provision of services, facilities or resources (or take other steps) which it considers will contribute towards preventing, delaying or reducing the needs for care and support of adults or for support in relation to carers.

The Care and Support Preventing Needs for Care and Support Regulations 2014 describe the rules permitting and prohibiting a local authority from making a charge for the provision

of services, facilities and resources under section 2 of the Act. The Care and Support Statutory Guidance, issued by the Department of Health in October 2014 and updated in June 2020 sets out how a local authority should perform its care and support responsibilities. This includes details about interpreting and applying the rules relating to charging and financial assessments as defined in both the Act and regulations.

Risk Assessment

There is a risk of increased appeals regarding the outcomes of financial assessments, should the policy be introduced. A Financial Risk Panel will be established within Adult Social Care which will consider and respond to appeals in line with the legal framework and a new fees and charges policy post consultation.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

All wards will potentially be impacted. Consultation has taken place with Cllr Pauline Beall and this paper proposes a Borough wide consultation process.

Background Papers

No background papers are presented.

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REPORT TO CABINET

14th May 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Health and Adult Social Care - Lead Cabinet Member - Cllr Pauline Beall

Strategic Commissioning Board – Corporate Approach

Summary

1. In Summer 2025, Powering Our Future Board (POF Board) approved a review of strategic commissioning across key directorates of the Council. The Project initiation Document (PID) set out the scope and focus for this review, identifying key outcomes including ensuring strategic approach to commissioning are aligned to priorities and medium-term financial plan, a focus on early intervention and prevention, and longer-term reduction of high-cost packages of care, reduced duplication across services, stronger partnerships and collaboration across services where there are mutual agreements, trust and transparency and increased value for money.
2. A cross directorate working group (colleagues across Children's, Adults, Public Health, Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees, Procurement and Finance) was stood up in the Summer of 2025 and has completed a baseline assessment of governance, leadership, finance, capacity, capability and maturity against the current strategic commissioning cycle at both a macro and micro level.
3. This baseline identified areas of good practice and opportunities to strengthen corporate oversight and steer across key areas of the commissioning cycle, including assessment of need, designing outcomes, strategic planning, value for money, service transformation, and monitoring/improvement.
4. The proposed approach to achieving this is the introduction of a new approach to commissioning, working towards and implementing a new Target Operating Model (TOM). This will be underpinned by a new Strategic Commissioning Board, comprising of senior officers with appropriate decision making authority, that will work within the current schemes of delegation and provide the Council with greater management and oversight and commissioning of the local services. Key decisions will remain the decision of cabinet and regular reports from the Commissioning Board will be presented to Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision

The Council's Powering our Futures' programme is a long-term, mission-led programme which will review how we work, deliver services and support communities over the coming years. The Strategic Commissioning review will focus on meeting these objectives, with an ambition to improve the commissioning process, ensure we are delivering services in the most efficient and effective way, and as a result deliver significant financial benefits to contribute towards the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Decision

- The content of this report is noted by Cabinet and the direction of travel approved including:
 - The Strategic Commissioning Board will be stood up and begin work on identifying priority areas of work. In addition, work will begin on working towards a more integrated model of commissioning for health and care.
 - The annual commissioning report will be drafted and produced for April 2027.
 - A quarterly report will be presented to the Corporate Management Team for assurance and oversight.

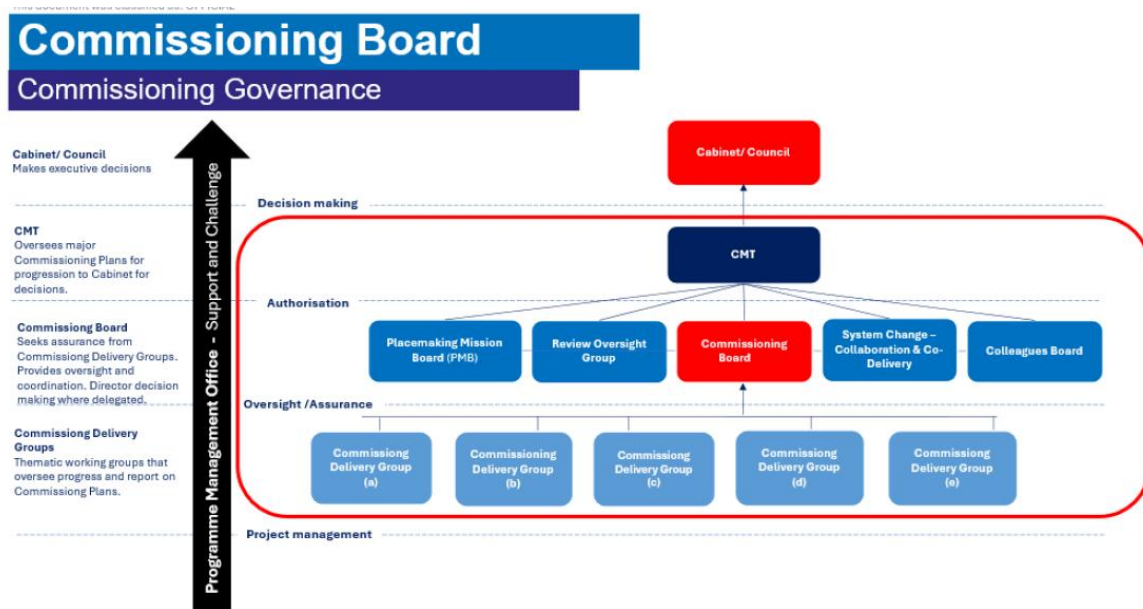
Detail

5. In common with many other Local Authorities, the strategic context is one of increased demand for services coupled with significant financial challenges and expectations of significant transformation and reform of wider services over the next decade. Within Stockton-on-Tees there remain challenges of areas of deprivation, widening health inequalities and poorer outcomes for residents.
6. The cross directorate working group considered several models of commissioning, and based on an assessment of evidence, agreed a Target Operating Model (TOM) for Strategic Commissioning with Corporate Management Team (CMT). This approach will be based on a partly centralised model with key responsibilities for service innovation and transformation embedded within service directorates (see Appendix 1 for details).
7. This model is intended to support the following key strategic shifts:
 - Outcome-based approach to commissioning services
 - Service transformation and new service models
 - Efficient use of resources and MTFP
 - Integration with neighbourhood priorities
8. As part of the TOM a Corporate Strategic Commissioning Board will be implemented from April 2026. Chaired by the Director (Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing), and the Vice Chair will be the Director of Children's Services, with support from senior key officers across the Corporate Management

team. There will be operational subgroups (Commissioning Delivery Groups) reporting to the Board on relevant commissioning activity. The Board will report into CMT and Cabinet within the existing scheme of delegation. The Board will provide oversight, co-ordination and management across commissioning activities in Children and Young People, Adults, Health and Wellbeing and Communities and Housing (revenue contracts) to:

- Set strategic direction and priorities in line with the council plan, MTFP, priorities and objectives.
- Develop and approve an annual commissioning plan to deliver the strategic priorities, improve outcomes and £3m of savings (in line with MTFP and associated timescales),
- Ensure that the annual commissioning plan will be informed by the Council Plan, design principles, legal frameworks and the Council's MTFP. It will also be developed alongside the relevant local, regional and national strategies.
- Develop and implement commissioning standards to continuously improve strategic commissioning maturity across the authority. The strategic commissioning framework to inform this work is shown in appendix three.
- Develop commissioning competency to continuously improve strategic commissioning maturity across the authority.
- Ensure that the identified savings are achieved and identified from within existing service budgets.

10. The Strategic Commissioning Board Governance is detailed below. This also details the various different Commissioning Delivery Groups which will sit under the Board to provide strategic oversight and assurance. The details of the membership of this Group is outlined at Appendix 2 along with draft Terms of Reference (ToR) at Appendix 3.



9. Adult's and Children's Social care are the two largest directorates within the Council, with the largest budgets. Commissioned services in these areas provide support for

some of our most vulnerable residents and account for the majority of spend within these areas. Commissioned services within Adult's and Children's Social Care, Public Health and Housing services currently equate to approximately £150m per annum.

10. The Council's MTFP has identified an estimated budget gap of £18m by 2028/29 due to growth in demand and complexity in Adult's and Children's Social Care, children with special educational needs and home to school transport. Following the improved approach to commissioned services, we anticipate that financial savings will result contributing to meeting the budget gap. Further updates will be brought to Cabinet with more detail on this as work progresses.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

11. As this project is part of the Powering our Future (PoF) Programme an initial EPIA was undertaken by the Project Team in December 2025. This EPIA is a mandatory part of the Design Phase of the PoF Governance. The outcome of the EPIA highlighted that the proposed new Strategic Commissioning model would bring improved outcomes for residents through more efficient and effective commissioning arrangements. Further EPIAs will be required for individual projects as the work of the Strategic Commissioning Board progresses.

Corporate Parenting Implications

12. There are no specific Corporate Parenting implications as part of this report. All commissioning approaches will take into account the Corporate Parenting responsibilities and these will inform the individual commissioning processes.

Financial Implications

13. There are no direct implications arising from the proposals in the report. As a result of the new approach it is anticipated that changes may arise to current contracts and the associated costs. The financial implications of these will be considered on a case by case basis, and decisions taken in line with the Council's constitution.
14. The Council's MTFP has identified an estimated budget gap of £18m by 2028/29 due to growth in demand and complexity in Adult's and Children's Social Care, children with special educational needs and home to school transport. Following the improved approach to commissioned services, we anticipate that financial savings will result contributing to meeting the budget gap. Further updates will be brought to Cabinet with more detail on this as work progresses.

Legal Implications

15. There are no identified legal risks at present but once individual contracts and procurement arrangements are to be reviewed this will be dealt with on a case by case basis by approved policies and procedures.

Risk Assessment

16. The proposed actions are assessed as low to medium risk. Reputational and service delivery risks will be mitigated through action plans, strengthened oversight, and reporting to both PoF Board, Strategic Commissioning Board and Cabinet.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors

17. There are no specific Wards identified as affected as part of this recommendation.

Background Papers

18. Appendix One - Options Appraisal – Target Operating Model (TOM)
19. Appendix Two – Strategic Commissioning Board membership
20. Appendix Three – Draft Terms of Reference

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Post Titles: Strategic Integration Lead and Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing

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Carolyn.nice@stockton.gov.uk

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Target Operating Model

The Authority faces increased service demand, financial constraints and growing expectations to move to integration and prevention. Current commissioning arrangements are fragmented, service-led and variable in their maturity. A revised Target Operating Model is required to strengthen corporate grip, focus on outcomes, alignment with strategic priorities, MTFP and value for money.

Strategic commissioning is a continuous evidence-based approach to plan, purchase, monitor and evaluate services over the longer term and with this improve population health, reduce health inequalities and improve equitable access to consistently high-quality health and social care.

The purpose is to enable the authority to:

- Understand needs and outcomes at system, place and population level
- Shape markets and providers (including VCSE) using contemporary and innovative approaches to commissioning
- Transform service and develop new models
- Allocate resources to value and impact on outcomes and management of risk
- Integrate commissioning across neighbourhoods, place, people, and prevention.

Target Operating Model – Recommended approach

Partially Centralised / Business Partner / “Hub and Spoke” Commissioning Model

Description

- Corporate director with portfolio responsibility for strategic commissioning across the authority
- Establishment of an officer led commissioning board at CMT level chaired by the corporate director to set strategic direction, plan for efficiencies, (in line with MTFP) standards, frameworks and annual commissioning plan.
- A small corporate strategic commissioning resource (existing resources) comprising process owners for
 - Needs assessment, data and insight
 - Planning and prioritisation
 - Service transformation and model design
 - Procurement and contract management
 - Outcome monitoring and evaluation
- AD post with strategic commissioning portfolio (vacant post, within existing resources) to support the corporate director and provide a coordination function with the process owners and service commissioning leads within directorates.

- Service-based commissioning teams retain responsibility for operational delivery and transformation of service models

Advantages

- ✓ Improves consistency without major restructuring
- ✓ Improved corporate ownership and grip strategically and financially
- ✓ Builds strategic capability gradually
- ✓ Retains service subject matter expertise close to delivery and transformation
- ✓ Lower implementation risk than full centralisation

Disadvantages

- ✗ Change to current ways of working and structures
- ✗ Dual accountability (corporate vs directorates)
- ✗ Potential inconsistent adoption across directorates
- ✗ Risk of the corporate resource becoming advisory rather than strategic/corporately responsible
- ✗ Variable maturity across services
- ✗ Limited leverage over budget prioritisation and strategic priorities

Overall Assessment

A pragmatic transition model, delivery of strategic change is contingent on corporate responsibility, priority setting and decision making is clearly defined within the revised governance arrangements. As work gets underway and commissioning principles and practices become embedded and part of business as usual there will be further opportunities to explore integrated commissioning with partners, exploration of more centralised approaches and ensuring our commissioning approach to health and care is fit for the future.

Strategic Commissioning Board – Membership April 2026

- *Director of Adults Social Care (Carolyn Nice)*
- *Director of Children’s Social Care (Majella McCarthy)*
- *Director of Public Health (Sarah Bowman Abouna)*
- *Director of Corporate Services (Ged Morton)*
- *Chief Financial Officer (Clare Harper)*
- *Assistant Director for Housing & A Fairer Stockton (Jane Edmonds)*
- *Strategic Development Manager (Adults and Health) (Rob Papworth)*
- *Head of Service Children’s Strategy and Commissioning (Jane Smith)*
- *Assistant Director Transformation, Early Intervention, Prevention and Integration (Emma Champley)*
- *Assistant Director Procurement and Governance (Martin Skipsey)*
- *Strategic Finance Manager (Lisa Tague)*
- *Head of Policy, Development and Public Affairs (Geraldine Brown)*
- *Strategic Integration Lead (Michael Houghton)*
- *Senior Project Manager (Louise Deer)*

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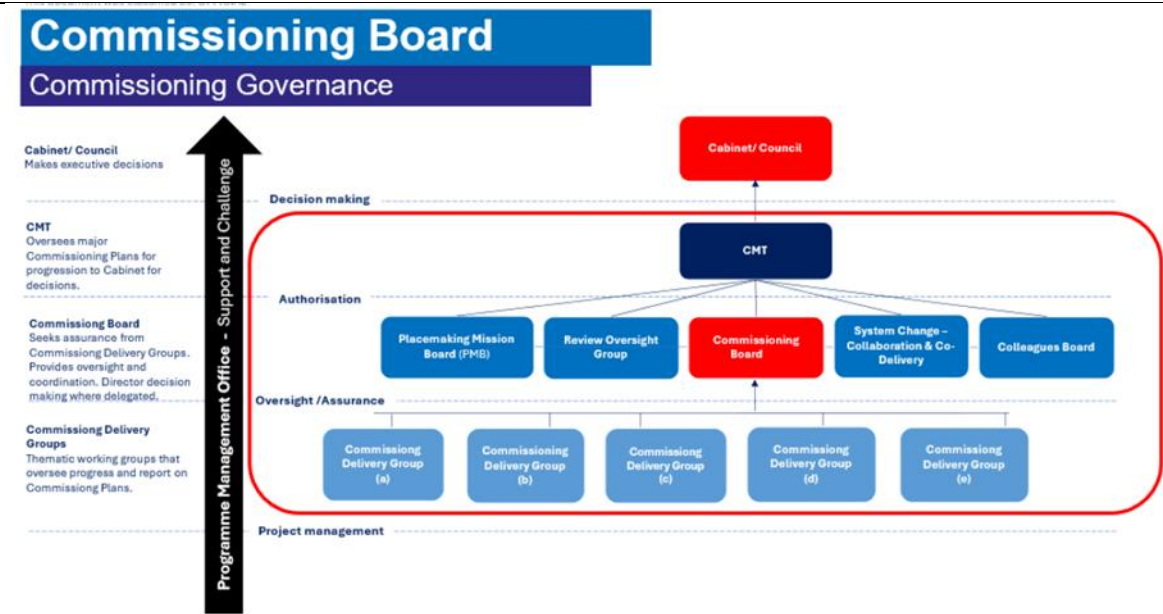
Commissioning Board - Terms of Reference

Name	Commissioning Board
Description	A strategic officer leadership group that has responsibility for the efficient, and effective management of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Commissioning Programme.
Overall role	The Commissioning Programme helps deliver outcomes for residents that meet statutory requirements and provide tangible benefits in the authority area, relating to health, welfare, safeguarding, housing and organisational benefits. It is developed from: a) Adult Social Care Strategy, a range of Children and Young Peoples Strategies, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Housing Strategy (and Supported Housing Strategy – once published): b) The Stockton on Tees Plan: c) Joint working both formally and informally with other partners such as Health, Registered Providers etc: d) Fit for the Future: 10-year Health Plan for England e) Medium-Term Financial Plan: and, f) Available funding streams (grants, successful bid awards, income generation, capital receipts. The Board is responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the Council's Commissioning Programme and Plans across Adults, Health and Wellbeing and Children's Services as well as providing collective assurance and the management of risk. The Board's co-ordination and oversight is guided by cost, timescale and scope, which should be set out in each Commissioning Plan. It will seek assurance that an outcome-based co-produced approach is taken in Commissioning Plan design and development to optimise achievement of local strategic priorities and outcomes. The Board is responsible for ensuring systems, processes and resources are in place across the whole commissioning cycle and will receive monitoring reports at regular intervals. The Board will ensure that proposed Commissioning Plans are aligned to the Stockton on Tees Plan and other strategies. The Board will ensure Commissioning Plans are cognisant of the Council's Design Principles, including: - Reduce inequality and prioritise prevention; - Put communities at the heart of everything we do: - Enable communities to help and support each other: - Have a 'place-based' approach: - Have efficient processes and be digital by design: and - Use data and intelligence to inform our decisions. The Board will ensure that Commissioning Plans are compliant with the broader governance framework as set out within the Council Constitution and the connected local schemes of delegation. The Board will ensure that Commissioning Plans are developed with appropriate input from partner agencies and are co-produced. The Board will consider strategic risk issues as well as opportunities (political, economic, social,

Commissioning Board - Terms of Reference

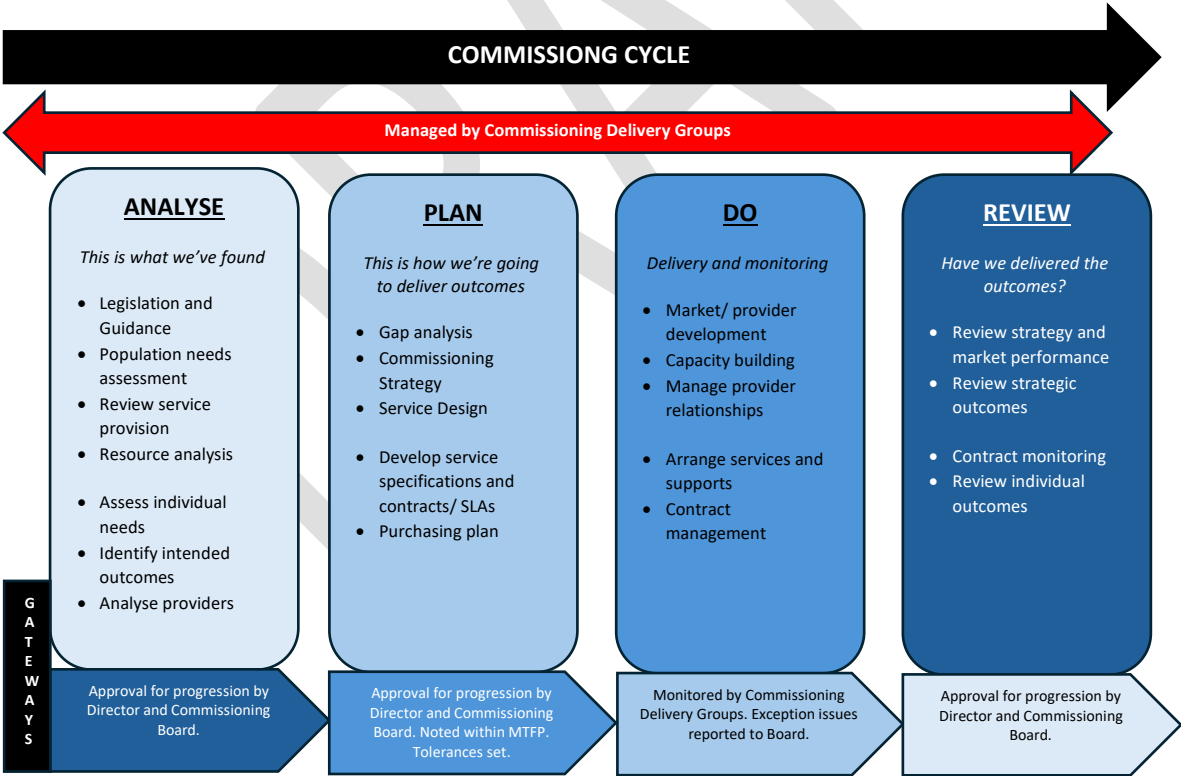
	technological, environmental, legal and organisational - PESTELO) associated with Commissioning Plans. The Board will review and decide upon Commissioning Plan exception issues, as escalated to Board when a plan has exceeded set tolerances.
Key Responsibilities	1. Reports to and agrees updates to CMT and Cabinet. 2. Management and oversight of the commissioning programme to ensure economic, effective, and efficient use of Council and other resources. 3. To provide direction and approve Commissioning Plan gateways to proceed to Director or Cabinet approval. 4. Monitor the progress of Commissioning Plans, including determining exception matters escalated by Commissioning Delivery Groups. 5. Seek assurance in respect of individual Commissioning Plans, providing check and challenge on resource envelope, risk management and delivery assumptions. 6. Provide direction on consultation and engagement strategies where required. 7. Provide direction on communications strategies where required. 8. Ensure interdependencies to other services and partner organisation are acknowledged and managed.
Key Accountabilities & Reporting Requirements	Reporting from: The Board will report directly to CMT, and where needed, Cabinet, as determined by the Chair in accordance with the Council constitution and Scheme of Delegation. The Board will make recommendations on all Commissioning Plans (aligned with Director functions – board is robust set of consultees). Final decision maker is the appropriate Director or Cabinet. Reports from the Board to CMT will include summaries of Commissioning Programme performance including notable milestones, achievements, emerging issues/themes and/or significant delivery constraints that are unable to be mitigated. Lateral reporting: The Commissioning Board members and Programme Management Office (PMO) will share information on the Board’s activity and decisions with other Powering Our Futures groups, such as Review Oversight Group, System Change – Collaboration & Co-Delivery Group, Colleagues Board and Placemaking Board when necessary. Reporting to: The Commissioning Delivery Groups will be required to develop, maintain, and report the following, on individual projects, to the Board: • Project Management Documentation (Mandates, Briefs, PIDs) • Commissioning Plans • Risk, Actions, Issues, Decisions and Lessons Learned documents (RAIDLs) • Exception reports on individual projects as required • Highlight reports on individual projects when requested Governance Map:

Commissioning Board - Terms of Reference



Project Gateways

These are formal control and decision-making points at the Board. The Commissioning Plan’s current status will be reviewed, including its performance to date against budget, timelines, milestones, and any scope changes, prior to the Chair determining whether it can progress to the next project stage. The process is illustrated here:



Chairing Arra The **Chair** of this Board is the **Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing**
The **Deputy Chair** is the **Director of Children’s Services**

Commissioning Board - Terms of Reference

ng men ts, Meet ing Sche dule and Orga nisat ion of Agen da and Busi ness	Following direction from the Chair and requests from Commissioning Delivery Group Leads, the PMO will organise agendas, papers and room booking. The PMO will maintain risk, action, issues, decisions, and lessons learned logs - RAIDLs and will develop the agenda and collate papers from Commissioning Delivery Group Leads to facilitate the Board's oversight and decision-making. The agenda and papers will be provided to the PMO no later than three days in advance of Board meetings for sharing with the Board members.
Spec ial Com miss iong Boar d meet ings	<i>In the event of an urgent issue that needs discussion and direction by the Board and where this occurs between scheduled Board meetings, an urgent meeting of the Board will be convened.</i> <i>Urgent meetings will be quorate with 50% of the Board Members (all members required to send a Rep. in their absence if unable to attend)</i>

Commissioning Board - Terms of Reference

Mem bers hip:	Core membership of the Strategic Programme Board: • Director of Adults Social Care (Carolyn Nice) • Director of Children’s Social Care (Majella McCarthy) • Director of Public Health (Sarah Bowman Abouna) • Director of Corporate Services (Ged Morton) • Chief Financial Officer (Clare Harper) • Assistant Director for Housing & A Fairer Stockton (Jane Edmonds) • Strategic Development Manager (Adults and Health) (Rob Papworth) • Head of Service Children’s Strategy and Commissioning (Jane Smith) • Assistant Director Transformation, Early Intervention, Prevention and Integration (Emma Champley) • Assistant Director Procurement and Governance (Martin Skipsey) • Strategic Finance Manager (Lisa Tague) • Head of Policy, Development and Public Affairs (Geraldine Brown) Associate members, drawn from Assistant Directors and Heads of Service across the Council, will periodically attend to present reports, assist with exceptions and other substantial commissioning issues. Additional officers from across the organisation and/ or external strategic partner organisations may be called up to the group on occasion if additional support and expertise is required. Board members will delegate attendance to deputy/ substitute when they are unable to attend to ensure a minimum of 50% quoracy.			
Meet ing Freq uenc y	Monthly TOR’s to be reviewed in September 2026			
Docu ment Contr ol	Any variations to these terms of reference must be agreed by the Board			
	Version number	Author	Date Agreed by Board	Review date
	1.0	Martin Skipsey		
	2.0	Louise Deer	Strategic Commissioning Board	September 2026

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REPORT TO CABINET

14th May 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Health and Adult Social Care - Lead Cabinet Member - Cllr Pauline Beall

Public Health Grant Spend

Summary

Through an outcome-based review, £1m of the public health grant has been identified to realign to other areas of the Council. The work builds on existing joint working between Public Health and other services across the Council. Working with Finance, the proposed Council areas to receive realigned funding have been identified. Further work is commencing on specific public health indicators to be achieved through discussion with the relevant service areas. To satisfy Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) assurance requirements, service level agreements will articulate joint working in each Council area, use of funding and indicators which must demonstrate specific public health added value.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Public health funding supports activity across a range of Council areas, to support a cross-Council approach to delivering health and wellbeing outcomes. It is important that this process is undertaken in-line with national parameters for grant spend and national assurance mechanisms, while maximising the opportunity to improve local outcomes. The work is undertaken as part of Council-wide outcomes-based review activity, aiming to maximise efficiency and address the Council's financial position. Areas receiving public health funding will in turn release the equivalent amount from their budgets to contribute to Council-wide efficiencies.

Recommendations

Cabinet is invited to:

1. Note the update on delivering the Public Health grant outcomes-based review
2. Note the wider Council areas where public health funding is planned to be realigned, to achieve public health outcomes
3. Note the mechanism for evidencing outcomes and spend to satisfy national assurance requirements

1 Detail

Public health grant outcomes-based review

1.1 Through the Public Health review of grant spend, £1m public health grant funding has been identified for 2026/7 as required. Budget planning will maintain this for 2027/8 and 2028/9, mindful of potential national changes.

National assurance process

1.2 DHSC has implemented a new strengthened national assurance process, regarding spend of the Public Health grant (**Appendix 1**). To satisfy the assurance process, written evidence in the form of service level agreements (SLAs) is required to demonstrate specific added value through use of the Public Health grant in achieving Public Health outcomes. National guidance stipulates areas / activity the grant cannot be used for, including other areas of Council statutory activity. Through this process, DHSC also seeks to determine there is an appropriate balance between funding Public Health core services, and wider Council activity supporting Public Health. All areas across Tees Valley and the North East are putting or have put SLAs in place. Comparison across Councils on wider use of the grant has limited value due to: nationally recognised variation in spend captured in budget reported outturn (RO) categories; and significant variation in set-up, scope and ways of working of wider Council services.

Planned use of Public Health grant

1.3 Public Health already works closely with a wide range of Council areas and public health funding is used across these services. In 2025/26 a total of £4.2m expenditure across other Council services and central overheads is forecast to be funded via public health, with £3.5m being funded through the public health grant and £0.7m funded through public health reserves (**Appendix 2**).

1.4 The Council areas receiving public health funding have been reviewed through joint working with Finance, to ensure that they are in line with the DHSC assurance requirements and to make sure that the funding can continue through public health grant funding as the public health reserve is drawn down. Some of the existing public health contributions will be reduced and others will increase. The exact amounts of funding for each service will be determined once public health indicators have been specified, to ensure the funding reflects joint working and public health added value but will include:

- Trading standards, enforcement
- Employment & training, inclusive growth, economic and place development
- Parks and green space, active travel
- Homelessness (complex lives) and communities, engagement & consultation
- Workplace health

The public health outcomes linked to these areas are detailed at **Appendix 3**.

1.5 Some areas currently funded by Public Health have historically been funded through reserves; these are now being covered through core Public Health grant. The total contribution will increase from £4.2m to £4.5m and this will be funded in full from the Public Health grant in future years. Therefore, the Public Health grant contribution will increase from £3.5m in 2025/26 to £4.5m from 2026/27 (**Appendix 4**). If £1m of the Public Health grant was not used in this way to fund other services providing public health outcomes then this would create a budget pressure the Council would have to meet from elsewhere.

1.6 Discussions will now take place with relevant Directors / Assistant Directors to maximise joint working through the proposed spend, to deliver specific public health indicators. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) will be required for all the spend across areas of the Council beyond Public Health, including both existing areas of spend and proposed new areas.

1.7 Discussions are ongoing with neighbouring Local Authorities to share good practice regarding SLAs, to inform our local approach. The SLA will be tested in one or two service areas, in conversation with the Assistant Director / service lead. It is proposed Public Health indicators in the SLA will mirror and complement existing indicators wherever possible and that they will be built in to reporting mechanisms working with the corporate performance team.

2 Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

2.1 A joined-up approach to the key areas proposed will build on existing work between public health and various other areas of the Council, to achieve common objectives. It will help to better specify these objectives, draw out the opportunity to improve health and wellbeing and address inequalities, and maximise efficient use of resources. The approach outlined above will support the Council's design principles, particularly reducing inequality and prioritising prevention across the organisation. Joint work to maximise resource and outcomes will support efficiency and be rooted in intelligence and evidence of what works in improving health and wellbeing and addressing inequality.

2.2 Any change to ways of working or services as part of the broader Council transformation work, will be subject to a specific Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA). EPIAs have been undertaken for the services where funding has been reduced or stopped, in order to identify the £1m for realignment. Mitigating actions are being implemented wherever possible.

3 Corporate Parenting Implications

3.1 There are no direct implications for corporate parenting, though public health already works very closely with children's services and partners across the system to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. This includes a focus on early prevention activity to reduce the risk of children needing to be looked after, as well as support to children and families who have the greatest level of need and support to care experienced young people.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The work is part of Council-wide outcomes-based review activity, aiming to maximise efficiency. The review has meant £1m of the Public Health Grant has been redirected to wider Council activity to improve health and wellbeing. Each allocation will be accompanied with a service level agreement that reports into Public Health outcomes as part of grant condition monitoring.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 The Public Health grant must be spent and evidenced in line with national requirements and assurance processes, which is subject to annual scrutiny through the DHSC.

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 There is a risk to population health and wellbeing, inherent in reducing opportunity to invest in early prevention as the core of public health delivery, particularly in an environment of increasing demand, complexity, socio-economic challenges in the community and pressure on services. It is appreciated that resource allocation decisions are taken in the context of the current financial challenge facing the Council and many other statutory agencies.

6.2 Should the public health grant not be used in an appropriate way with clear evidence, there is a risk to population health and wellbeing and a risk to the Council of challenge and follow up from DHSC. This risk is being managed through work to identify areas where clear public health added value can be achieved and evidenced.

7 Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

7.1 All wards are impacted due to the borough-wide nature of the services funded through and supported by Public Health. Should specific wards be likely to be particularly impacted in future, discussions will take place with the relevant ward Councillor.

8 Background Papers

N/A

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Appendices

Appendix 1: National DHSC assurance process

DHSC has implemented a new strengthened national assurance process, regarding spend of the Public Health grant, to ensure the grant is used in line with national parameters and the Health and Social Care Act (2021). This includes:

- National annual return on spend per (nationally determined) Reported Outturn (RO) category and letter of assurance signed by the DPH and section 151 officer
- Annual assurance meeting with DHSC and follow up written response from DHSC seeking further information as required. This must be supported by written evidence, usually through a service level agreement, setting out the specific public health added value gained through the funding, and progress against public health indicators achieved as a result
- Annual deep dive process on one of the RO categories followed by clarification questions as needed
- National peer review process (currently being commissioned)

Appendix 2: Existing spend across Council areas beyond core PH services

Council Service/Programme Area	2025/26
Director of Adults & Public Health	£294,000
Children & Families	£1,452,000
Leisure	£748,000
Fairer Stockton Team	£224,000
Environmental Health & Trading Standards	£186,000
Communities, Engagement, Homelessness Workplace Health	£237,000
Subtotal: Spend across Council areas beyond core PH services	£3,141,000
Central Overheads	£1,064,000
Gross Expenditure	£4,205,000
Public Health Grant	(£3,500,000)
Public Health Reserves	(£705,000)
Funding	(£4,205,000)
Net Expenditure	£0

Appendix 3: Planned use of Public Health grant from 2026/27

NB: Table sets out use of £1m of Public Health grant from 2026/27. Amounts are estimates and subject to change – exact amounts and specific metrics to be determined through SLA development.

Council area / service	Approx. investment (% total service budget line)	PH outcomes
Trading standards & enforcement	£165,000	Addressing harm reduction & substance misuse; food safety & healthier choices; protecting vulnerable people; reducing injury & harm; reducing violent crime; improving mental wellbeing & feelings of safety; improving community cohesion; addressing inequalities
Employment, training, inclusive growth, economic development & place development	£138,000	Improving mental health; reducing social isolation & loneliness; addressing health inequalities; reducing sickness absence; improving wellbeing through increasing employment; reducing demand on public services; improved community infrastructure (social value)
Parks & green spaces, active travel	£153,000	Improving mental wellbeing and physical health (obesity, cardiovascular disease etc.); supporting environmental health & improving air quality; addressing health inequalities; addressing loneliness & social isolation; connecting communities
Communities, engagement & consultation, homelessness (complex lives), workplace health & wellbeing advice (SBC)	£542,000	Understanding community assets & needs; informing and co-producing approaches and service models; supporting appropriate use of public services & reducing demand; improving community ownership & satisfaction; improving mental and physical wellbeing; addressing inequalities; lowering premature mortality risk; enhancing social determinants of health

Appendix 4:

Council Service/Programme Area	2025/26	Revision	2026/27
Director of Adults & Public Health	£294,000	(£72,000)	£222,000
Children & Families	£1,452,000	(£505,000)	£947,000
Leisure	£748,000	(£175,000)	£573,000
Fairer Stockton Team	£224,000	£0	£224,000
Environmental Health & Trading Standards	£186,000	£165,000	£351,000
Economic Development & Place Development	£0	£138,000	£138,000
Parks & Green Spaces, Active Travel	£0	£153,000	£153,000
Communities, Engagement, Homelessness Workplace Health	£237,000	£542,000	£779,000
Subtotal: Spend across Council areas beyond core PH services	£3,141,000	£246,000	£3,387,332
Central Overheads	£1,064,000	£49,000	£1,113,000
Gross Expenditure	£4,205,000	£295,000	£4,500,000
Public Health Grant	(£3,500,000)	(£1,000,000)	(£4,500,000)
Public Health Reserves	(£705,000)	£705,000	£0
Funding	(£4,205,000)	(£295,000)	(£4,500,000)
Net Expenditure	£0	£0	£0

**REPORT TO CABINET
DATE 14th MAY 2026**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

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

Stockton-on-Tees Statutory Biodiversity Duty Report 2026

Summary

As part of the Environment Act 2021, all Local Authorities and Local Planning Authorities within England are required to demonstrate how they have met the enhanced Biodiversity Duty. This ensures that Local Authorities are working towards the delivery of the Environmental Improvement Plan for England, with government commitments to halt the decline in species abundance and protect 30% of UK land and sea by 2030, with greater commitments to be met by 2042.

A requirement to produce and publish a Biodiversity Duty Report every 5 years has been issued by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This report includes actions undertaken within the current reporting period, commitments to deliver within the next reporting period and Biodiversity Net Gain data from the Local Planning Authority.

Reasons for Decision

This report and commitments within it have been discussed with Officers to deem them achievable and appropriate to each service.

As a statutory report, the Local Authority must report on its actions from the previous reporting period and actions committed to the next reporting period. This must be published by the Local Authority.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approve the draft Biodiversity Duty Report, including commitment to future actions, for publication.

Detail

The draft Biodiversity Duty Report presented highlights how biodiversity improvements have been made across the Council, including capital projects, policy changes and operational improvements. These have been used to showcase the excellent work being

undertaken to demonstrate our commitments to enhance biodiversity within the borough.

A requirement of the Biodiversity Duty Report is to identify commitments the Council will endeavour to deliver within the next 5 year reporting period. In this instance, delivery of these commitments should be demonstratable before January 2031 (please note: reporting periods are set in calendar years by DEFRA). The following opportunities have been identified to be delivered within the next reporting period:

1.	The Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy is due for publication in 2026. As a Supporting Authority, policies and initiatives will be amended and developed to reflect the areas of benefit for local nature recovery which will be highlighted within this publication.
2.	Introducing battery operated machinery and hand tools within our green space operations to build upon existing successful pilots within the Borough
3.	Review canopy cover across the borough and produce a strategic tree planting plan to target the most impactful locations for tree planting.
4.	Explore opportunities for expanding our green wedges and green corridors through public and privately owned land, including alignment with the Business Coalition.
5.	Continued working with key organisations, Defra arm's-length bodies and partnerships within the Tees Valley to continue best practice and opportunities for investment, examples include Tees Valley Nature Partnership, Tees Estuary Recovery Partnership, Your Tees Catchment Partnership, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Environment Agency, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Forestry Commission.
6.	Continue to prioritise native tree planting and/or appropriate climate resilient varieties which support local ecosystems and provide wider ecosystem services to Stockton-on-Tees.
7.	Continue reduced use of herbicides and peat within our public realm and green spaces, whilst also trialling best practice to eliminate use where suitable.
8.	Ensure we are leaving dead standing hard wood in woodland areas, where suitable. Where public safety deems this not suitable, alternative provisions should be made to keep this on site.
9.	Working with partners to reduce prevent spread and reduce abundance of invasive species and plant disease, including Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Ash Dieback.
10.	Expand our 'Better for Nature' initiative to include all formal parks, giving all residents access to engage with nature and providing pollinator corridors through traditionally amenity grassland areas.
11.	Continue proactive woodland thinning programme to ensure healthy thriving existing woodlands for flora and fauna
12.	Increase land managed for biodiversity in Stockon-on-Tees.

13. Review procurement and internal project management templates to ensure consideration for biodiversity and environmental impact is included, where possible.
14. Continue to follow biodiversity improvement plans for Preston Park, including 110m of hedge, 12 fruit trees, 500 new trees planted to enhance and hedge laying
15. Expand Citizen's Science and green space volunteering offer to increase education and awareness of the environment and biodiversity
16. Explore opportunity to establish a habitat bank and alternative green finance models to support our investment into habitat creation.

As a Local Planning Authority Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council are required to also provide planning data held on local Biodiversity Net Gain data, to show Biodiversity Units which have been created from new developments.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

17. An EPIA has not been undertaken for this report, however will be undertaken for individual changes outlined within the committed actions, as they come to fruition, to mitigate against impacts to those with protected characteristics.

Corporate Parenting Implications

The report does not contain any direct corporate parenting implications.

Financial Implications

18. Committed actions within this report have been developed in line with existing strategies, policies and operational objectives, including input from relevant Council Officers to deem these reasonable and achievable within current departmental budgets.

Where commitments have been identified to deliver capital enhancements or increased activation/education initiatives, Officers will seek to work with partners and grant funders to deliver these improvements.

Where practicable, Council Officers will explore alternative green finance models to develop a sustainable method of investing in green spaces within the borough.

Legal Implications

19. The Biodiversity Duty report is a statutory report that must be published at a minimum of every 5 years. Therefore this report must be revised and republished in 2031 to comply with the Biodiversity Duty. The report must cover the actions delivered within previous reporting period. Failure to publish this report and identify delivery of actions towards the Environmental Improvement Plan will result in failure to comply with the Biodiversity Duty.

Risk Assessment

20. Risks associated with this report

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

21. This report covers all wards within the borough.

22. Additional consultation with ward members will be undertaken where projects are to directly impact wards within the borough

Background Papers

23. Draft Biodiversity Duty Report

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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Biodiversity Duty Report

2025/26



Pickard's Meadow

Photo Credit: Tony Raine

Executive Summary

This report demonstrates how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has met the requirements of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act 2021, and outlines the actions we will take to protect and enhance biodiversity between now and the next reporting period in 2031.

The Council is working to protect and improve nature across the Borough by restoring habitats, planting trees, creating wildflower-rich grasslands, improving rivers and wetlands, reducing chemical use, supporting important species such as great crested newts and water voles, and involving residents, schools and volunteers in hands-on environmental projects.

Through major partnership work, improved land management, and biodiversity requirements in new developments, more than 2,400 hectares of land across Stockton-on-Tees are now managed with nature in mind.

Despite challenges such as climate change, pollution and invasive species, the Council is committed to expanding its “Better for Nature” programme, increasing tree cover, improving data and monitoring, restoring more habitats and supporting the new Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy, creating a healthier, greener and more resilient Borough for people and wildlife.

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Foreword

When we restore habitats, protect species, and allow nature the space to flourish, we strengthen the resilience of our environment and enrich the lives of everyone who depends on it. Every action, whether through strategic planning, community engagement, or practical land management, plays a vital role in reversing decline and nurturing the recovery of biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Duty highlights the excellent work that the Council is undertaking to support nature within the Borough. It not only showcases achievements to date but also provides a valuable opportunity to consider how Stockton on Tees' natural landscape will evolve in both the short and long term. This Duty reinforces our commitment to embedding biodiversity into decision making and ensuring that nature remains central to our future planning.

Across the Borough, grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands are being carefully improved through actions such as reducing mowing to encourage wildflowers, planting of new trees, and undertaking restoration projects to improve water quality and habitats. As our work continues to evolve, we remain excited and optimistic about the positive contributions future actions will bring to the natural environment within Stockton.

Councillor Nigel Cooke

Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Green Spaces

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has met the requirements of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty, as part of the Environment Act 2021, and to provide further actions that will be undertaken in order to improve biodiversity outcomes within the Borough.

This report provides a holistic view of existing policies, strategies and action plans that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, alongside their local and regional partners, have delivered between the reporting period of January 2023 and January 2026. Alongside this, a number of future actions will be highlighted to demonstrate our commitment and ambitions towards improving biodiversity between publication and the next iteration of this report in March 2031.

The Council also see this as an opportunity to highlight exemplar work within the Borough and showcase to residents the measures which have been taken to protect and enhance nature.

About this Report

This report must set out how the Council have complied with the enhanced Biodiversity Duty within the Environment Act 2021 and how they look to comply with this over the next 5 years.

The guidance provided by Defra states that this report must cover the following:

- Policies and objectives that have been set out to meet the biodiversity duty and the actions completed to date
- Local, Regional and National legislation, targets and metrics that have influenced policies, objectives and actions
- How we plan to comply with the Biodiversity Duty in the next reporting period
- Any other information considered as appropriate

Reports from local planning authorities must also include:

- Actions carried out to meet Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations
- Details of gains resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans that are approved
- Plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

_(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the number of different plants, animals, insects, fungi and microorganisms that can be found in a single location or area. These work together to make up ecosystems, where many work together in a perfect balance to provide food, clean air and water, medicine, shelter to each other and to humans. (World Wildlife Fund, 2026)

This balance is being increasingly disrupted by hotter summers, wetter winters, pollution, pests and disease, manmade infrastructure, pesticides, domestic pets and a reduction in habitat availability, resulting in significant decline in the number of different species we see and the amount of them.

This has meant that many species we have grown to see as iconically British, for example the Hedgehog, Red Squirrel and Water Vole, are now considered to be endangered. (Begum, 2020)

[Hedgehogs and water voles face extinction in new Red List for British mammals | Natural History Museum](#)

The UK has noted a significant decline in its biodiversity, with 19% decline in species abundance since monitoring began in 1970 (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2026), with a particular impact on birds, with a reduction of 43% and fewer butterflies being found in woodland, with a decline by 54% since 1990 (Joint Nature Climate Committee, 2025)

It has been widely reported that human intervention through conservation measures, monitoring and habitat creation, can support our native species and it is effective on all scales, from restoring national landscapes (University of Oxford, 2024) to providing pot-plants for pollinators. (The Wildlife Trust, 2026)

The Environment Act 2021 and enhanced Biodiversity Duty seek to establish how this can be delivered and mandate that all Councils have consideration for how they could be improving prospects and contribute towards meeting national targets for biodiversity. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

National Biodiversity Goals and Targets

The biodiversity duty has been developed to support the delivery of central government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (previously referred to as the 25 Year Environment Plan), requiring all local authorities (excluding parish councils) and planning authorities to report on reasonable steps that have been taken and identified to contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within their boundary area.

Within the Nature Recovery Green Paper the Government has committed to:



1 Photo Credit: Tony Raine

By 2030:

- halt the decline in species abundance
- protect 30% of UK land and sea

By 2042:

- increase species abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels
- restore or create at least 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife rich habitats
- reduce the risk of species extinction
- restore 75% of sites of special scientific interest to favourable condition
- Improve our marine environment with 70% of designated features in the Marine Protected Area network to be in favourable condition, with the remainder in recovering condition, and additional reporting on changes in individual feature condition
- Planting 180,000 hectares of woodland

Further information on the Governments Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and further information on national reporting, can be found here: [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

About Stockton-on-Tees

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is a local authority in the North East of England, which covers 20,400 hectares, with an estimated population of over 206,800 (Office for National Statistics, 2025). The area boundary lies entirely within the Natural England National Character Area of the Tees Lowlands and includes the River Tees. (Natural England, 2026)

The Council's remit as a Unitary Authority is wide ranging, including management of a large estate in the Tees Valley area and delivering the local planning authority function for the Stockton-on-Tees borough area.

The Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of Council assets and public spaces, such as parks, woodlands, cemeteries, highways verges and countryside sites, along with a number of designated sites. A number of priority species are recorded within the Borough, including Water Voles and Great Crested Newts, which are require specialist management and annual reporting on designated habitats.



Meeting the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty

The Biodiversity Duty was first introduced as part of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, requiring all public authorities in England to have consideration for how they could enhance and protect Biodiversity. This has recently been amended and superseded by the Environment Act 2021, which strengthened the duty, often referred to as the 'Enhanced Biodiversity Duty'. (Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

The Environment Act 2021 also introduced Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, meaning there is a greater responsibility for public authorities, developers and other organisations to showcase their commitments to enhancing spaces to improve biodiversity.

Additional considerations for nutrient neutrality through Environmental Delivery Plans has also been included within recent amendments of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, highlighting the Tees River catchment as a priority, however in its infancy the Council cannot comment on its delivery or impacts. An update will be included within future iterations of this report. (Wentworth, 2025)

[Changes to nutrient neutrality in England - POST](#)

Our Duty to Report

Under the Environment Act 2021, all public bodies in England are required to consider and integrate the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. This further requires all public bodies to report every five years on how they comply with this duty and outline actions which have been taken to improve biodiversity.

The following report highlights the extensive work being delivered across Stockon-on-Tees, supported by a range of partners. Our commitment to enhance biodiversity is demonstrated through our actions to date, including our continued partnership working and our willingness to understand and adapt our ways of working based on emergent best practice. Our duty to report on biodiversity enhancement is a welcome opportunity to highlight local achievements.

To meet the requirements of the Biodiversity Duty, the Council should consider:

- How new and existing strategies, policies and projects affect compliance with the Biodiversity Duty, including how they can be integrated and support delivery of key actions. This should include how the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Wildlife Site management, Local Plans and wider requirements as part of the Environment Act 2021
- Review how land is currently managed and highlight areas which can be better managed to enhance and restore biodiversity
- To review internal processes which could adversely affect biodiversity, including procurement of external services and following best practice guidance on how to minimise our impact
- How we can better understand, collect and store environmental data to inform our strategies, policies and processes and celebrate our successes
- How we can share what we have learned with our communities and partners to create a joined-up approach to restoring biodiversity across the Tees Valley

- How to improve education, training and awareness of biodiversity loss and broader carbon literacy for communities, employees and partners

[Biodiversity Report.pdf](#)

Local Policies, Objectives and Actions

Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32

In 2022, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council adopted a [Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32](#), (ESCR Strategy) which focuses on protecting and enhancing the environment, resource efficiency and climate adaptations.

Many of the actions delivered to date are informed by the ESCR Strategy, best practice for designated sites and advice from specialist partners.

Specific objectives relating to the biodiversity duty include:

- Capture and store carbon in woodlands and other natural habitats
- Protect, extend and connect areas of natural habitat and help address the decline in native species
- Take action to improve water quality
- Plan and adapt the built and natural environment to withstand the impacts of climate change (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2022)



Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024

Priority Three: A great place to live, work and visit

This priority aims to ensure the Council are working to achieve 'an environment that is well looked after, with outdoor spaces to enjoy and to connect amenities'

By strengthening our approach to biodiversity and green spaces, this priority also supports the creation of a healthier, more resilient natural environment. Protecting and enhancing habitats such as meadows, woodlands, wetlands, parks and hedgerows helps wildlife to thrive and increases the ecological value of our public spaces.

Managing land for nature not only boosts biodiversity but also provides ecosystem services, such as improved landscape quality, supporting climate adaptation, and ensuring that



residents can enjoy richer, more varied green spaces. (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2024)

Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan

A strategic priority of the Local Plan is 'to enhance local identity and sense of place through the protection and enhancement of the Borough's natural and built environment, green infrastructure, biodiversity, cultural and heritage assets.' In addition to protecting and enhancing international, national (SSSIs) and locally designated ecological sites (Local Wildlife Sites), the local plan also recognises network of green wedge between existing settlements. As summarised within the current local plan 'Green wedges' play an important role in maintaining local character and the separate identity of built-up areas; this is achieved, in part, through ensuring that development within this designation does not lead to the physical or visual coalescence of built-up areas. Beyond this, green wedges fulfil a range of other purposes including providing recreational opportunities and supporting ecological networks. In order for development within the green wedge to be acceptable, criteria within this policy needs to be met.



In addition to this, it is directly stated that:

'To improve the quality of the water environment the Council will:

- Support ecological improvements along riparian corridors including the retention and creation of river frontage habitats;
- Avoid net loss of sensitive inter-tidal or sub-tidal habitats and support the creation of new habitats; and
- Protect natural water bodies from modification, and support the improvement and naturalisation of heavily modified water bodies (including de-culverting and the removal of barriers to fish migration)

Other considerations within the Local Plan include:

- Percentage of residential properties within flood risk areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 'favourable' condition
- Percentage of Local Wildlife Sites and Geological Sites in positive management
- Maintain Open Spaces, including allotments and play spaces, based on the estimated per 1000 residents
- Progress towards delivering the Green Infrastructure Strategy

Further information about the local plan can be found here: [Local Plan - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)

Please note that the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan is due to be reviewed, therefore subsequent revisions to these priorities will be reflected within future iterations of this Biodiversity Duty Report.

(Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2019)

Biodiversity in Stockton-on-Tees

This chapter describes the current information held on land managed for biodiversity across Stockton-on-Tees, including other key landowners whose predominant focus is to manage their land for biodiversity. All figures for other landowners within the borough are estimates based on data available.

For the purpose of this report, actions and future actions do not include areas managed by third parties, however the Council continue to work closely with these partners through projects and proposals for biodiversity enhancements across the borough.



Land Management

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

The land owned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council covers 20,400 Ha, of which 1216.09 Ha is considered to be green space.

The figures below highlight land owned by the Council explicitly managed or biodiversity, including space held as amenity grass for recreation which continues to support connectivity of green corridors, allotments which are managed by individuals and cemeteries which are mapped into their habitat types.



Please note a small proportion of the below figures are based on non-publicly accessible land owned by the Council, which are currently managed within leases, however hold notable sized habitat areas and have been included for completeness.

Habitat Type	Size (Hectares)
Woodland	547.29Ha (43.7Ha is owned and managed by SBC, but outside of borough boundaries)
Non-amenity grassland	177.9Ha
Open water and wetland (excluding the River Tees)	42.8Ha

Amenity grass (maintained for recreation)	344Ha
Allotments	41Ha
Arable Fields	63.1Ha
Total	1216.09 Ha

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust

The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust own a substantial area of land managed for biodiversity within Stockton-on-Tees, including the management of a number of sites owned by the Council included in the figures above.

Sites managed by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust but owned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council therefore not included in the below are Hardwick Dene and Elm Tree Wood.

Site Name	Estimated Size (Hectares)
Gravel Hole	4.2Ha
Portrack Marsh	29.6Ha
Preston Farm	21.5Ha
Bowesfield Farm	38.7Ha
Total	94Ha

Estimated Total Land Managed for Biodiversity

Please note that the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council figures include amenity grassland as detailed above.

Land Owner	Estimated Total Area of Land Managed for Biodiversity (Hectares)
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	1216.09 Ha
Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	94 Ha
Forestry Commission	198.5 Ha
RSPB	650 Ha
Privately Owned Local Wildlife Sites	283.3 Ha
Total Land Managed for Biodiversity	2441.89 Ha

Designations

The borough has a number of designated sites, including those owned and managed by the Council and those owned by local organisations or individuals. The below information reflects the sites with designations across the whole of Stockton-on-Tees borough boundary area which have particular importance for biodiversity and additional considerations for their management.

Designation	Number of Sites
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands	12
Local Wildlife/Geology Sites	58
Local Nature Reserves	12
National Nature Reserves	1 (Teesmouth NNR)
Ramsar Sites	1 (Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast)
Community Forest	1 (Tees Community Forest)
SSSIs	3
Listed Parks	1

Actions & Case Studies

This section demonstrates how the Council is actively meeting its Biodiversity Duty through practical action, partnership working, and the integration of nature recovery principles across our services. The following actions and case studies highlight the tangible steps taken to protect, enhance, and restore biodiversity across the Borough. They illustrate how the Council is embedding biodiversity considerations into everyday operations, ranging from land management and planning to community engagement and climate adaptation.



A number of case studies have also been selected, as they showcase innovative approaches, collaborative projects, and nature-positive interventions that support healthier ecosystems, increase landscape resilience, and enhance the quality and connectivity of green spaces across the district.

Actions

Better for Nature

Stockton Borough Council has committed to increasing the amount of greenspace managed for biodiversity, which is monitored by means of internal performance indicators and benefits from extensive habitat mapping of approximately 1,216.09 Ha of land assets. The Council currently manage 831.06ha of this greenspace explicitly for biodiversity (excluding amenity grass and allotments).

The Council have undertaken a number of different initiatives in order to increase the area of land managed for biodiversity in recent years, which are captured within the 'Actions' table, however have used 'Better for Nature' branding to increase awareness of residents to the improvements being made and the impact this is having on their doorstep.

Stockton Council's 'Better for Nature' initiative covers a range of environmental conservation work such as reduced amenity grass mowing, tree planting, woodland management etc., that is easily identifiable to residents of the Borough and provides opportunities for regular active community engagement.

Wetland Creation & Management

Billingham Beck Country Park

In 2024/25 a significant engineering project was undertaken at Billingham Beck Valley Country Park, which was led by the EA alongside National Highways, The Tees Rivers Trust and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as an ambitious project to restore habitat, reconnect the watercourse to the natural floodplain and improve visitor access to the park.

This area is low lying and is therefore a natural floodplain, making it extremely fertile, creating valuable native meadow habitat for butterflies, dragonflies and wetland birds.

As part of the project, the historic weir was removed from the river, allowing 55km of open river for migrating fish and new channels were installed with design to create woody debris dams to divert water to restore wetland and other habitat in the wider floodplain.

Improved footpaths, landscaping and interpretation were installed alongside this to increase accessibility and develop greater awareness of the importance of the Beck amongst visitors.

Lustrum Beck

As part of the wider Tees Tidelands project, the Environment Agency led partnership project, Lustrum Beck has been identified as a critical area for nature recovery and a key habitat area for European Eels, Otters, Kingfishers and Water Voles. The wider project looks to support climate adaptation and improve habitats along the River Tees and its tributaries.

Through this project, around 1.5km of Lustrum Beck, which was previously heavily modified, has now been restored with a range of channel features including scrapes, berms, woody debris and backwaters. The works have provided additional habitat to support a greater range of species, including invertebrates, amphibians and wading birds.

Grassland Management

The Council's annual '*no mow*' initiative seeks to not only identify and re-establish remnant species rich grassland, but also to develop and expand them as a means of connecting areas of semi natural habitat. This programme has been designed to ensure these '*no mow*' spaces are meaningful connected routes for pollinators and support native wildflowers and grassland habitats

Traditional grassland management, such as conservation grazing and hay cutting, is also carried out across several key sites, including the Wynyard Woodland Park and Billingham Beck Valley Country Park.

This work is delivered in partnership with the local agricultural community through agricultural licences and other agreements, ensuring habitats are managed sustainably while supporting local farming. The approach helps maintain species rich grasslands, prevents scrub encroachment and promotes a diverse mosaic of meadow habitats across the borough.

A number of other sites benefit from established native grassland meadows, including Honey Pot Wood, Portrack Meadow, The Holmes, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park and Six Fields, but are cut via flail at the end of each Summer, where traditional methods are not suitable

Tree/Woodland Planting & Management

Tree Planting

In Winter 2024/25 the Council planted 220 standard trees, 7,500 tree whips, with a total of 228 volunteers supporting the Community Tree & Woodland Officer planting within their neighbourhoods.

In Winter 25/26 the authority planted 60 standard trees but delayed any additional whip planting until 26/27.

Where possible, we look to incorporate orchard and fruiting trees, as these provide both a benefit to our local residents, but also a food source for insects and birds.

Please note additional memorial trees are planted every year, with information collated alongside cemeteries and their management. This information can be found in the relevant section below.

Tree and Woodland Management

In addition to our tree planting programme, detailed above, the Council have a number of policies and processes in place to ensure we are working sustainably and in a way where biodiversity is always considered.

Where possible, trees are left as dead standing hardwood, particularly within woodland sites, as this provides valuable habitat, particularly for insects, birds and bats and adds to the overall soil health within woodlands. Where this is not suitable in higher footfall areas, trees are cut and left on site to provide similar benefits.

Where limbs of trees are removed and are not suitable to move on site, these are chipped and turn to mulch to suppress weeds on shrub beds, or spread as a sustainable method of replenishing areas of soil. This reduces our use of herbicides and artificial fertilisers.

Below are some examples of woodland management within the borough:

Wynyard Woodland Park

Wynyard Woodland Park has three distinct sections of woodland, which are managed according to their features and designations.

Thorpe Wood- Thorpe Wood is designated as one of the Boroughs Ancient semi-natural woodlands, defined by its age, mix of native deciduous trees and rich ground flora. This area of the park is sympathetically managed to ensure the character of the woodland is maintained and safeguarded for its diverse biodiversity and unique habitat. This is also the only area of the park where dogs are explicitly requested to be on lead to protect key habitats.

Tilery & Brierley Woods- Both of these areas have previously been used for commercial timber plantations, but have since been managed by our site Ranger and Volunteers for natural regeneration of native woodland. This is managed through halo thinning to retain particular specimen trees and removal of faster growing species to develop a sustainable woodland.

Stoney Field

Stoney Field is a 4.7 Ha former agricultural field planted with native deciduous trees in 2001, including a small biomass trial plot of Goat Willow and Hybrid Black Poplar. As has woodland matured, the site is managed through light thinning every five years, rather than large interventions, to maintain visual amenity, improve structure and proactively inspect for issues such as ash dieback. The biomass plots are being gradually diversified by reducing willow and poplar and promoting naturally regeneration native trees through halo-thinning.

Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park- Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park is managed differently to other areas of the borough due to the potential ground contaminants from its former life as a landfill site. The park has extensive woodland cover, however, requires specific management and removal of self-seeded trees on restricted areas, as to not damage the capped contaminants within the park.

The extensive nature of the woodland areas means there is a regular programme of woodland thinning which is undertaken with our on-site Ranger with support from the volunteers. The site has a high number of Ash trees, which unfortunately has been increasingly susceptible to Ash Dieback, resulting in an increased amount of safety-related felling.

As with many of our woodland areas, we are encouraging natural regeneration of more resilient varieties of trees, to reduce the need for pathogen related removals.

Other

The Council holds international recognition, achieving 'Tree City of the World' status for 2025, with application pending for 2026, delivered by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Arbor Day Foundation. This achievement demonstrates our ongoing commitment to urban forestry and tree management within Stockon-on-Tees.

Priority Species & District Level Licencing

Priority species in the Lower Tees Valley have been identified as Great Crested Newts and Water Voles, and monitoring programmes have been established in partnership with the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and the Freshwater Trust respectively.

Working in partnership with the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, a number of District Level Licensing ponds have been created at Wynyard Woodland Park to create habitat which supports breeding for Great Crested Newts, with further proposals under the same scheme for Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park.

Water Vole have previously been actively monitored by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust at Six Fields, by capturing footprints and assessing live video footage, showcasing an active population on the site.

Other Environmental Monitoring

Stockton Borough Council actively encourages the use of its greenspace for recognised and established monitoring programmes, such as the Butterfly Conservation transects and the British Trust for Ornithology surveys undertaken by the Teesmouth Bird Club. The Freshwater Trust also undertake annual eDNA monitoring for the presence of Great Crested Newts at Wynyard Woodland Park.

Education and Research

Stockton Borough Council actively encourages the use of greenspaces for education and research.

The Council are currently working in partnership with students at Liverpool University to investigate the relationship between Invasive Non-Native Species and the natural bacterial communities present in soils. Please note the outcomes of this study has not yet been determined, however could support in innovative and sustainable treatments for INNS across the UK.

The Council have also undertaken a number of engagement activities with communities and local primary schools in conjunction with Teesside University and Natural England to identify improvements that could be made to urban green spaces to support recreational use and environmental improvements. Children particularly highlighted the importance of trees and spaces for nature within their parks, showcasing the importance and effectiveness of early education around biodiversity and the environment.

Invasive Non-Native Species

Stockton Borough Council works closely with the Tees Rivers Trust to identify, monitor and treat INNS such as Himalayan Balsam, Floating Pennywort, Crassula etc. and also has an active management programme of species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

Pollinating Insects

Stockton Borough Council has provided the Cleveland Bee Keepers Association with an apiary at Ropner Park in order to train beekeepers, which led to securing the DEFRA '*Bees Needs*' award in 2024.

The Council consults with Cleveland Bee Keepers Association in matters such as reduced mowing and invasive species monitoring to ensure there is not likely to be significant impact on local bee populations.

In addition to this, the Council have increased the number of wildflowers in the borough, both through reduced mowing and changing ornamental planting, to create a wider network of pollinator friendly plants. More information on our site operations and management can be found below in the relevant Action.

Nature Partnerships

Stockton Borough Council is an active member of the following local partnerships that comprises other Local Authorities and organisations throughout the Tees Valley, working to deliver a more strategic approach to nature recovery:

- Tees Valley Nature Partnership

- Your Tees Catchment Partnership
- Tees Estuary Nature Recovery Partnership

These partnerships bring with them a wealth of expertise across public and voluntary sectors, bringing key players around the table to discuss habitats, education and green finance, along with emerging issues directly impacting the Tees Valley.

The historic Local Nature Partnership directly supported the designation of a number of Local Wildlife Sites, such as Hartburn Beck (Water Voles) and Stillington Forest Park (Butterfly assemblage).

These ongoing discussions continue to be essential for continuous improvement of our estate across Stockton-on-Tees.

Volunteering

The Council are committed to offering volunteering opportunities for our residents to be involved in developing and managing their local green spaces, both supported and independently, giving flexibility and removing barriers to access.

The main routes to volunteering in green spaces are through the Preston Park Volunteers (Site Specific), Stockton Countryside Volunteers (Boroughwide) and through a number of local parks Friends' groups and voluntary organisations. Please note, that we do not currently collect this data from our partners, therefore data below reflects volunteers supported through Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council services only. This does not include other types of volunteering across the Council.

For the year of 2025/26 the number of volunteer hours are highlighted below:

- Stockton Countryside Volunteers:** 3625
- Preston Park Volunteers:** 432 hours
- Preston Park Corporate Volunteers:** 20 hours

In total the Council have supported **4077** hours of green space volunteering in 2025/26.

Other environmental engagement activities at Preston Park include:
Owl Walks (63 attendees)
Otter Walks (54 attendees)

For the year of 2024/25 the number of volunteer hours are highlighted below:

- Stockton Countryside Volunteers: 2440
- Preston Park Volunteers:**

An acknowledgement should be given to our Friends' groups, litter picking groups, biodiversity monitoring volunteers, VCSE partners and other volunteers, who regularly contribute a significant number of hours towards improving our parks, green spaces and public realm and support us in providing high standards of habitat for biodiversity and improve our understanding of ecology within the borough.

Mapping & Data

The Council currently maps data within our managed green spaces based on habitat type. This means that we are able to accurately understand which areas of land are managed specifically for

biodiversity and able to differentiate from wider mown amenity grass which may be present within our Parks and green spaces.

This mapping allows us to think holistically about where land is underutilised and could be uplifted to support biodiversity or managed different to increase awareness and understanding of challenges facing biodiversity.

The data collected by the Council and partners is used to inform our strategies, policies and projects.

Stockton-on-Tees Environment Fair

The annual Stockton Environment Fair, held in the town centre to coincide with the national Great Big Green Week, is a key event in the local calendar and a major platform for showcasing community led climate action. Supported by coalition members, primarily local residents, the Fair brings together around 20 stalls featuring businesses, charities, grassroots groups and local projects working to improve the local environment and promote sustainable living.

Alongside the event, informal networking and social sessions are held roughly every six months, providing coalition members with opportunities to connect, share ideas, collaborate and raise awareness of emerging environmental issues.

Flood Alleviation Schemes and Sustainable Drainage Systems

As the Lead Flood Authority for Stockton-on-Tees, the Council continues to incorporate natural flood management projects and consider how green space management could benefit biodiversity through creation of wetland habitat.

All schemes continue to consider opportunity for BNG and how design can play a factor in reducing nutrient pollution into our waterways, including tributaries to the River Tees.

The Council will continue to follow best practice guidance and work with our environmental partners to ensure we are incorporating enhancements to biodiversity where practicable.

Cemeteries/Crematorium management/Memorial Trees

The Crematorium and cemeteries have significant biodiversity value, particularly with historic sites being managed sympathetically to include spaces for nature, including a substantial part of Oxbridge Lane Cemetery and smaller areas of Thornaby Cemetery. These spaces remain sympathetically managed to ensure they are not overgrown and access is still provided to graves.

The Crematorium itself also includes landscaped areas for reflection, adding further opportunity for pollinator corridors.

As a sustainable option, the Council also offer sites for memorial trees within our parks and green spaces, with 115 being planted since 2023, in addition to the more general tree planting programme outlined above. The Crematorium is now also offering memorial bulbs, which can be planted through the grounds in memory of a loved one, in addition to working with charity partners on bird boxes and bug hotels to improve the habitat opportunities on our sites.

Grounds Maintenance

A number of processes and operational considerations have been amended to improve the biodiversity of the borough and move towards a more sustainable service, whilst still maintaining high standards of complimentary green spaces for recreation.

The Council have significantly reduced the use of herbicides and glyphosate in recent years, with its use strictly monitored and applied on a case-by-case basis where it is deemed essential to prevent weed growth. As a rule, these are only sprayed on hard standing and explicitly are not used beside hedgerows, or trees.

There has also been a move away from ornamental bedding plants towards support planting of native wildflowers, in order to create more diverse habitat for pollinators. Where possible, these are planted to create green corridors and connect existing habitats.

As technology has improved around battery operated machinery, ongoing trials and investment is a priority for the Council, in a bid to reduce negative impact of petrol operated equipment on local air pollution. Successful trials in our town centres now mean that all handheld maintenance equipment operated is now full battery operated.

Playing Pitches

Currently there are a number of open playing fields identified through the Local Plan. These spaces remain as mowed amenity grass to ensure provision for sports in available within the Borough, however provide key connections and resting spaces for mammals (most notably water fowl) through our urban areas.

Waterfront Park Regeneration Project

Investing in large capital developments, there is often scope to improve our environmental credentials, particularly including an increased areas for habitat by investing in greening schemes.

A recent example is the development of the Stockton Town Centre, Waterfront Park. A space which transforms the high street into public realm where residents have a greater opportunity to engage with our blue and green spaces.

This development has created green space and planted 150 standard trees, to add to the green corridor to connect with the Tees Barrage.

Preston Park

Preston Park and Gardens are managed alongside the historic Preston Hall, as a site to showcase the heritage of the site, therefore some areas are cultivated and formally landscaped to reflect this. The site also benefits from extensive grounds, which have in recent times, been predominantly managed for recreation and as haven for wildlife to thrive amongst the urban environment.

Enhancements have been made within the site, including reducing mowing regimes of amenity grassland, increased native hedgerow planting, additional tree planting and invasive species management. Further detail can be found in the case study below.

Schools Climate and Sustainability Support

The Schools Climate Coalition, originally established with support from the Bright Minds Big Futures initiative to engage schools in environmental activity, has evolved to focus more directly on supporting teachers in sustainability roles.

Following the introduction of the Department for Education requirement for each school to appoint a School Sustainability Lead, a new School Sustainability Leads Network (SSLN) has been created, working in partnership with the national Let's Go Zero campaign, which the Council has supported since 2023.

The Council has also contributed to school tree-planting initiatives and continues to encourage schools to join the National Education Nature Park, helping pupils engage with nature and outdoor learning.

The Council continues to work closely with our schools to increase education about biodiversity and green spaces.

Creative Climate Coalition

The Creative Climate Coalition is comprised of around 15 freelance artists and local cultural and creative organisations, this coalition focuses on improving sustainability within their own practice while using performances, exhibitions and events to communicate climate and environmental messages to the wider public.

Overseen by Stockton Arts Centre (ARC) and meeting quarterly, the group includes organisations such as Tees Music Alliance, Festival of Thrift, Preston Hall Museum and Park, Tees Valley Museum Group and Tees Active Leisure, alongside individual creatives from across the Tees Valley.

Communities Climate Coalition

Recently relaunched and chaired by Catalyst, the Communities Climate Coalition now has around 65 members on its mailing list, bringing together individuals and organisations with an interest in becoming more sustainable.

Membership includes Parish Councils, VCSE organisations, litter picking groups, nature and wildlife organisations, and food distribution and growing initiatives. The group meets quarterly to share good news stories, explore opportunities for collaboration and offer mutual support, with strong links to wider Council teams through members' community focused activities.

Business Climate Coalition

The Business Climate Coalition brings together almost 70 businesses, ranging from SMEs to multinational companies across a wide range of sectors.

Meeting monthly, members share best practice, explore opportunities to improve their environmental performance and take part in site visits that showcase sustainability in action. Recent visits have included Teesside University's Net Zero Industrial Innovation Centre, Northumbrian Water's

wastewater treatment facility, Thirteen's Recycling Centre, Central Area Transmission System Terminal, the Northern Renewables Centre, Quorn Foods and Three Brothers Brewing.

The coalition has already supported new collaborations between local businesses and provides a valuable platform for TVCA engagement as part of the Local Area Energy Plan. Regular guest speakers from member organisations, national bodies and academia help provide a holistic approach to business sustainability.

This platform also gives opportunities for businesses to support local community projects and cross-coalition activities, including networking events to bring members together in an informal setting to discuss local environmental priorities.

CASE STUDY: Wynyard Woodland Park Habitat Restoration

Location: Wynyard Woodland Park
Area: 144.63 Ha (88% woodland)

A long-term- programme of habitat creation and restoration is ongoing to develop a high-quality mosaic landscape made up of wildflower meadow, naturally regenerating parkland, ponds- and the surrounding woodland site. The vision is to create a self-sustaining, ecologically rich system with seamless transitions between habitats, supporting a wide range of plant, invertebrate, amphibian, bird- and mammal species.

The project stands out for its holistic approach, creating a network of improvements, combining four major habitat types that interact and support one another. The approach taken has been sympathetic to the site and is an excellent example of how less intensive land management can be sustainable and deliver multiple benefits for people and nature.

Species rich wildflower meadow, enhanced through hay cuts and cattle grazing.

A rotational pond system, allowing natural succession while ensuring a continual supply of early stage pond habitat.

Restoration of the wider Brierley Wood, which provides both ecological connectivity and natural regeneration.

Natural regeneration of woodland and creation of open parkland has included large-scale willow thinning and halo thinning, opening the canopy to support

woodland flora and slower growing native species, such as Oak.

Selective removal of self-seeded, faster growing trees, is used to support long-term woodland diversity and a to support veteran trees.

Sensitive Wildlife First Operations

Established woodland relies on careful management, with the Council’s Countryside Rangers promoting wildlife-first operational practices. This includes using remote controlled machinery, which allows for precision, slower pace and reduced ground disturbance.

The site has significant support from a dedicated group of countryside volunteers, who go above and beyond to ensure common amphibians can be relocated to reduce disturbance and other small mammals, are spotted and allowed to relocate naturally.

The site has 51 mapped ponds, of which a number host a great crested newt population. Additional larger newt ponds were created in 2022 through the District Level Licensing Scheme, strengthening amphibian habitat across the site. This approach ensures long-term viability of amphibian populations.

The site showcases excellent examples of circular economy, supporting both biodiversity and recreation.

Timber is retained as habitat piles or left where it falls to support fungi, invertebrates, small mammals and birds.

Coppiced willow is used for wreaths, basketry, spoon carving and other crafts, linking habitat management with sustainable community use.

This combination of biodiversity value and resource reuse is a model of best practice.

CASE STUDY: Tees Tideland Partnership- Billingham Beck Valley Country Park

In 2024–25, partners completed a £1.3 million river and wetland restoration at Billingham Beck Valley Country Park to boost biodiversity, improve water quality and reconnect the beck to its natural floodplain. The project delivered substantial ecological gains and climate adaptation including the removal of a historic weir to reopen approximately 55 km of upstream habitat for fish migration, alongside extensive wetland creation and natural flood management interventions. These works transformed a previously modified watercourse into a more natural, connected and climate resilient system and is regarded as one of the most significant fish-pass improvements in the local catchment.

The project was led by the Environment Agency in partnership with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Tees Rivers Trust, and National Highways, forming a strong cross-sector team. Delivery was aligned to the wider Tees Tideland Programme, a £30 million initiative improving climate resilience and habitat connectivity across the Tees estuary.

Objectives

- Restore ecological connectivity by re-establishing natural floodplain processes and removing barriers to fish passage.
- Enhance biodiversity and water quality through creation of scrapes, shallow channels and wetland features

- Improve community access and experience through upgraded paths, landscaping and visitor infrastructure within the Country Park.



Wider Benefits

Two large woody debris dams were installed to emulate naturally fallen trees, diversifying river flows, slowing water and creating habitat refuges while still allowing fish migration. This system not only benefits biodiversity but also acts as a natural flood management system for local residents.

Reconnected floodplains slow and store water, trapping sediment and nutrients and contributing to improved ecological status in Billingham Beck and Thorpe Beck.

To integrate ecological improvements with visitor experience, additional works were delivered, including:

- New and resurfaced footpaths
- Improved drainage
- New steps, benches and gates
- Planting of 5,000 native trees and additional mixed hedgerow

These upgrades provide opportunities to learn about the local habitat, connect to nature and support long-term stewardship of the site.

CASE STUDY: Preston Park

A wide range of habitat management, species conservation and public engagement activities have been delivered across the extensive estate at Preston Park, building on the Council's development plan for the site, work focused on improving habitat condition, increasing biodiversity, enhancing ecological connectivity and engaging visitors and volunteers in practical conservation.

The site showcases its exemplary opportunities for habitat enhancement, showing how the historic estate can be of benefit to nature recovery.

Ambitious plans for the site and its ongoing management for biodiversity can be demonstrated through recent improvements, including:

- Planting 2,000 yellow rattle plugs and 300 cowslips significantly improving species richness
 - Installing 210 metres of new hedgerow providing vital corridors for birds, small mammals and invertebrates.
 - Proactive woodland thinning to improve structure, light levels and understory regeneration within woodland
 - Establishing 200 metres of dead hedge
 - Removal of snowberry, Himalayan balsam, and treatment of giant hogweed
 - Planting willow and alder whips to reduce riverbank erosion demonstrates a strong approach to nature-based solutions
-

Public Engagement and Education Activities

Preston Park has developed itself a reputation amongst residents of Stockton, as the go-to location to learn about the environment, through its engaging and unique guided walks

This gives visitors the rare opportunities to see and learn about species which would otherwise be fairly aloof, such as Otters, Owls and Bats. Last year alone, 117 people attended wildlife walks at Preston Park, which shows excellent community participation and interest in local biodiversity.

They also run a number of school holiday activities, which has included sowing 500 acorns with local children as a way to inspire young participants and develop the next generation of environmental stewards.

Extensive Bird Monitoring Results

Due to Preston Park's extensive estate, excellent habitat management and its connections with local environmental schemes. This site benefits from an increasing number of volunteers monitoring and recording different species, particularly birds, which have included sparrowhawk, marsh tit, redwing, bullfinch, and long-tailed tit. This ongoing monitoring helps the Council to understand how best to manage its estate and where improvements could be best focussed.

The breadth and volume of ringing data demonstrate a well-established monitoring effort, supporting evidence-led site management.

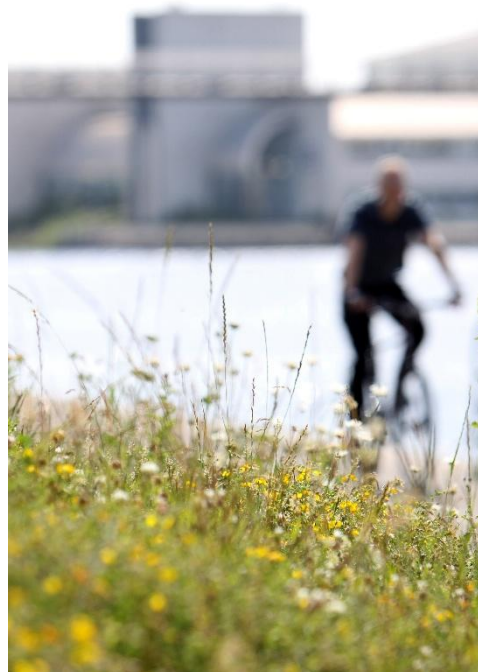
Biodiversity Net Gain

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Biodiversity Net Gain (also known as BNG) is mandatory in England under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Environment Act 2021.

Biodiversity Net Gain is a measure used to ensure that habitats and wildlife are left in a better state than they were before development. (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, 2024)

Developers in England must deliver a 10% BNG uplift, which is determined based on ecological surveys which will consider the biodiversity value of existing habitat and advise on suitable mitigation or enhancements. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than before it was built. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)



2 Photo Credit: Sustrans

Biodiversity Units

For the purpose of BNG, biodiversity value is measured in standardised biodiversity units. This can be calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric tool, available here: [Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK](#)

A habitat will contain a number of biodiversity units, depending on things like its:

- Size
- Quality
- Location
- Type

Where developers cannot reasonably generate these units on their development site, units can be purchased and habitat enhancement or creation be made elsewhere via off-site units or as a last resort, government biodiversity credits.

These habitats must be maintained for a minimum of 30 years, including where it is created off-site. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

Planning Services Biodiversity Net Gain Monitoring

The Environment Act (2021) amended the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) introducing the requirement for the consideration of 'Biodiversity Net Gain' in the processing of planning applications. As a consequence every grant of planning permission, subject to exemptions, includes a condition that requires new development to demonstrate it has achieved a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the baseline / pre-development value of the site. The biodiversity value of a site is calculated through site appraisal and completion of the 'statutory biodiversity metric' (produced by Natural England) by suitably qualified individuals.

Further guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain is available [here](#).

Between 01/01/2023 and 12/02/2024, when mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain came in to force, the Council sought net biodiversity gains in new development wherever possible through the application of Local Plan policy ENV5.5 and policies within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The remainder of this section provides an overview of how the Council has achieved Biodiversity Net Gain since it became a mandatory requirement for new planning applications submitted after 12th February 2024.

Exemptions

The Council has screened planning applications against the regulations to understand whether they meet the following exemptions:

- **Temporary exemption for non-major development (until April 2024). 134 applications.** Development which is not defined as major development under [Article 2 Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#) is exempt until 2 April 2024. The exemption will continue to apply to section 73 permissions where the original permission which the section 73 relates to was subject to this temporary exemption.
- **Householder development. 753 applications.** Development which is subject of a householder application as defined within [Article 2\(1\) of the Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#).
- **Development granted planning permission by a development order under section 59 of the Town and Country Planning Act. 8 applications.** This includes development which is classed "permitted development", where planning permission is not normally required.
- **Development subject to the de minimis exemption. 83 applications.** Development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat, and 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.
- **Self-build and custom build development. 8 applications.** Development which:
 - consists of no more than 9 dwellings, and

- is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, and
 - consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in [section 1\(A1\) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015](#).
- **Urgent Crown development granted permission under section 293A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. 0 applications.**
 - **Development of a biodiversity gain site. 0 applications.** Development which is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the biodiversity gain condition which applies in relation to another development.
 - **Development related to the high speed railway transport network. Not relevant to Stockton-on-Tees Borough / 0 applications.**

During the preparation of this report the Council has identified 28 applications where biodiversity net gain was not exempt and was a key consideration in the determination of the proposal.

Biodiversity Net Gain Overview

The table below provides all of the agreed biodiversity information relating to planning applications in the monitoring period, starting with the date that Biodiversity Net Gain came in to force (12th February 2024).

Table 1 – Summary of biodiversity net gain information in relevant planning applications between 12th February 2024 and 31st December 2025

Category	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
Onsite Baseline	272.58	18.77	0
Onsite Post Development	187.26	28.94	0
Onsite Net Unit Change	-85.32	10.17	0
Offsite Baseline	2.16	0	0
Offsite Post	96.89	0	0
Total Offsite Net Unit Change	94.73	0	0
Units From Credits	4.22	0	0

As the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain is a pre-commencement condition it is possible that applications can be permitted:

- Including details of the approach to Biodiversity Net Gain.

- Subject to the confirmation pre-commencement of the approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

Appendix A below summarises all schemes where the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy has been agreed during the application process or prior to commencement.

Habitat Units

Change in habitat biodiversity units account for the majority of impact / change from new development. Overall, there is an on-site loss of habitat units following development, however, in accordance with the biodiversity duty this loss will be mitigated off-site whilst also achieving a 10% uplift against the baseline position.

The most significant on-site gains were achieved in the following developments which achieved the mandatory 10% uplift within the development site boundary:

- 24/1769/FUL – Solar Panel Scheme at Teesside Grange with a biodiversity increase to 12.16 units (circa +8 units) above the baseline of 3.98 units.
- 24/1628/FUL – Billingham Sports Hub. An increase in habitat units from 51.05 units to 57.61 units (+6.56 units).
- 23/0752/FUL – A battery energy storage development at Letch Lane, Carlton. An increase from 4.95 habitat units to 6.28 units (+1.33 units).
- 24/1031/FUL – Extensions and other development at KP Snacks increasing baseline habitat units from 10.39 units to 11.5 units (+1.11 units).
- 24/2073/FUL – redevelopment work at St John's Primary School, Wolviston. Increase from 2.15 units to 2.91 units (+0.76 units).

As noted above, a number of sites have resulted in a reduction in biodiversity units against the baseline position, or the 10% uplift has not been achieved on-site. In these circumstances the council has agreed the mitigation approach during the planning application, in accordance with government guidance on achieving biodiversity gains. Mitigation and gains have either been achieved through schemes submitted with the planning application, or will be agreed prior to commencement of the development.

The most significant on-site losses are at the following sites, most of which have previously benefitted from planning permission granted prior to biodiversity net gain coming in to force, or are allocated in the Local Plan. These sites include major economic growth proposals including Teeslink at Durham Lane Industrial Estate (loss of 77.56 habitat units) and Dynamo Park at Portrack Lane (loss of 4.7 habitat units). These schemes will mitigate the impact of the development off-site whilst achieving a 10% uplift. A further economic growth proposal has been agreed at Conoco Philips which involves the loss of 1.1 habitat units which will be off-set by 1.73 units secured by biodiversity credits.

The two residential developments with the most significant on-site losses are on locations that have previously been permitted and are identified for development in the Local Plan. Permission has been granted for an extension to the Harebell Meadows residential development at Greatham Avenue, which is a vacant development plot on a former brownfield

site (Corus Pipe Mill). The scheme has led to an on-site loss of circa 6.71 habitat units. The client will seek to secure offsetting units via a landowner within the Stockton area, secured by a Section 106 (S106) agreement.

At Little Maltby Farm in Ingleby Barwick a development for commercial units and residential development / older people's housing was permitted which resulted in a loss of 2.58 credits, which will be mitigated off-site. This site previously benefited from planning permission and is identified for development in the Local Plan.

Whilst these schemes are the most significant on-site losses of habitat credits, several other sites will also be meeting the biodiversity requirement off-site.

During the preparation of this report council officers have also identified a scheme where a development which was granted planning permission has commenced and completed without securing the biodiversity gains that were required. As the scheme relates to a temporary classroom on school site work is underway to secure the necessary mitigation retrospectively.

Hedgerow Units

All hedgerow biodiversity gains from new permissions were identified as being potentially achieved on-site. This equated to an increase of 10 additional units against a baseline of 18 units, an increase which is potentially far in excess of the 10% requirement. The largest increases were agreed at the following sites:

- 24/1628/FUL – Billingham Sports Hub. Increase from 0.16 units to 4.93 units a +4.77 increase. This development has not commenced.
- 23/0752/FUL – A battery energy storage development at Letch Lane, Carlton. An increase from 12.51 units to 14.26 units a 1.75 units increase.
- 24/2127/FUL – Additional housing development at Harebell Meadows (near Portrack Lane) with an increase from 0 units to 1.47 units.
- 24/2073/FUL – redevelopment work at St Paul's Primary School, Wolviston increase from 1.23 units to 1.91 units, an increase of 0.68 units.

River Units

The approved planning applications did not include the loss of, or generation of, 'river' based biodiversity units.

Permission Data

Appendix A below provides the detailed information recorded on the council's planning application register.

A Future for Biodiversity in Stockton-on-Tees

Vision for Nature Recovery

Despite ongoing pressures, the Council remain committed to creating a borough where biodiversity is considered an asset, which is managed and restored sympathetically to the benefit of all. We will continue to deliver our existing commitments to implement projects which increase climate resilience and work alongside our partners and VCSE organisations to better manage our estate for nature.

Over the next 5 years the Council will continue to be ambitious in how we improve our outcomes for biodiversity, showcasing best practice, thinking strategically and creating greater opportunities for partnership working.



3 Photo Credit: Kenny Crooks

Pressures

Nature recovery as a local authority comes with a number of pressures. To ensure the Council is able to manage these, the following list of common pressures has been used to develop our future actions, working to mitigate and adapt to ensure these do not impact on local biodiversity.

Pressure	Impact on Biodiversity
Land use and development	Conflicts and changes in land use have resulted in reduced and fragmented habitat across the UK, reducing connectivity for mammals and pollinators. This also includes intense mowing regimes for recreation and agricultural monoculture, which result in reduced diversity of plants and flowers.
Pollution	Water and air pollution is a growing concern from unsustainable land management practices, vehicle use, fly tipping, misconnected sewage, unregulated sewage discharge and intensive farming. The Tees Valley is known for its industry, which also contributes to local air and water pollution, including airport, chemical and manufacturing.

	Smaller scale but persistent pollution, such as littering, domestic pet flea and worming treatments, dog fouling, also pose a growing concern for biodiversity on local sites.
Climate Change	Changes to our climate result in differing weather patterns and quickly changing climate, meaning wildlife is unable to adapt. Increasing extremes of our climate has been seen to result in hotter, drier summers and wetter, more mild winters. This has a significant impact on bird migration patterns, nesting seasons, hibernating mammals, pathogens, damage to habitat from floods/fires and timing of flowering/fruited plants. Marine ecosystems are known to be more sensitive to changes in climate, as they are unable to adapt or relocate.
Invasive Non-Native Species and Pathogens	As Invasive Non-Native Species become more prevalent amongst our landscapes, these outcompete space and resources from our native wildlife. Some common examples include Grey Squirrel, American Mink and Japanese Knotweed. Where INNS plants are not managed, these can become a monoculture and impact food chains for other mammals and insects which would otherwise have foraged there. Pathogens are also a significant threat to native wildlife, with invasive species and monoculture itself, bringing a higher risk of new diseases that UK native wildlife is not adapted for. Warmer temperatures, also increases the reach of where these pathogens and INNS can survive across the UK, meaning areas which were previously not affected, now see rising cases of pests and diseases.
Financing	As a local authority, there are increasing pressures on funding with a wider reach than ever before. Working in partnership, exploring alternative green finance models and cross departmental working, all play a part in how the Council can better understand how it can play a part in improving biodiversity within Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Tees Valley.
Land Ownership	There are thousands of different landowners across Stockton-on-Tees, so developing a joined-up approach to managing land for biodiversity can be challenging. Connecting habitats and treating INNS cohesively will result in greater opportunities for habitat restoration and nature recovery.

Data & Research	Current datasets are limited in some areas, so our knowledge of best practice and actual numbers of priority species is restricted to what we know. Growing this data set and engaging with research to understand where habitat is best restored, will give strong foundations to improve biodiversity locally.
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Priorities

The Council will continue to deliver priorities that deliver the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, but also align to regional and local priorities and projects for nature recovery.

Priorities for the Council include:

- Creation and restoration of habitats, including woodland, native grassland, watercourses and hedgerows
- Manage existing woodland and plant new trees to improve climate resilience and increase canopy cover, including benefits realisation of natural flood management
- Increasing education and awareness of biodiversity within our communities and showcase best practice delivered by the Council and its partners
- Supporting development and delivery of priorities and measures highlighted within the Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Improving data sets and research to inform strategies, policies and projects



Future Action Plan

Department	Pressure Mitigation	Action
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	Land Use & Development/ Data & Research	The Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy is due for publication in 2026. As a Supporting Authority, policies and initiatives will be amended and developed to reflect the areas of benefit for local nature recovery which will be highlighted within this publication.
Community Services,	Pollution	Introducing battery operated machinery and hand tools within our green space operations to build upon existing successful pilots within the Borough

Environment & Culture		
Community Services, Environment & Culture	Climate Change	Review canopy cover across the borough and produce a strategic tree planting plan to target the most impactful locations for tree planting.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development/ Land Ownership	Explore opportunities for expanding our green wedges and green corridors through public and privately owned land, including alignment with the Business Coalition.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Data & Research/ Financing	Continued working with key organisations, Defra arm's-length bodies and partnerships within the Tees Valley to continue best practice and opportunities for investment, examples include Tees Valley Nature Partnership, Tees Estuary Recovery Partnership, Your Tees Catchment Partnership, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Environment Agency, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Forestry Commission.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Climate Change	Continue to prioritise native tree planting and/or appropriate climate resilient varieties which support local ecosystems and provide wider ecosystem services to Stockton-on-Tees.
Community Services, Environment & Culture	Pollution	Continue reduced use of herbicides and peat within our public realm and green spaces, whilst also trialling best practice to eliminate use where suitable.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Land Use & Development	Ensure we are leaving dead standing hard wood in woodland areas, where suitable. Where public safety deems this not suitable, alternative provisions should be made to keep this on site.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Invasive Non-Native Species and Pathogens	Working with partners to reduce prevent spread and reduce abundance of invasive species and plant disease, including Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Ash Dieback.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development	Expand our 'Better for Nature' initiative to include all formal parks, giving all residents access to engage with nature and

		providing pollinator corridors through traditionally amenity grassland areas.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development	Continue proactive woodland thinning programme to ensure healthy thriving existing woodlands for flora and fauna
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development/ Land Ownership	Increase land managed for biodiversity in Stockon-on-Tees.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Data & Research	Review procurement and internal project management templates to ensure consideration for biodiversity and environmental impact is included, where possible.
Community Services, Environment & Culture	Land Use & Development	Continue to follow biodiversity improvement plans for Preston Park, including 110m of hedge, 12 fruit trees, 500 new trees planted to enhance and hedge laying
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Land Use & Development	Expand Citizen's Science and green space volunteering offer to increase education and awareness of the environment and biodiversity
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	Financing	Explore opportunity to establish a habitat bank and alternative green finance models to support our investment into habitat creation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Council take a number of approaches to monitoring and evaluation, along with a range of data sets available through our partners. Below includes opportunities to demonstrate metrics and other opportunities for reporting.

Examples of data currently collected include:

- Funding- Value (£) invested into green or blue projects to benefit biodiversity, directly through the capital programme, S106 or external grant funding



4 Photo Credit: Kenny Crooks

- Biodiversity Net Gain- Number of units and type of habitat created
- Local Wildlife Sites- Number sites positively managed for biodiversity
- Habitat Creation/Restoration- Hectares of new/restored habitat
- Trees/Woodland- Percentage total canopy cover, number of trees planted, hectares of managed woodland
- Engagement and Education- Number of schools engaged, number of residents engaged through co-production or other consultation, number of greenspace volunteers, number of training courses completed

Appendix

Appendix A – Sites where Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy has been agreed

Reference / Address	Onsite Baseline			Onsite-Post Development			Onsite Net Change			Offsite Baseline			Offsite Post- Intervention			Offsite Net Change			Units from Credits			Total Net Unit Change			Overall Total % Change		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
23/0752/FUL -Land East Of The Carrs Angling Lakes, Letch Lane, Carlton, TS21 1ED	4.95	12.51	0.0	6.28	14.26	0.0	1.33	1.75	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.33	1.75	0	26.87%	13.99%	0%
24/0730/FUL – Stockton, Riverside College, Harvard Avenue, Stockton On Tees, TS17 6FB	4.63	0.15	0.00	5.28	0.32	0.00	0.65	0.17	0.00												0.65	0.17	0	14.04%	113.33%	0%	
24/0847/FUL - Land North Of Lidl, Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3RU	1.86	0.79	0.00	2.15	1.15	0.00	0.29	0.36	0.00												0.29	0.36	0	15.59%	45.57%	0%	
24/0910/FUL - HMP Holme House, Holme House Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2QU	1.10	0.00	0.00	1.21	0.40	0.00	0.11	0.40	0.00												0.11	0.4	0	10.00%		0%	
24/1031/FUL - K P Snacks Limited, Macklin Avenue, Cowpen Lane Industrial Estate, Billingham, TS23 4DU	10.39	0.61	0.00	11.50	0.69	0.00	1.11	0.08	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				1.11	0.08	0	10.68%	13.11%	0%
24/1351/FUL - Land To The West Of Thornaby Pavillion, Thornaby, TS17 9EW	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0.07	0	0	28.00%		0%
24/1368/FUL - Flanges Limited, Blue House Point Road, Portrack Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2PL	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.29	0.00	0.00										0.32	0	0	0.03	0	0	10.34%		0%
24/1454/FUL - Land Off Roundhill Avenue, Ingleby Barwick, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 5FZ	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0.31	0	0	Zero baseline units - % cannot be calculated		
24/1628/FUL - Land South Of Marsh House Avenue Northfield School Site, Marsh House Avenue, Billingham, TS23 3HB	51.05	0.16	0.00	57.61	4.93		6.56	4.77													6.56	4.77		12.85%	2981.25 %	0%	
24/1769/FUL -Teesside Grange, A67 From Urlay Nook Road To Airport, Eaglescliffe, Stockton-On-Tees, TS16 0QH	3.98	0.00	0.00	12.16	0.00	0.00	8.18	0.00	0.00												8.18	0	0	205.53 %		0%	
24/1971/FUL - Morrisons Petrol Filling Station, Newmarket Avenue,Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees,TS17 7BQ	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00												0.0211	0	0	16.12%		0%	
24/2073/FUL - St Pauls Roman Catholic Primary School, Wolviston Mill Lane, Billingham, TS22 5LU	2.15	1.23	0.00	2.91	1.91	0.00	0.76	0.68	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0.76	0.68	0	35.35%	55.28%	0%

Reference / Address	Onsite Baseline			Onsite-Post Development			Onsite Net Change			Offsite Baseline			Offsite Post- Intervention			Offsite Net Change			Units from Credits			Total Net Unit Change			Overall Total % Change		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
24/2132/LA - Quarry Road Allotments, Quarry Road, Eaglescliffe, TS16 9BD	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00													0.0587	0	0	53.85%		0%
25/0254/FUL - Land North West Of Soccer Sensations, Westland Way, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3TG	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.74	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00													0.07	0	0	10.45%		0%
25/0564/FUL - The Hermitage , The Spital, Yarm, Stockton-On-Tees, TS15 9ER	1.77	0.65	0.00	1.96	0.72	0.00	0.19	0.07	0.00													0.19	0.07	0	10.73%	10.77%	0%
25/0579/FUL - Conoco Phillips Petroleum Company, Seal Sands Road, Seal Sands, Middlesbrough, TS2 1UH	6.410	0.00	0.00	5.322	0.00	0.00	-1.088	0.00	0.00										1.729			0.641	0	0	10.00%		0%
25/0672/FUL - Land East Of Durham Lane, Eaglescliffe, Stockton On Tees	117.02	2.03	0.00	39.46	2.36	0.00	-77.56	0.33	0.00	0	0	0	89.34	0	0	89.34	0	0	0	0	0	11.78	0.33	0	10.07%	16.26%	0%
25/1143/FUL - The Grangefield Academy, Oxbridge Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 4LE	0.63	0.00	0.00	0.76	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00													0.13	0	0	20.63%		0%
25/1260/FUL - Land At Knowles Farm, Forest Lane, Kirklevington,TS15 9NG	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00													0.09	0	0	12.68%		0%
25/1586/FUL - Land North Of Cheltenham Road, Wetherby Close, Portrack Interchange Business Park, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2AD	6.80	0.00	0.00	2.10	0.05	0.00	-4.70	0.05	0.00	2.16	0	0	7.55	0	0	5.39	0	0	2.16			2.85	0.05	0	41.91%		0%
25/1588/FUL - Mandale Retail Park, Ross Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2LX	0.015	0.00	0.00	0.007	0.00	0.00	-0.008	0.00	0.00										0.0095	0	0	0.0165	0	0	10.00%		0%
26/0134/LA - St John The Baptist Church Of England Primary School, St John's Way, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 0FB	0.73	0.26	0.00	0.87	0.30		0.14	0.04														0.14	0.04		19.18%	15.38%	0%
24/2127/FUL - Land North Of Greatham Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2QE	15.59	0.00	0.00	8.883	1.469	0.00	-6.705	1.47	0.00										8.264			1.5589	1.47		10.00%		
24/0977/OUT - Little Maltby Farm, Low Lane, High Leven, Yarm, TS15 9JT	4.536			1.957			-2.578												3.03			0.45			10.00%		
24/1208/FUL - Navigator Terminals Seal Sands, Seal Sands Road, Seal Sands, Middlesbrough, TS2 1UA	22.8	0	0.87	22.43	0	0.87	0.367	0	0										2.646			2.28	0	0	10.00%		10.00 %
25/1090/FUL - Land North Of George Stephenson Court , Westland Way, Preston Farm	2.597			2.597															0.259			0.259			10.00%		

Reference / Address	Onsite Baseline			Onsite-Post Development			Onsite Net Change			Offsite Baseline			Offsite Post- Intervention			Offsite Net Change			Units from Credits			Total Net Unit Change			Overall Total % Change		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
Industrial Estate, Stockton-On-Tees, TS18 3FB																											
24/1462/FUL - Whitehouse Innovation Park , New Road, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 1LE	0.13			0.143 9			0.0139														0.0139			10.7%			

Glossary

Please note, all definitions are given in context of this document and refer to the natural environment to support the interpretation of this document. Other definitions may be applicable in alternative contexts.

Biodiversity	The variety of different plants, animals, amphibians, fungi and microorganisms within an area.
Species	A group of plants, animals, fungi or microorganism which are genetically similar and have the ability to reproduce and create fertile offspring.
Abundance	The number of one type of plant, animal, fungi or microorganism in one place.
Biodiversity Net Gain	A phrase commonly used within development, to demonstrate there has been a measurable increase (or net gain) in biodiversity within an area. Developers must deliver BNG of 10%, meaning they must baseline their site and uplift biodiversity by at least 10% following their development. They are also required to maintain this habitat for a minimum of 30 years.
Climate	Climate is the long-term pattern of weather in a particular area. This is usually tracked over 30 years.
Climate Change	Changes in climate can be seen over an extended period of time. These happen naturally, however fossil fuel use is known to accelerate this, meaning we can now see extreme changes in our climate much more frequently. This can make it difficult for plants and animals (including humans) to adapt.
Mandate	Command given by an elected group ie government to perform an action, often determined through law.
Monitoring	Collecting and analysing data or information to track progress or outcomes
Invasive Non-Native Species	Species which are not originally native to the UK, which outcompete native wildlife for resources
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	A spatial plan and supporting document outlining areas which are best for nature recovery
Nature Recovery	To improve opportunities for native plants and wildlife which might otherwise be in decline, endangers or threatened with extinction. Often this involved proactive conservation and habitat improvements.
Fossil Fuels	Energy sources which are derived from fossilised organic matter. These are usually high in carbon and release this as gas when burned.
Crop Yields	The measurable amount of plants grown for food or other agricultural uses in a specified area of land. A higher yield means there are more crops harvested from one specific area.
Monoculture	Monoculture is when a single plant is grown in an area, this can increase risk of whole areas being wiped out by pests or disease.
Natural flood management	Natural Flood Management involves using natural processes and characteristics of a landscape to reduce the risk of flooding.
Local Wildlife Site	Areas are designated as Local Wildlife Site due to an area being particularly important for wildlife. These usually include essential habitat for rare species.

Site Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A designation created in areas which are unique and include features of special interest to Wildlife, Geology or Landform.
RAMSAR	An international treaty on the preservation of designated wetlands. This seeks to protect wetlands of international significance.
Tree Canopy Cover (also known as Urban Tree Canopy Cover)	A measure of the cover of trees within a town or city, focusing primarily on the reach of a trees leaves.
Habitat	A home or place where plants and animals would naturally live (usually referring to the natural environment eg woodland).
Green Finance	Private funding provided to support exclusively environmental projects or improve climate resilience.
Nature Based Solutions	This phrase is usually referring to projects which are delivering benefits to humans or the environment by utilising nature or natural processes, rather than traditional hard engineering. An example would be planting trees for increased shade, planted SuDS to reduce flooding or saltmarsh restoration or act as a natural buffer during harsh storms.
Habitat Bank	A habitat bank is an area of land set aside for environmental enhancements, specifically being funded by off-site BNG unit contributions.
Pathogen	A microorganism which causes disease, often resulting in damage or death.
Climate Resilience	The ability for plants and animals to change in order to survive the impacts of a changing climate ie hotter summers
Green Corridor/Green Wedge	Green spaces designed to connect existing habitats or green spaces, these often include walking or cycling routes. A Green Wedge is specifically set aside to ensure towns do not merge, but also has the same properties as a green corridor.
Adaptation	To change to fit a new environment or adjust to changing conditions.
Mitigation	To reduce the severity or seriousness of a hazard or risk through proactive measures, in this case, interventions which protect and enhance biodiversity or reduce impact of climate change.
Conservation	Management and restoration of existing ecosystems to prevent loss or further damage.
Restoration	Returning habitats to their original condition.
District Level Licensing	The District Level Licensing scheme was introduced by Natural England to fund installation of new breeding ponds for Great Crested Newts and support the restoration/creation of habitats for resident populations.
Watercourse	A natural or artificial channel of water, which includes rivers, streams, ditches or other culverted waterways.
Ecosystem Services	The direct and indirect contributions that the natural environment gives to sustain human life, including clean air, fresh water and food (and its pollination).
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and usually businesses with less than 250 employees. They make up 99.8% of the UK private business sector, with the majority being considered Micro Businesses, with less

	than 9 employees (Government Commercial Function, 2026).
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise are not for profit, non-governmental groups, which often include charities and social enterprises.

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REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 23 APRIL 2026

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

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

Foster with North East Expansion

Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Council to take part in the expansion of the Regional Fostering Hub in line with the Department for Education (DfE) expansion programme. This will build on the Foster with North East (FwNE) pathfinder that has been in operation since 2023 and all North East Councils are part of, but also requires a move to an 'End-to-End' model encompassing all aspects of the Fostering process

Children in Care sufficiency is the most significant risk and financial pressure to Councils across the North East and nationally. Following the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in 2022 national policy, supported by proposed legislation in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, has identified regional working as key to addressing these challenges. The Competitions and Market Authority (CMA) have also reported that the current model is dysfunctional driving up costs and delivering poor outcomes.

DfE is progressing at pace on this agenda publishing a blueprint including regional fostering, Renewing Fostering: homes for 10,000 more children, in February 2026 and guidance on the next stage of development for Regional Care Co-operatives (RCCs) in March 2026 Apply to set up a regional care cooperative - GOV.UK along with an Expression of Interest (EoI) for six further regions to become RCC's.

Foster with North East (FwNE) was established in 2023 as the National Fostering Pathfinder, hosted by Together for Children and with all 12 councils in the region participating. An evaluation of FwNE was carried out last year and it was recognised that expansion of the model to an End-to-End approach was essential to achieve the benefits of the regional approach. It is positive that national policy and some additional funding have now aligned with that view.

DfE policy statement sets out seven minimum requirements for an expanded Regional Fostering Hub along with a specification and very tight timelines to establish and implement the model. A fully costed plan needs to be submitted to DfE by 1st June 2026. The work undertaken in the region to develop the model, financial planning and implementation are set out in the body of this report.

DfE provided over £2m of funding to FwNE to establish it and for initial running costs, however in 2025-26 the current model was fully funded by the 12 LAs through a population-based formula. In 2026-27 it's projected that the model will cost approximately £2m with £500k of funding through government grant. A commitment has been made that the financial contributions from individual LA's will be maintained at 2025/26 levels, and the efficiencies will be sought to support the expansion of the Hub. For context in 2023-24 the region spent £540m on children in care placements and costs continue to rise at an exponential rate. Financial details are set out in the body of the report.

To ensure the benefits of regional working are fully realised and we operate as efficiently as possible it is proposed that FwNE will be fully integrated into a proposed North East RCC. It is recommended that a regional bid is submitted as part of the RCC EoI by May 22nd, building on extensive work that has taken place regionally over the last 18 months. If successful it would bring at least £1.5m additional funding into the region and enable significant efficiency and benefits by integrating with FwNE.

A high-level structure for regional working through a proposed RCC and delivery of FwNE via a locality model is described in detail in the report. Whilst it will be required to operate across a full regional footprint of all 12 LA's our design is based on 3 Locality delivery teams taking the learning from FwNE pathfinder. It is proposed that the 3 localities are:

- North Locality – Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland
- Central Locality – Durham, South Tyneside and TfC/Sunderland
- South Locality – Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.

This report presents a clear rationale for the recommendations and the move to regional arrangements to address chronic shortfalls in sufficiency of children in care placements. The risks presented by the current dysfunctional market approach impacting on children's outcomes and the financial sustainability of LA's must be addressed and this work provides an opportunity to do so.

Reasons for Recommendations

Foster carers provide high quality care for some of our most vulnerable children and as such we highly value the part they play in making a difference to children's lives. Our ambition is to be able to offer more children and young people high quality family-based care provided by our foster carers. It is also important that we are able to maintain lifelong connections for our children with siblings, extended families and their wider community. Enhancing our recruitment and retention of foster carers to reverse the decline in numbers seen in recent years is essential to achieving that.

There is also a financial imperative with rapidly escalating costs driven by a dysfunctional market model within the care system. This has led to costs escalating well in advance of budgets creating substantial pressure and sustainability risks for Councils across the region and nationally. A different approach is needed, and these developments give us the

opportunity to completely redesign this critical service area with an enhanced regional approach that is still embedded in locality.

In July 2025, Cabinet considered a report outlining a sustained reduction in the number of local foster carers at a time of increasing demand for placements, driven by a growing cohort of children entering care. The report presented proposals to modernise the fostering service in Stockton-on-Tees, underpinned by a comprehensive service review, options appraisal and a supporting business case. The proposals sought to address pressures on placement sufficiency, including the increasing dependence on external private providers, while improving outcomes for children in care and supporting their long-term stability and wellbeing. A key priority within the proposals was to strengthen the capacity and resilience of the in-house fostering service through targeted recruitment activity, improved retention of existing carers and a more flexible and responsive service offer capable of meeting the increasingly complex and diverse needs of children in care. The proposals included increases to fostering fees, enhanced training and support arrangements and a focused recruitment strategy to broaden the local foster carer base.

The Council's approved approach is consistent with the national policy direction and the Government's ambition to strengthen the end-to-end system for the recruitment, retention and support of foster carers, ensuring sustainable placement sufficiency and improved outcomes for children.

The Directors of Children's Services within 12 North East local authorities in scope for this activity have agreed to support this programme, and there is a national expectation to deliver the 'End-to-End' expansion. On a national and regional level, recruiting sufficient numbers of foster carers for the number of children requiring care remains a challenge and this approach is designed to reduce the challenges faced. The costs associated with using external fostering providers and children's homes can be high and so it is hoped this will see a reduction.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Give approval for the Local Authority to enter into an agreement to be part of the expanded North East Fostering Hub in line with national policy and guidance
- 2) Give approval for the Local Authority to support a North East Regional bid to become a 'Wave 2' RCC national pathfinder and support submission of a bid to DfE by 22nd May 2026.
- 3) Authorise the Director of Children's Services in conjunction with the Lead Member for Children's Services to take all necessary steps to implement the recommendations in line with National Policy.

Detail

1. Children's Social Care has been operating in a very challenging context in recent years, particularly with sufficiency of places for children in care being constrained by a dysfunctional market model. These issues have been well documented through the Independent Review of Children's Social Care led by Josh McAllister which reported in May 2022 and a report by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published in March 2022.
2. The government formulated a response to these reviews and started the process of primary legislation to take forward recommendations in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which is now at its final stage in Parliament. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care recommended the development of Regional Care Co-operatives (RCCs) and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will give the Secretary of State powers to direct regions to establish RCC taking on a range of duties for commissioning of fostering and residential care.
3. DfE established a 'pathfinder' programme for RCC's in 2024 and the two successful regions following Expressions of Interest, Greater Manchester and South East, went live with their RCC's in 2025. The pathfinders have tested out different governance models, shared commissioning approaches and provider engagement, regional collaboration on data and insights and moving away from reactive approaches to commissioning to a more proactive planned approach across the regional footprint.
4. A complementary recommendation from the national review was to develop collaborative approaches at regional level to fostering recruitment and retention following a decline in the number of foster carers nationally after Covid. This reduction in foster capacity combined with an increase in the number of children in care requiring foster placements has created a perfect storm. We cannot fully meet children's needs close to their homes and have seen significant financial pressures due to increased usage of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) and residential care.
5. Financially there is a 'burning platform' driving change with nationally around £9bn now spent on supporting children in care with costs rapidly out pacing budgets creating significant risks to the financial sustainability of Councils. An external review commissioned in 2024 showed that the region spent £540m on children in care placement in 2023-24 with around £300m of that on residential placements. It was also estimated that just over 30% of children in residential placements could have been placed in foster care if sufficiency challenges are addressed.
6. In the North East our regional fostering hub Foster with North East (FwNE) was the first national fostering hub Pathfinder established in 2023 and hosted by Together for Children. This has enabled substantial learning in the region, and we have also benefited from approx. £2m of DfE investment in our hub. An evaluation of FwNE was commissioned last year and recommendations from that have been integrated into the proposal to expand the model in line with national requirements.

7. Josh MacAlister, author of the independent review of children's social care is now a Labour MP and September 2025 was appointed as the children's minister. He now has the national political leadership for the implementation of the recommendations he made in 2022 and that has seen an acceleration in the national roll out of both RCC's and Fostering Hubs.
8. The DfE published a policy statement on Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) in February 2026 which sets out the national direction of travel, giving the high-level expectations of an RCC building on the work of the 2 pathfinders in Greater Manchester and the South-East regions. This was followed by publication of detailed guidance setting out requirements and route for regions to submit an EoI to become an RCC published on 26th March 2026 - Apply to set up a regional care cooperative - GOV.UK.
9. It has been confirmed there will be 6 regions joining the pathfinder programme as part of the national roll out of RCCs. RCC's will be expected to develop in 3 stages, foundation, development and delivery with a checklist of minimum requirements at each stage set out in the guidance. National funding of up to £10.8m over 2 years will be provided across the new pathfinders for initial costs of set up and implementation, so the North East could expect around £1.5-2m if successful.
10. The DfE launched a new policy paper, 'Renew Fostering,' in February which sets an 'ambitious' target of securing an additional 10,000 new fostering places by 2029, underpinned by 5 'Pillars of Reform'. This includes a clear expectation that existing fostering hubs, which are currently a primarily 'front door' recruitment model, will expand to an 'End-to-End' to include assessment, approval and expanded support to help both recruit and keep foster carers in the system for longer.
11. The DfE's expectation is that regions will move towards an End-to-End model (enquiry to approval) during the 2026-27 financial year. A proposed model has been developed through the regional governance arrangements led by the North East Association of Directors of Children's Services (NE ADCS) and the regional Directors of Resources (DRG). Several workshops with DCS's and operational leads have taken place to shape the regional proposal and ensure we can meet the national requirements in a way that works in our context.
12. It is expected the proposed model will significantly reduce duplication across the region and could result in more efficient use of resources, a better experience for prospective foster cares and sharing of best practice. The ambition is ultimately to recruit and retain more foster carers giving more children access to loving homes within their own communities as reduce pressure on Children in Care budgets that are unsustainable across the region.
13. The national guidance provided by the DfE sets out a range of 'minimum requirements' for regional fostering hubs against which we must design a model that fits our local context and needs. Those requirements are.
 - Recruitment: Regional approach to recruitment led by the Hub

- Single Front Door: All enquiries regionally to be routed through a single point of entry
 - Journey Guide: A dedicated person to support and steer carers through assessment and approval processes
 - Support Network for Carers: Core regional offer establishing lasting support networks
 - Regional Assessment: Single assessment function for the region with the Hub
 - Regional Data: Regional systems and data collection with oversight of progress
 - Post Approval Support: Regional offer of training and support
14. The proposal to move to a fully End-to-End fostering model across the region covering all aspects of fostering services from initial enquiry through to post approval support and supervision will require structural change. Learning from the experience of the Foster with North East national pathfinder the proposal is to build a locality delivery structure into the Regional Hub. Working through NE ADCS and DRG the preferred option is for three locality delivery teams to be established covering the following areas.
- a. North Locality – Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland
 - b. Central Locality – Durham, South Tyneside and TfC/Sunderland
 - c. South Locality – Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesborough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton
15. The national minimum requirements include the management and oversight of all resources, including staffing to be through the regional hub. Therefore, structural change and a formal HR process will be required as part of the transition to new arrangements. The proposed high-level structures are set out in paragraph 25 of this report. A detailed capacity and demand analysis is being undertaken to design the structures required in each locality to deliver against the new model. This will inform a formal consultation process likely to take place in the summer of 2026 with transition to the new locality structure during the autumn of 2026
16. There is a requirement to submit to DfE by 1st June, a full costed plan setting out how the region will meet the minimum requirements and the allocation of resources. An interim plan giving high level direction of travel, outline of model and costs was submitted to DfE on 31st March and feedback on this will inform the final version.
17. The DfE provided grant funding in total of over £2m for the set up and initial running costs of Foster with North East. From 2025/26, it is now fully funded by LA contributions using a formula based on population. The core budget for the existing FwNE activity in 2026-27, prior to expanding its remit is £1,170,524 (including an agreed uplift in contributions of 4%).

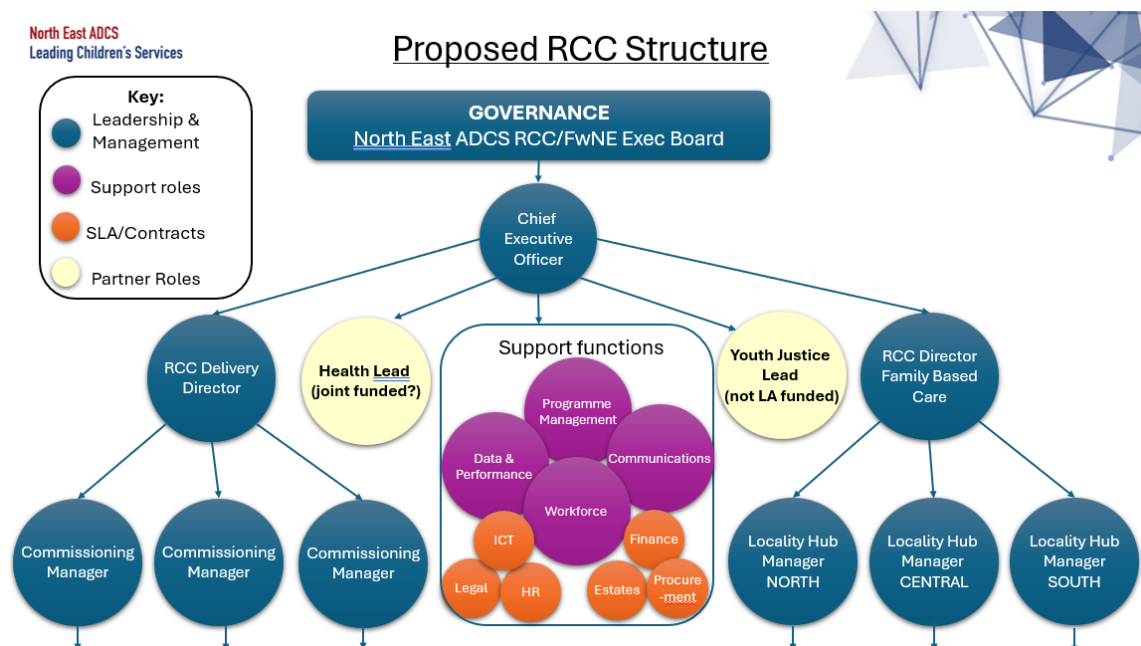
18. The DfE have offered grant fund of up to £500,000 to support the region's ability to expand to an end-to-end model. DfE's modelling indicates that to receive the full grant it needs to equate to 25% of the costs of the expanded model with the remainder funded by the LA financial contributions, in kind contributions or sharing resources with the RCC infrastructures. NE ADCS had already agreement in 2025 that for the Regional Fostering Hub to be sustainable and fulfil its potential it needed to go further to eliminate duplication in the current model. Therefore, it is welcome the national policy position and additional funding have aligned with that approach. Initial high-level costings for the extension to End-to-End Expansion activity estimates the cost for the Regional Fostering Hub for 2026-27 financial year to be £2,072,817.
19. If the full DfE allocation of £500,000 towards the costs is received, split between core functions and expansion activity, this leaves an initial funding gap of £402,292 to be mitigated by in kind activity, alignment with broader regional work and other efficiencies. In addition, in-year slippage on new posts and activity are anticipated in 2026-27 and once we know the outcome of a possible RCC EoI a medium-term financial strategy can be developed to ensure a sustainable model.
20. In relation to RCC development, for the past 18 months North East ADCS has been proactively preparing for these announcements and have established a new governance arrangement for both the development of our northeast RCC and fostering expansion activity. The RCC Executive Board meets every 6 weeks and includes DCSs, Chief Executives, Section 151 / Finance Directors, Legal and Commissioning strategic representation.
21. All indications suggest we are in a strong position for the North East to be successful in a bid to become one of the next rounds of RCC pathfinders, to take advantage of additional national funding and support.
22. Our regional work to date has included.
 - Establishment of a Complex Needs Board in September 2023 working with the ICB and health partners on four workstreams – market management, integration, transition and prevention.
 - Commissioned and external partner (Newton Consulting) to conduct a regional deep dive and diagnostic exercise analysing the cost of placements for children with the most complex needs.
 - Developed and published a regional 'Sufficiency Statement' in Spring 2025 and subsequent rolling programme of provider engagement activities NE ADCS Sufficiency Position Statement
 - Held several workshop sessions to develop regional thinking and learn from the two National Pathfinders. We also commissioned additional support from a consultant who had previously worked with the GM pathfinder to share their experience of the process.

- Successful in a regional bid to work with Social Finance, funded by DfE, to develop a regional data platform to support our commissioning activity and form a core foundation of a future RCC.
- Used DfE RIIA grant to invest in additional regional leadership and programme management capacity to progress FwNE's development and prepare the region to become an RCC.

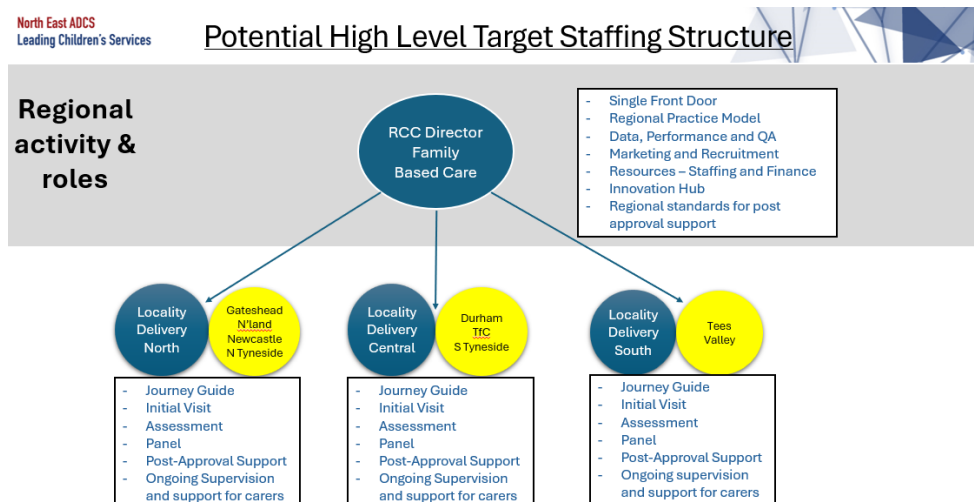
23. As a result of this work, we are in a strong position to submit an Expression of Interest to become an RCC and already have in place or are developing the key building blocks required to meet the national requirements DfE have set out in the RCC guidance.

Proposed High Level Regional Structure

24. All our planning has been based on the opportunity to fully integrated the fostering hub with a future NE RCC. The high-level structure developed takes a proactive view that our expanded fostering hub will be 'nested' within the overarching Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) structure. The following graphic shows the proposed high-level structure:



25. To meet the requirement for Fostering Hubs to have a senior accountable person operating at regional level it is proposed that the 'Director of Family Based Care' role will hold this accountability and oversee 3 locality hubs, each with its own manager. NE ADCS have recommended the groupings of local authorities within these localities, as outlined on the following graphic:



Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

26. See summary paragraph 3.

Corporate Parenting Implications

27. See summary paragraph 4.

Financial Implications

28. Subject to confirmation of funding being secured from the DfE as described in paragraphs 18 & 19, the 2026/27 financial contribution from SBC is anticipated to be £85,961, which is in line with the Children's budget for 2026/27.

29. Any further financial implications will be considered in future updates to Cabinet.

Legal Implications

30. Local authorities have a duty to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, that they have a sufficient provision and range of accommodation for children that are looked after, or whose welfare otherwise requires accommodation, in their area and that meets the children's needs.

Background Papers

'Renewing fostering: homes for 10,000 more children' February 2026 at: [Renewing fostering: homes for 10,000 more children - GOV.UK](#)

Regional Care Cooperatives policy statement February 2026 at: [Regional care cooperatives policy statement - GOV.UK](#)

Regional Care Cooperatives guidance and Eo1 March 2026 at: [Apply to set up a regional care cooperative - GOV.UK](#)

Independent Review of Childrens Social Care at: [Independent review of children's social care: final report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation at: [Children's social care stable homes built on love consultation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

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