

## **Cabinet**

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 16th July 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:** Ged Morton, Peter Bell, Haleem Ghafoor, Julie Butcher, Tara Connor, Clare Harper, Laura Kelsey, Leanne Maloney-Kelly, Majella McCarthy, Carolyn Nice, Sarah Robinson, Edwin Squire, Joy Swithenbank and Craig Willows.

**Also in attendance:** Members of BMBF, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Lynn Hall and Cllr Marcus Vickers.

**Apologies:** None.

### **CAB/153/25 Live Streaming**

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

### **CAB/154/25 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CAB/155/25 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **CAB/156/25 Minutes**

Consideration was given to minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2026 be approved.

### **CAB/157/25 Bright Minds Big Futures - Annual Update**

Consideration was given to a report on Bright Minds Big Futures – Annual Update.

Cabinet were reminded BMBF was a youth-led movement working together with the Council to make the Borough a great place to grow up.

The report was presented by representatives of the BMBF team and a presentation was also given. Some of excellent progress had made in the last 12 months. Some examples were:

- Recruited 21 young people as SBC Correspondents at SIRF (August 25). This has led to some of these young people joining BMBF and provided young people with

important volunteering experience that they can reference for college, university and job applications.

- A Second Dance Prom Project has raised £1,460, providing 98 prom outfits to young people. This funding will be reinvested for 2026/27 to continue the project. Many of the young people supported by the scheme may otherwise not have been able to attend their prom due to the high cost of sourcing an outfit.
- 14 young people joined in Take Over Day at the Council, giving them experience of working in various departments within the local authority. A number of these young people are keen to do further work experience within the Council and has also given inspiration of which career path they would like to take.
- 806 young people from across the borough responded to the Have Your Say North East campaign in March 2026 and voted that Health & Wellbeing and Jobs, Training & Opportunities are their top 2 priorities. This enables BMBF to focus on the issues that really matter to the young people in our borough.
- Other social action volunteering projects have included BMBF members supporting the Community Gift and various Community Fun Days.
- Health & wellbeing initiatives such as voting to provide match funding to run a series of boxing sessions in the Ropner area to provide diversionary activities for the young people in this area.

An ongoing recruitment campaign was in place to increase membership of BMBF. This activity sought to ensure that BMBF was representative of the young people across the Borough. Strong links had developed across Council services, including the Leaving Care Team and Home School Team as well as YUSA and other partners.

Members were also asked to note that BMBF were now represented locally through Youth Focussed North East, with young people from BMBF attending the first regional session in May 2026.

From March 2026, BMBF's new objectives, which came out of Have Your Say North East consultation with 806 young people, were Health and Wellbeing and Jobs, Training and Opportunities. BMBF had already started working towards these and ongoing takeover days, for example, would provide opportunities for BMBF members to learn more about council roles and functions.

BMBF were undergoing a recruitment process to form a Youth Council from which two members of Youth Parliament would be elected. The recruitment drive also continued to ensure that BMBF was representative of the young people across the Borough. It was hoped that the process for the Members of Youth Parliament would increase the number of young people on BMBF

BMBF would host a development day in September 2026 where the young people would look at how to build upon the success of the last 12 months and plan further projects and activities. Looking ahead, in order to bring in more than the current restricted £5,000 per year, they were looking to change the governance arrangements of how they are constituted allowing them to bring in further funding to carry out further work across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the progress made over the last 12 months by BMBF to be noted.

Consideration was given to a report on the School Term and Holiday Dates for 2027/2028 Academic Year.

The purpose of the report was, following consultation, to present the proposed calendars of school term and holiday dates for 2027/2028 academic year.

School employers were required to set the term dates of their school year. Employers were:

- the Local Authority in maintained, voluntary controlled and maintained special schools.
- the Governing Body in foundation and voluntary aided schools.
- Multi Academy Trusts, academies and free schools.

In line with statutory requirements and the protocol agreed in 2008, consideration had been given to compile a set of term and holiday dates for schools in the Borough.

Officers consulted with colleagues from all neighbouring authorities to endeavour to reach consensus on a proposed model for the academic year.

Attached as Appendix 1 of the report were the proposed dates for 2027/2028.

As part of the consultation process the document was duly circulated to schools/academies and all other relevant parties, including Diocesan Authorities and Trade Unions/Teaching Associations. There were no comments received, details were provided at Appendix 2 of the report.

To date the neighbouring authorities that had published their dates had endorsed the proposed matrix for 2027/2028. This included Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough. There was a slight difference to Darlington dates (two days) in that they return on 1 September 2027 and break up on 20 July 2028. It was proposed that Stockton-on-Tees would return on 2 September 2027 and break up on 21 July 2028 which was in line with all other neighbouring authorities. This level of agreement between authorities would relieve many of the cross-boundary issues that some families had suffered in the past.

RESOLVED that the school term and holiday dates 2027/2028 shown at Appendix 1 of the report, be agreed.

## **CAB/159/25 Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing)**

Consideration was given to a report on the Enforcement & Regulatory Policy Housing.

The Renters Rights Act received Royal Assent on the 27 October 2025. It was a significant and transformative piece of legislation intended to strengthen protections for private tenants and rebalance landlord-tenant relationships.

With effect from the 27 October 2025 the Act introduced a significantly expanded civil penalty framework and placed new duties on Councils to enforce a broader range of landlord obligations. This included additional compliance requirements, enhanced penalties for repeat or serious non-compliance, and clearer expectations that enforcement activity was carried out in a fair, consistent and proportionate manner.

The Council's existing Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy v6 (published in 2024) no longer reflected the current legislative position. The report therefore sought approval for the updated (and renamed) Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing).

Members were asked to note that agreeing an updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) was one of the ways in which the Council was preparing for the introduction of the Act. To ensure a timely and appropriate response preparatory work had been ongoing on a cross-service basis. This included the use of New Burdens funding to support our capacity requirements and up-skill existing colleagues, alongside a review of all relevant policies and working procedures, reviewing the monitoring systems to ensure the Council could provide the information required by Government, with the introduction of new mandatory returns, updating the Council's website to support tenants understand the key changes, and engagement with private sector landlords. Officers had and would continue to work closely with other LA's as part of a regional group and was a member of the Government's JIGSAW network. This network was funded by Government to support Local Authorities in preparing for the new legislation and promoted collaboration across PRS teams in England and supporting readiness for Renters' Rights reforms. This network allowed LA's access to an online community, knowledge HUB and shared best practice.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy V7 (Housing) copy attached at Appendix 1 of the report be agreed.
2. The updated Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) will apply to offences from the point of adoption and will run alongside the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (v6) for a transitional period to enable legacy cases to be concluded (for an approximate 6-month period).
3. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Adults, Health & Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Transport to make any necessary revisions or amendments to the Enforcement & Regulatory Policy (Housing) as may be required arising from the phased implementation stages of the Renters Rights Act (a summary of the implementation stages are summarised in Appendix 2 of the report), and/or any further updates made by Government to relevant powers or regulations available to Councils to address unsafe housing conditions and protect tenants.

### **CAB/160/25 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy Review 2026**

Consideration was given to a report on the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy Review 2026.

Under the Licensing Act 2003 local authorities must develop and review their Statement of Licensing Policy at least every five years. The revised policy provides a pragmatic and fair approach to all those working within the licensable activity sector, whilst continuing to meet the statutory obligations under the Licensing Act 2003.

A copy of the proposed Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Statement of Licensing Policy was available on the SBC website.

The proposed policy reflected legislation, best practice and integrated the recently published National Licensing Policy Framework which was a strategic vision for a modern, permissive licensing system that safeguarded communities while enabling hospitality and leisure to thrive, and was aligned with the licensing objectives which were:

- the prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- the prevention of public nuisance
- the protection of children from harm

The proposed policy supported the Council's vision and priorities and includes information on:

- Martyn's Law (Protect Duty)
- Illegal employment practices
- Local alcohol related harm

The proposed policy reinforced the commitment to:

- Partnership working including Pubwatch
- Proactive enforcement around alcohol harm including underage sales and early morning sales
- Engagement and compliance with the trade including the Reducing the Strength scheme
- Developing a responsible retailer guide that can be updated and remain current outside of the 5 year policy cycle

For statutory consultation the proposed policy was circulated for response to:

- Responsible authorities under the Licensing Act 2003 including the Police
- All members
- Internal and external stakeholders
- All current licence holders in the hospitality trade

The proposed policy was advertised to the public on the licensing website and social media pages. Comments were to be received by 31 May 2026.

No comments objecting to the proposed policy were received.

Supportive comments were received from the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) via the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). The comments and proposed additional policy wording were attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

The matter was referred to the General Licensing Committee on the 9 June 2026. The committee agreed unanimously on the revised Statement of Licensing Policy and the positive impact of the Reducing the Strength Scheme was acknowledged.

The Licensing Act 2003 places a statutory requirement on all Local Authorities to develop a Statement of Licensing Policy, and policies would to be reviewed at least every five years.

The Statement of Licensing Policy guided how the Council exercises its responsibilities when issuing licences for the sale of alcohol, regulated entertainment, and late-night refreshment.

All decisions must support the four equal-weight licensing objectives, as advised by the Section 182 guidance which accompanies the Act, these objectives underpin every part of the policy to ensure that Stockton-on-Tees continues to promote safe, responsible, and well-managed licensed activities.

The policy review had been undertaken with full consideration given to the follows the Councils design principals:

- Put communities at the heart of everything we do  
The policy prioritises the needs and concerns of residents by promoting the licensing objectives and ensuring community impact and feedback are central to decision making.
- Has a 'place-based' approach  
The policy reflects local characteristics by using tools such as area-specific evidence to respond to the distinct needs and risks within different parts of the borough.
- Has efficient processes and be digital by design  
The policy supports streamlined, transparent and accessible licensing processes, including the use of digital systems to submit, manage and determine applications efficiently.
- Uses data and intelligence to inform our decision  
Decisions under the policy are informed by robust data and intelligence from responsible authorities, ensuring an evidence-based approach.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the proposed Statement of Licensing Policy be agreed.

### **CAB/161/25 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) - Outturn March 2026**

Consideration was given to a report on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) - Outturn March 2026.

The overall financial position remained broadly consistent with that projected at the end of December 2025, as outlined in the budget report in February 2026, with a minor overall variance of (£72,000) from the previously reported position of £3.937m. The final year-end position reflected an overspend against budget of £3.865m.

During the financial year pressure had continued across the largest, demand driven services, namely Adult's and Children's Social Care, Home to School Transport and support for children with Special Educational Needs. These areas were the focus of ongoing transformation reviews.

In the final quarter of the financial year, there had been a notable improvement in the projected financial position across most budget areas. Improvements against earlier forecasts across directorate budgets had enabled the Council to ring fence the required 10%, £1.7m, for Special Educational Needs, without the need to identify further savings.

However, there had been a worsened position on Children's Social care and a significant increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, which had risen to £17.1m, driven primarily by continued growth in the numbers of children with Education, Health & Care Plans.

The Capital Programme had been updated to reflect the inclusion of new schemes and the completion of projects as at the financial year end.

RESOLVED that the outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2026 and the updated Capital Programme be noted.

### **CAB/162/25 Powering our Future - Transformation Reviews Update**

Consideration was given to a report that provided a further update following the report to Cabinet in May on the progress of the Council's Powering Our Future Programme and its contribution to closing the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) budget gap.

The programme set out a framework to modernise services, improve outcomes for residents and ensure long-term financial sustainability in the context of rising demand and cost pressures. Phase 1 had identified £9.9m of savings, with a number of projects now in delivery.

The February budget report highlighted significant ongoing pressures, particularly within Children's and Adults' Social Care, Home to School Transport, and SEND, where demand and complexity continued to rise faster than funding. This had resulted in a projected budget gap of £6.7m in 2026/27, increasing to £13.8m in 2027/28 and £18.4m in 2028/29.

In response, a Phase 2 programme of Transformation Reviews was underway, focusing on efficiency measures, council-wide initiatives, and outcome-based service reviews. The report provided an update on progress, with a particular emphasis on front-loaded efficiency savings, while further detailed reports on outcome-based reviews would follow. Savings identified within Phase 2 so far were £5,220,000 in 2026/27 and £3,520,000 per annum in future years.

RESOLVED that the progress of reviews to date and the activity towards closing the budget gap across the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.

### **CAB/163/25 Procurement Plan / Higher Value Contracts**

Consideration was given to a report on Procurement Plan / Higher Value Contracts.

The report sought approval for the award of planned higher value contracts where the value exceeds the limit on officer delegated authority and which are either funded within the approved MTFP/ Capital Programme or are subject to a bid for external funding.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contract listed in Annex 1 of the report be approved.
2. Authority be given to the relevant Director or Assistant Director to make the specific contract award decision and any subsequent contract variation, annual inflationary

uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decision in accordance with the delegations listed in Annex 1 of the report.

### **CAB/164/25 Xentrall Annual Report**

Consideration was given to the Xentrall Annual Report. The annual report allowed Cabinet to review the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services.

The report highlighted the following key areas:-

- Employees and Staffing
- Customers
- Finance and Value for Money
- Performance
- SBC and DBC Achievements
- Looking Forward

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The continuing success of Xentrall over the eighteen years since it was formed be acknowledged.

### **CAB/165/25 Resolution to exclude the public from the meeting for the following 2 agenda item - Billingham Town Centre Update and Business Case / Options Appraisal Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following two items due to the likelihood that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure of exempt information and the information was exempt under s100A(4) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

### **CAB/166/25 Billingham Town Centre**

Consideration was given to an exempt report on Billingham Town Centre.

RESOLVED that the recommendations as detailed within the report be agreed.

### **CAB/167/25 Business Case Options Appraisal - Environment, Leisure and Green Infrastructure**

Consideration was given to an exempt report on the Business Case Options Appraisal - Environment, Leisure and Green Infrastructure.

RESOLVED that the recommendations as detailed within the report be agreed.